

CZ-CULTURE

ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT 2020: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Programme Culture is at the start of the project implementation following the signature of the Programme Agreement in 2019 and its preparation phase. Thanks to the extended open call deadlines reflecting the COVID-19 pandemic the potential applicants had enough time to evaluate possible effects on planned project activities and their timing and to find a partner from the Donor States. For applicants from open calls the Programme Partners (Ministry of Culture and Arts and Theatre Institute) organized two seminars in cooperation with the Programme Operator (January 2020). The three open calls in the area: *“Arts and Cultural Criticism”*, *“Capacity Building of Umbrella Associations, Networks and Platforms”* and *“Contemporary Arts”* were closed after postponed deadline due to the pandemic situation till 15 April 2020. The open call in the supported area *“Revitalization of movable and immovable cultural heritage”* was closed after postponed deadline due to the pandemic situation till 30 April 2020. As expected and based on the experience from the previous period EEA Grants 2009-2014, the interest in the area Cultural Heritage was immense and the given allocation (18,76 mil EUR) covered only 13 % of the requested funding, so many projects of high quality and importance could not be supported. Altogether 245 applications were received within four supported areas. 235 applications passed formal and eligibility check and 56 projects were selected by the Selection Committees that took place in August and November 2020. 8 more projects from the reserve list in the area of Contemporary Arts will be supported after the increase of allocation from the reserve of the EEA Grants Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021 in the amount of 1 750 000 EUR is processed.

In connection with the COVID - 19 pandemic, the government of the Czech Republic adopted crisis measures that have an adverse effect (among others) on culture as a whole. The following laws for culture have been adopted in 2020 to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus epidemic: Act No. 247/2020 Coll., On certain measures to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus epidemic known as SARS CoV-2 on cultural events, and Act No. 448/2020 Coll., Amending Act No. 247/2020 Coll., setting the same conditions for organizers of cultural events and customers, which were introduced by Act No. 247/2020 Coll., for the next time period. The laws allow the organizer of cultural events to postpone the refund of the already paid entrance and will be cancelled due to the epidemic (applies to cultural events with an expected date until 31 October 2020 and after the amendment until 30 September 2021).

As an overarching objective of the EEA grants is to strengthen the bilateral relations between the Czech Republic and Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, all projects in the open calls were encouraged to include partners from the Donor States. Getting the partners directly involved in projects was interesting for most of the projects since 70 % received applications were in bilateral cooperation. As a result of four closed calls 44 out of 56 approved projects will be implemented in the partnership with at least one entity from the Donor States (with 7 more

projects in bilateral cooperation after the increase of allocation from the reserve of the EEA Grants is processed).

Museum of Romani Culture as a Project Promoter is preparing the proposal for the pre-defined project "Building of a memorial to the victims of the Roma holocaust in Lety – Písek Museum of Romani Culture" addressing the cultural heritage of Roma. A contract with the landscape-architectural competition winner for the design of the new memorial is being finalized.

General information about the Programme Culture including information about the EEA grants is available on the website (www.eeagrants.cz/culture), both in the Czech and English language. The open calls were accompanied by intense short media campaign for potential applicants reaching at least 500 000 people (for example video spot in cinemas seen by 53 000 visitors - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1XO0gSL8i0>). Campaign introducing selected projects will start in 2021. The Programme Operator publishes regularly videos and recordings on youtube under the "**Fondy EHP a Norska**" channel, relevant information is also available on social media (Facebook/Instagram).

In response to the lessons learned from the programme development, especially from the evaluation procedure of the closed calls, the gained experience will help and be useful with the preparation and setting up of the remaining open calls.

The overall risk of the programme has not changed as some partial risks were mitigated or eliminated but simultaneously there are some new challenges regarding the Covid-19 pandemic that not only the culture sector will have to face in the future period. The Programme Operator will use flexible approach to allow the necessary projects modifications and to communicate with the project promoters regularly in order to enable the smooth project implementation and to reduce the possible negative impacts on the projects from the epidemic situation. There has also been a delay in verification of applications in open calls Contemporary Arts and Revitalization of Cultural Heritage due to orderly administration of state aid rules in line with EC General Block Exemption 651/2014 (GBER). This will result in later signature of grant contracts and postponing project implementation start. Despite the delay, there is still a sufficient period for project implementation including the possibility of its prolongation in order to complete the project within the final date of eligibility.