



**The Kick-off Meeting of the Jean Monnet project ‘EU Competences and National Cultural Policies: Critical Dialogues’ (CULPOL)
and
First Stakeholders Group Meeting on the topic:
Programme ‘European Capital of Culture’ and Local Cultural Policies**

Report

A two-day meeting activities of the Jean Monnet project ‘*EU Competencies and National Cultural Policies: Critical Dialogues*’ (CULPOL) were organised from 8th to 9th of December 2016, at the premises of the Institute for Development and International Relations and in the Gallery Klovičevi dvori in Zagreb.

A) **The official kick-off meeting** was held on the **8th of December, 2016** at the premises of IRMO. After the preparatory organisational board meeting that took place during the morning hours, the open session with invited stakeholders and general public gathered twenty-six Croatian cultural policy researchers, cultural professionals, representatives of cultural civil society organizations and policy-makers in the field of culture.

B) **The first meeting of the stakeholder groups** was held the next day, on **9th of December 2016**, at the Gallery Klovičevi dvori. The meeting entitled ‘Programme *European Capital of Culture* and local cultural policies’ was organized in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and was attended by thirty-one representative of the Croatian cities candidates for the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) and other interested stakeholders of the CULPOL project.

A) KICK-OFF MEETING AGENDA, 8th of December, 2016:

- Welcome address by Dr Sanja Tišma, The Director of IRMO
- Introductory remarks and welcoming speech by Dr Nina Obuljen Koržinek, The Croatian Minister of Culture
- Presentation of the Jean Monnet Programme, Dr Višnja Samardžija, the Head of the IRMO’s Department for European Integration, coordinator of Jean Monnet support for Institutions project ‘Policy Observatory in Croatia (POLO-Cro28)’ and CULPOL team member
- Presentation of the CULPOL project, Dr Aleksandra Uzelac, the Head of the CULPOL project and IRMO’s Department for Culture and Communication
- Discussion
- Networking.



The Director of IRMO, Dr Sanja Tišma, opened the kick-off meeting, noting that the CULPOL project coordinated by IRMO's Department for Culture and Communication provides a great opportunity for networking and opening of new topics in the field of culture and media research.

The Croatian Minister of Culture, Dr Nina Obuljen Koržinek, delivered the welcome speech stating that this project contributes to the analysis and creation of public policies, and encourages intrasectoral and intersectoral cooperation, which is of great importance for small countries where culture is a sensitive issue. Dr Obuljen Koržinek also emphasized how it is valuable that the CULPOL project deals also with the importance of Digital Single Market (DSM) strategy due to its implications for the cultural and creative industries (CCI). The Minister concluded that she sees the CULPOL project as a good impetus for better integration of existing knowledge and research in the field of cultural policies and for developing new methods and policies.

Dr Višnja Samardžija, the Head of the IRMO's Department for European Integration and one of the project team members, presented Jean Monnet programme, an EU initiative to encourage teaching, research and reflection in the field of European integration studies in higher education institutions. The programme refers to the activities that promote the idea of the European Union and the EU's research policy as well as its support to higher education. Dr Samardžija stressed the difference in type of projects supported by Jean Monnet Programme – CULPOL as an example of Support to Projects, and IRMO's Support to Institutions project entitled 'Policy Observatory in Croatia (POLO-Cro28)'. Dr Samardžija also highlighted the importance of projects in the field of culture such as CULPOL that promote discussion and reflection on EU issues and enhance knowledge about the Union and its processes.

The CULPOL project coordinator and the Head of the Department for Culture and Communication, Dr Aleksandra Uzelac, gave a presentation on the general framework of the project, its key objectives and expected impacts as well as the main activities that will take place over the next two years of the project. In addition, Dr Uzelac invited the main stakeholders for discussion about project work plan, to join the stakeholders group of the project and to contribute to creating CULPOL project as a space for sharing research and establishing knowledge transfer between different fields of cultural policy research as well as between research and practice.

The meeting was concluded with a dynamic discussion about the possible cooperation on the project that was moderated by Dr Jaka Primorac, a CULPOL's team member. The meeting was attended by twenty-six participants from all over Croatia - cultural policy researchers, cultural professionals, cultural civil society representatives and policy-makers in the field of culture. The majority of them (21 participants) were from Zagreb, two participants were from Rijeka, one participant from Osijek, one from Split and one from Dubrovnik. Participants presented their ideas and levels of expertise, and expressed their particular interests to join in and to contribute to the



project activities, notably the participation in the CULPOL spring conference and to the CULPOL research through issue papers and commentary documents. Special emphasis in the discussion was given to the need for exchange of the already existing knowledge that is sometimes fragmented and on the big tradition of the cultural policy research that is available in Croatia, notably at IRMO.

B) FIRST STAKEHOLDERS GROUP MEETING AGENDA, 9th of December 2016:

- Welcome address by Dr Aleksandra Uzelac, the Head of the CULPOL project and IRMO's Department for Culture and Communication, and Anera Stopfer, MSc, the Head of Department for Cultural and Creative Industries of the Croatian Ministry of Culture;
- Presentation of the focus group work in three parallel sessions and division of participants in three groups;
- Session 1 (moderator: Paško Bilić, CULPOL team member; rapporteur: Matea Senkić, CULPOL team member);
- Session 2 (moderator: Mario Kikaš, CULPOL stakeholder; rapporteur: Barbara Lovrinić, CULPOL team member);
- Session 3 (moderator: Jaka Primorac, CULPOL team member; rapporteur: Anera Stopfer, CULPOL stakeholder);
- Joint discussion and conclusions.

First stakeholder's group meeting entitled 'Programme *European Capital of Culture* and local cultural policies' was attended by 31 participants, city representatives and ECoC team members from all nine Croatian cities that were candidates for the European Capital of Culture. The largest number of participants – 13 of them were from Zagreb, three participants were from Split, Dubrovnik and Rijeka respectively, two participants represented each Osijek, Pula, Varaždin and Zadar, whereas one was from Đakovo.

The participants were welcomed by members of the CULPOL project team Dr Aleksandra Uzelac, Dr Jaka Primorac and Anera Stopfer, MSc, the Head of the Department for Cultural and Creative Industries of the Croatian Ministry of Culture. In the brief presentation team members divided participants in three groups making sure, where possible, that the participants from the same city are not in the same group, in order to have a larger scope of the subject matter. The focus group work was set up in three parallel sessions with the following themes: 1) The main obstacles in the process of the ECoC application; 2) Positive effects of the ECoC process and application; and 3) How to use the ECoC experience for further development of local cultural policy and community. The focus group discussions were taped in order to be transcribed so as to have detailed material



for analysis and preparation of the CULPOL issue paper as a background material for the upcoming spring conference.

The first focus group entitled **“The main obstacles in the process of the ECoC application”** examined the main obstacles participants encountered in the process and the problems arising at national, local or organizational level. It also examined how some of these obstacles have been overcome in particular cities and, if not, what happened and how this problem can be addressed in the future.

To start off the debate, Paško Bilić, moderator and Matea Senkić, rapporteur posed following questions to the participants:

- What were the main obstacles that you encountered in the process of the ECoC application?
- Were these obstacles related to infrastructure, finance or human resources?
- How did the program’s requirements affect these obstacles or were such requirements barriers on their own?
- How did you solve some of these obstacles and what were the main factors for this success?
- If you were not able to solve the obstacles, what was the reason for it?
- Did the ECoC application process contribute to detect the key issues of local cultural policy? If so, can you name them?

The discussion about the main obstacles in the process of the ECoC application was dynamic and revealed several key issues that participants from all three groups encountered in the process. The financing was identified as one of key issues. A very common claim amongst city representatives, concerning challenges to delivering the ECoC event, was that it relies mostly on the capacity of the host city and/or nation to raise the funds, which in Croatian context represent a significant challenge. In many cases, there was an evident lack of financial support from Municipalities and Croatian Ministry for Culture. Many city representatives said that there was no clarification regarding some of the technical issues in the application process – i.e. what budget is available locally for the application stage, and what can the budget in particular city application include. Issues related to the unclear ECoC Programme criteria were mentioned such as the vague definition of ‘European value’ that candidates’ proposals needed to demonstrate. Despite ongoing efforts by the European Commission to position the European Dimension as central to the ECoC Programme, this area remained, according to city representatives, one of the most contested points of the Programme, primarily due to a broad, varied and conflicting range of interpretations over its precise meaning. Participants stressed the importance of strong political leadership and vision linked to the ECoC, and the added value of having local politicians being



openly supportive and interested in the programme, which was not always the case. Participants did not feel that the potential of ECoC had been properly recognized by local politicians and argued this may result in a lack of commitment to, and understanding of the long-term legacies of ECoC. They also noted that the relatively long period between appointment and the event itself included a risk, due to possible changes in the political structures of the city in the meantime. The strong political support was considered particularly important, but also the support of local communities and the citizens in general.

In most of the cases the support from the local communities was missing, as well as their engagement in the planning and delivery of the ECoC application. One of the detected problems was building audiences for activities from within the local population. The majority of participants highlighted an evident lack of media attention on the local and national level, but also internationally. During their application process, participants felt that there was a lack of human capacities to execute the project on the several levels: cultural managers in most of the sectors were missing; cultural institutions do not have the capacities to collaborate on an intersectoral level; there was a lack of managers with the experience and skills required to lead an ECoC process on behalf of a city, and the cities did not have a clear idea of what qualities to look for in a senior manager. Participants stressed the importance of the intersectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation which was missing, and a complex, slow and extremely bureaucratic national system as one of the main obstacles in the process of the ECoC application. There was also recorded disappointment with the Croatian Ministry of Culture mostly in terms of their absent financial and educational support during the application process, but also their absent support to all other city candidates after Rijeka became ECoC 2020.

The second focus group **“Positive effects of the ECoC process and application”** focused on identifying the ways in which the application process had a positive effect on both the elaboration of local cultural policies and the development of local communities. In addition, the goal of this session was to explore the advantages the application process has brought to the city at local, national and European level.

Mario Kikaš, moderator and Barbara Lovrinić, rapporteur posed the following questions to the participants:

- Did the ECoC application process have a positive effect on the elaboration of local cultural policy?
- Did the application process encourage some positive changes at the local cultural scene? If so, which ones?
- What has been the most positive moment of the process?



- Did the application process benefit your city at local, national and/or European level? If so, in what ways?

Unsurprisingly, the positive effects of the ECoC process and application were at first difficult to discern. Due to many disappointments participants experienced, it was very hard to distinguish good and bad sides of the process. Nevertheless, during the conversations, all the participants in each of the groups realized that all of the teams have done a substantive amount of work.

Firstly, the ECoC process was a great opportunity to open the dialogue and to collaborate within and between the sectors. It has contributed to a systematisation of the existing knowledge and to a 'discursive change' that enabled some cultural policy concepts to enter strategic documents and thus be reference points for change by the actors from the cultural sector. In most cases, and especially in Rijeka, this was the first time that people in-between sectors communicated and discussed the city development plans related to ECoC application process that created the uplifting energy for all participants. Varaždin for example, was able to gather culture professionals not only from the city but also from the whole county. Even the Culture Council was founded in order to stimulate local community development. Despite the fact that Đakovo was not a city-co-candidate together with Osijek, as initially planned, professionals from the both cities managed to continue to communicate and develop good relations. The main positive effects in Split concerned the flourishing of the NGO scene. The culture became a top issue in the city, and as one of unexpected effects of the process a discussion opened on the possibility of protecting the hill Marjan as a cultural heritage. On the other hand, Pula is a city with strong independent cultural scene which, in this occasion, simply had to connect with the 'mainstream' cultural institutions, in order to establish mutual relationship between these two sectors. Zadar's candidacy has gathered alternative culture professionals, some outstanding professors and I.T. professionals, while the Croatian National Theatre (HNK) was not interested to cooperate. The ECoC also had an impact on the on-going dialogue with international partners. Even Zagreb, where culture presented a serious battleground for self-interests of decision-makers, managed to establish communication with some international cultural actors.

Secondly, all the participants agreed on the fact that on the basis on the gathered information and finished fieldwork for the ECoC application process, there are good materials available that can be a substantive basis for the creation of the national cultural policy. The ECoC selection process was definitely a boost for everybody to work better and faster. For sure, some of the city projects will be realized regardless the ECoC title, after all, the synergy lasted for over a year and a half. Namely, some of the former military barracks in Zadar are reused as cultural centers for different organizations and associations. In Dubrovnik, the project of the summer residence programme in Lazareti has also been pushed forward. Zadar is now even planning to create a



short document on the basis of the Bid book, which will serve as a sort of creative program brochure.

The focus group entitled **“How to use the ECoC experience for further development of local cultural policy and community”** explored the experiences (either positive or negative) that came as a result of the ECoC application and which can contribute to changes in local cultural policies. The goal was to encourage participants to highlight the changes in the cultural life of the cities, and to discuss the next steps to further this positive change. Jaka Primorac, moderator and Anera Stopfer, rapporteur posed the following questions to the participants:

- After completing the ECoC application process, could you point out the experiences (either positive or negative) that have contributed to changes in local cultural policies?
- Did the ECoC process change the cultural life of your city? If so, how?
- Which issues could not be addressed through the ECoC process and why?
- Is the knowledge acquired through this process already in use when it comes to strategic thinking of the local cultural policy? If so, which one?
- What are the main obstacles to the use of this acquired knowledge?
- Can you identify the next steps to encourage positive cultural change in your community?
- Which actors should be involved in order to achieve optimal cultural development of your city?

The participants highlighted that one of the first positive outcomes of the ECoC process is that the cities have adopted cultural strategies, which was not (in most cases) present before. However, in most of the cities, especially the ones that did not pass the first selection round, after the strategies have been adopted not much occurred as a follow up of these activities. The participants stressed that the ECoC process contributed to the changing of the attitudes towards cultural sector in majority of the cities, and to developing the awareness that culture can contribute to the rising of the creative potential of the cities. However, the ECoC also showed to be an anachronistic concept aiming at a predefined transformation of the city based on the instrumentalisation of culture, which created obstacles for a creation of genuine bottom-up ECoC models that would cater the local cultural needs.

The major positive effect was the networking among different stakeholders and of creating cooperation that was not present before on the local, but also on the national and international level. Intersectorial cooperation also occurred, which was also a novelty and showed to be an important change. In some of the cities, this was the first time that the people from the cultural sector communicated together in one arena, and some of the results of this networking are still present in selected projects on local, national as well as on international level. All of the



participants stressed the large amount of emotional labour that was put into the project from all the participants involved, and the devastating effect that the 'losing of the title' created for all the involved. Due to the lack of political will on the local as well as on the national level and the fact that no mechanisms were created to contribute to the continuation of collaborations that emerged, many of the positive-side effects and synergies created are, and probably will be, lost.

Conclusion

After the participants convened in each of the thematic groups, the main conclusions from the focus groups were presented, followed by a joint debate. The participants highlighted the importance of having such a meeting as this stakeholders group in order to exchange experiences and ideas about the ECoC project with participants from other cities involved in the process of candidature for ECoC. The discussions showed a significant difference between the cities that can partly be attributed to the duration of the participation in the process (first and second phase of the selection rounds), and partly to the size of the cities and the socio-political context of a particular city. However, there were some similarities (both positive and negative) that can be highlighted for all the cities involved: problems of technical nature (finances, infrastructure); high dependence on the volatile events on the local and national political scene; activation of the (human) potential in cultural production on the local level; raising of the cooperation between cultural institutions and independent cultural sector; and developing of intersectoral and intrasectoral partnerships on local, national and international level. The debate demonstrated the need to create some specific mechanisms that would enable that the knowledge and experience gained through the ECoC application process could be used to create both local and national cultural policies. Based on focus groups, joint discussions and available ECoC materials, an issue paper will be written and made available on the CULPOL's website for the purposes of an international scientific conference to be held in late spring 2017.