

CZ-CULTURE

ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT 2021: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Programme Culture ran for a third year in the Czech Republic in 2021. So far, we have had 64 projects selected the previous year in four open calls (*“Arts and Cultural Criticism”*; *“Capacity Building of Umbrella Associations, Networks and Platforms”*; *“Contemporary Arts”*; *“Revitalization of Movable and Immovable Cultural Heritage”*) that went into the implementation phase. In April 2021, a second modification of the Programme Agreement was approved (covering the increased allocation of the programme by EUR 1,75 million from the reserve of the EEA Grants Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and the programme development). The final allocation of the Programme is now EUR 35 million, including national co-financing.

The first cultural activities in soft artistic projects and public tenders including publicity events in cultural heritage projects took place throughout the year. To help the project promoters with smooth project implementation, the Programme Operator organized two online seminars for project promoters (in March and May 2021), which subsequently attracted a large online audience. Moreover, detailed instructions, guidelines and examples of publicity tools were created and published on the website. In 2021, there was already one completed project with a shorter implementation period *“iLi Lab of literary criticism”* by the project promoter Association for iLiteratura from the open call „Arts and Cultural Criticism“. As for the remaining open calls – the second round included three open calls in 2021. The second call within the *“Capacity Building of Umbrella Associations, Networks and Platforms”* was launched in April 2021 with the Selection Committee taking place in December 2021. 15 projects were recommended for support out of 18 submitted grant applications. The second round of the call *“Contemporary Arts”* was launched in May 2021. The selection Committee for 40 submitted grant applications will be held in January 2022. And within the theme Cultural Heritage the last (seventh) open call of the Programme aimed at *“Innovative Use of Movable and Immovable Cultural Heritage”* was announced in August 2021. 37 applications were submitted up to the deadline 1 November 2021 and the Selection Committee has been planned for 1Q 2022.

No laws that came into force had a negative impact on Programme Culture in 2021. Within the competence of the Ministry of Culture, the government of the Czech Republic adopted following laws: Act No. 94/2021 Coll., On Extraordinary Measures during the COVID-19 disease epidemic and on the amendment of certain related acts (so called “Pandemic Act), entered into force on 27 February 2021 and Act No. 284/2021 Coll., Act amending certain laws in connection with the adoption of the Construction Law. Within the framework of this Act an amendment to Act No. 20/1987 Coll., On State Monument Care, which responds to the new regulation of Construction Law was also approved.

Bilateral partnerships with Donor States were encouraged in all projects while preparing the grant application. At the moment, the Programme has 51 projects that are being implemented in the Donor State partnership with at least one Donor State partner. Since the projects had mostly started in spring and summer 2021, and because of the difficult travelling circumstances brought on by the epidemic situation, most of the planned bilateral activities and exchanges had to be postponed for next year or moved online and only a few results could be reported.

The pre-defined project (PDP) *“Building of a memorial to the victims of the Roma holocaust in Lety”* aimed at ensuring dignified commemoration of the victims of the Roma holocaust which is to be

implemented by the Museum of Romani Culture is delayed, especially due to the complexity of the overall project and lack of effective communication between stakeholders involved. Thanks to the regularly organized meetings with all stakeholders, the process has moved forward, the finalized grant application was officially submitted to the PO in December 2021 and the project contract is expected to be signed in February 2022. Despite the delay, the opening of the memorial is still planned in May 2023 and the deadline of project implementation in April 2024 will be met.

The publicity of the EEA Grants is secured both at the programme and project level. The website www.eeagrants.cz/culture has been used and continuously updated in Czech and the English language including new videos and recordings on YouTube under the "**Fondy EHP a Norska**" channel. A leaflet entitled, "Programme Culture in a nutshell" was prepared containing basic information and pictures from supported projects. Relevant information about the Culture Programme is also available on social media (Facebook/Instagram). A private "EEA CZ - Culture Publicity Group" was created on Facebook for the staff of the key Programme stakeholders. The Culture Programme campaign running from May till August 2021 was implemented with the aim to increase general awareness about the Culture Programme and its mission, and indeed, higher number of Facebook followers occurred immediately. Due to the COVID-19 situation, the main tools used were primarily online media such as the website and Facebook.

Lessons and experience learned from the first round of Open Calls were used while preparing the second round of Open Calls. More flexibility in the design of project activities was allowed in connection with the COVID-19 so that they are easily adjustable to the pandemic measures valid at the time of their implementation, and planned results could be achieved.

The overall risk of the programme has not changed in 2021 as some partial risks were mitigated and eliminated. However, in addition to the persistent risk connected with the COVID-19 situation, a new significant risk has been identified - "Increased prices of construction materials, unavailability of construction workers and high inflation". The rising prices in construction have mostly impacted the projects in the area of cultural heritage, but high inflation affects almost every project. The Programme Operator is helping the project promoters to find potential savings in project budgets (for example savings in travel costs as planned expenditures in this area might not be fully spent due to the travel restrictions and epidemiological situation, etc...) and at the same time projects are looking for possible funds from other sources (municipalities, state support).