

International Summer Music Festival “Nei Suoni dei Luoghi”

Background

The International Summer Music Festival "Nei Suoni dei Luoghi" (In the Sounds of Places) was initiated and founded by Progetto Musica, the Musicians' Association of Friuli Venezia Giulia. It is administered by 9 professionals with a great deal of international experience.

The main goals of the Festival are to foster cultural and environmental development and tourism through music and to establish partnerships and networks between the cities/towns in Italy and the Western Balkans. In addition to concerts, the Festival has developed a series of side activities such as workshops, educational programmes, exhibitions and conferences. The purpose of such activities is to raise awareness of the potential of music to become an economic resource contributing to sustainable development and tourism in smaller cities/towns.

How it works

The Festival takes place in 7 countries and in 77 cities. The majority are small cities of rather unknown historical, architectural, naturalistic and gastronomical heritage located in Italy and in countries of the Western Balkan region surrounding the Adriatic Sea (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania). The breakdown of cities is as follows: Italy (45), Austria (1), Slovenia (3), Croatia (5), Serbia (6), Montenegro (2), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2), and Albania (13). The main target groups are: local musicians, local cultural institutions and organizations, local administration, local public and private sector.

The main support for the Festival was provided by the Italian Government and the EU Interreg III A programme; the most important EU Programme providing support for Adriatic cross-border cooperation. Other partners were: the Central European Initiative (CEI), governmental institutions and NGOs and local communities and organizations in the individual countries of the Western Balkans.

The main targets of INTERREG III were regions and municipalities, though other public bodies could participate. The programme supported inter-regional cooperation between public authorities from regions across the entire EU territory and neighbouring countries. Some projects included partners from outside Europe, just like in case of the project "Nei Suoni dei Luoghi". However, only partners from EU Member States were eligible to access ERDF funds. Those from non-EU countries needed to use their own national funds, or, where appropriate, other EU funds such as PHARE, TACIS and MEDA, to support their participation in IIC operations.

From 2004-2007, the BalkanKult Foundation was engaged as a partner of Progetto Musica organizing/coordinating many of the concerts in the various participating cities in Serbia and Montenegro e.g. Belgrade, Nis, Zajecar, Smederevo, Sremska Mitrovica, Pancevo, Bar and Perast. The involvement of this regional foundation helped to facilitate side activities such as visits of municipal level delegations from Italy to Serbia and Albania to consider projects such as joint tourism presentations. A series of workshops were organized in Serbia, Croatia and Albania on issues of city level networking and the role of music in cultural and rural tourism.

All the workshops and conferences were attended by the Progetto Musica's representatives and the delegations of the Italian municipalities involved in the project. Their mobility was financially supported by the Italian Government and INTERREG (ERDF Funds).

Results

On average, 70 concerts are performed each year involving ca. 450 musicians from each country. Visitor attendance figures show that more than 10 000 people have taken part in the Festival.

Intensive bilateral artistic exchange developed. One of the most important effects has been the improved relationship between countries in the Western Balkan region (especially those with a history of recent conflict: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania).

Apart from cultural and artistic collaboration, the result of this project is development of the initiatives for improving the economic cooperation, because the festival represented a unique opportunity for the tourist workers and businessmen to meet each other, which enables the evaluation of smaller cities that have an important cultural heritage.

The project initiated mobility of artists (musicians) as its purpose was to make connections between the towns by organizing touring concerts. In this respect, development of artists' mobility was inherent part of the project, although it was more intensive on Italian part, as it was financially supported by Interreg. Mobility of artists from non-EU countries of Western Balkans did not have this support, but was financed by these states' ministries of culture, regional governments and municipalities. Bridging the regions through the project did not have any political context and was not institutionalized with the bilateral intergovernmental agreements, but was based on connecting small towns having ancient cultural heritage in common which was seen as resource in promoting interregional cooperation in the field of cultural tourism.

The most important factor for this project was funding from the INTERREG III; an EU-funded programme that used to help Europe's regions form partnerships to work together on common projects and promotes inter-regional cooperation. It was designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union. INTERREG was financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which is part of the Structural Funds. INTERREG IIIA focused on cross-border co-operation emphasising the balanced and sustainable development of the EU territory, in line with the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) emphasised the balanced and sustainable development of the EU territory, in line with the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

The overall objective of III was to improve the effectiveness of policies and instruments for regional development, mainly through exchange of experience, know-how and information.

Partnerships could also be based on regions having something in common, such as similar economies or geographies (such as mountainous or coastal areas, ancient cultural heritage) or the need to tackle similar problems (such as climate protection or flood prevention).

INTERREG III ran until 2006. Opportunities for EU-funded inter-regional co-operation and for exchange and transfer of experience more generally, changed in the new funding period. The Commission's proposals for a reformed Cohesion Policy for 2007-2013 includes continued support for inter-regional co-operation, though the precise mechanisms for this have not yet been agreed.

The evaluation of the overall project consists of a set of interlinked evaluations, most of them of thematic nature, which will be carried out between now and the end of 2009.

As for the Balkankult Foundation's effects, cultural life in the minor cities throughout Serbia has been considerably enriched. Numerous side activities resulted in bilateral and multilateral expert

visits with the purpose of networking towns and exchanging experiences in cultural tourism development.

The Festival's programme and side activities that took place in Serbia and Montenegro were largely present in the national and particularly local media (newspapers, radio, TV).

Source

Project website: <http://www.neisuonideiluoghi.it/2008/it/news.htm>

Balkankult website: <http://www.balkankult.org>

Interreg Programme website: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/interreg3/index_it.htm and <http://www.interregiii.org.uk/articleiicg.shtml>

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