

Strategy for development of art festivals in border areas

(Republic of Karelia (Russia), Northern Karelia (Finland))

Strategy for development of art festivals in border areas (hereinafter “the Strategy”) has been developed within the implementation framework of the Russian – Finnish project “Big Music for small cities” KA9031 financed by the Programme of cross border cooperation Russia – EU “Karelia”. The main goal of the project is to improve collaboration practices in the field of music art presentation and promotion through cross-border capacity building activities and cross-sectorial initiatives on both sides of the border. The project is implementing in partnership of the Directorate of the festival and cultural events of the Republic of Karelia (Leading Partner) and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Karelia, Budgetary institution “the Karelian state philharmonic” and the Department of Cultural services of Joensuu city (Finland)/

Activities of the project “Big Music for small cities” target on

- enhancing networks of cultural operators working in the field of music art presentation and promotion through best practices exchange, training and joint marketing strategy
- improving professional expertise and practical tools of related cultural sector creative companies through program development assistance
- obtaining practical experience of implementing initiatives based on cross-border and cross-sectorial cooperation

The “art festival” is seen as a public event comprehending wide variety of arts and might ground on their synthesis; it has got clear structure and implements within certain period of time, aims at promotion of arts in local communities and guests of the area and is endowed with certain potential for its social economic progress.

This strategy specifies main trends for art festival progress to raise their social, cultural, and economic importance in areal development.

The strategy bears applicable nature and has been developed for 5 year period, it contains current situation analysis and specifies objectives and concrete steps towards their achievement, including recommendations for art festivals to arranged in cross-border areas of the Republic of Karelia (Russian Federation) and Northern Karelia (Republic of Finland) (hereinafter “cross-border area”). The strategy is a tool for social economic development of the areas by growing festival movement in cross-border area.

1. Assessment of festival activities in cross-border area

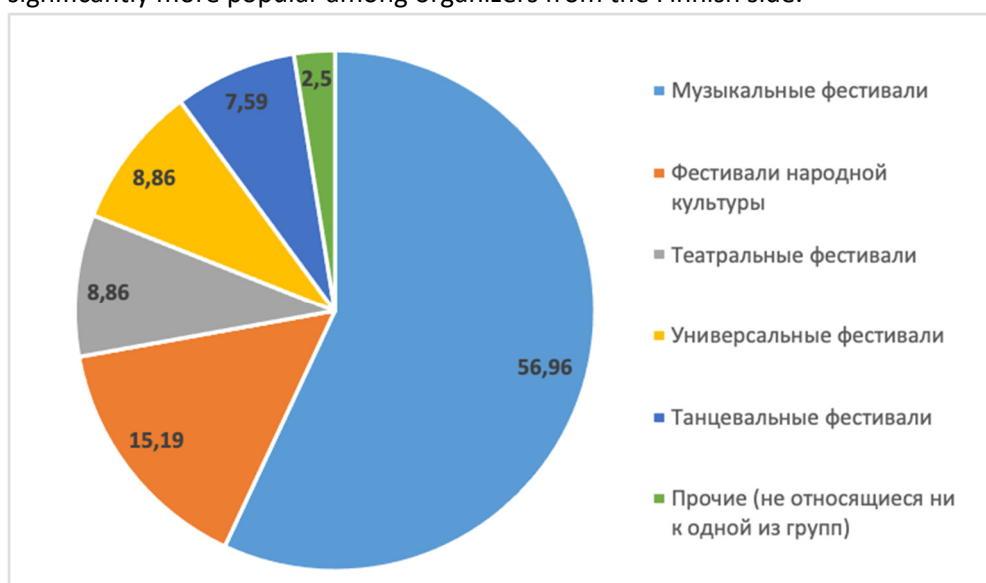
Rise of popularity and attendance at objects and activities of culture before pandemic of COVID-19 in March 2020 had been an obvious trend. The World tourist flow grew more than twice within 2008 – 2019 and certain cities like Venetia, Dubrovnik and others had to limit it. Domestic tourism in Russia grew for more than 70% within the same period. Moreover, the further three times growth of cultural events’ attendance in Russia anticipates within the period till 2030.

Next criteria for development of festival activity allow considering it as an enabler starting positive changes in social - economic, and cultural spheres:

- Make of favorable conditions for using creative potential of cities and settlements, art groups and citizens of cross-border area.
- Turning of creative industries and elements of national-cultural potential into significant factors of social – economic development of cross-border area.

- Assistance to involvement of local people especially youth in art movement.
- Facilitation to design of the unique Image for border regions as areas attractive for art and art-activities and their promotion to interregional and international levels.
- Attraction of tourists and visitors to cross-border area.

At the same time making special favorable regime for festival movement (festival ecosystem) as one of the system and areal development oriented methods still is a rather rare occurrence (unlike in development of festivals). At least there are no official strategies for development of festival movement in the Russian segment of internet. Furthermore, when running primary survey among officers of municipalities located in the project implementation area there has been revealed absence of common understanding what “art festival” means. If the Finnish side (the Northern Karelia region) has performed 20 events, and all of them have had general nature, then more than half of 79 events performed by the Republic of Karelia (Russia) have happened to be either child specialized contest-festivals, arranged for professional and pedagogic purposes, or festivals where art has been just the formal component. Drawing on study results “Festival palette of cross-border regions” (Annex 1) it might be admitted that in cross-border areas both in Russia (Republic of Karelia) and in Finland (Northern Karelia), there has formed the system of art festivals comprising local traditions (festivals with their own “familiar face”) and international ambitions of organizers. Overwhelming majority of organizers (over 90% on both sides the border) have committed to develop their festivals further. Analysis of the designed “Calendar of Festivals” (Annex 2) shows that the major share of 79 festivals in the Republic of Karelia falls to musical festivals – 56,96% , then on popularity, come folk culture festivals – 15,19%, theater festivals – 8,86%, dance festivals – 7,59%, the share of “universal” festivals (variety of arts) is not big – 8,86% and two festivals (Barents ecological film festival and contest of young journalists “XXI century. Time and we”) have subsumed to none of the categories (Illustration 1). Concept of “universal” festivals (73,3%) is significantly more popular among organizers from the Finnish side.



Light blue – musical festivals

Orange – folk culture festivals

Grey – theater festivals

Yellow – universal festivals

Dark blue – dancing festivals

Green – other festivals

Illustration 1. Share of different categories of festivals organized in the Republic of Karelia, in their total quantity

55,7% of festivals run in the southern, central parts of the Republic of Karelia and in Petrozavodsk area. 34,18% of festivals run directly in border municipalities (Kalevala region, Kostomuksha city region, Lahdenpohja, Loukhi, Muesersky, Sortavala regions) Illustration 2.



Illustration 2. Distribution of festivals in the territory of the Republic of Karelia

Blue – southern and central parts of Karelia and Petrozavodsk

Orange – border municipalities

Grey – municipalities of eastern and northern parts of Karelia

Regarding seasons of festival arrangement, the highest peak of activity comes in July – August (40%) in Finland, seasonal distribution in the Republic of Karelia is also uneven: winter season – 13,92%, spring season – 44,3%, summer season 15,9% autumn season – 12,66%. Four festivals (5,06%) run untied to any season and a month. 60% of them happen in spring and summer, since March till August (share of July – August is 24,1% it is lower than in Northern Karelia (Finland)) Illustration 3.

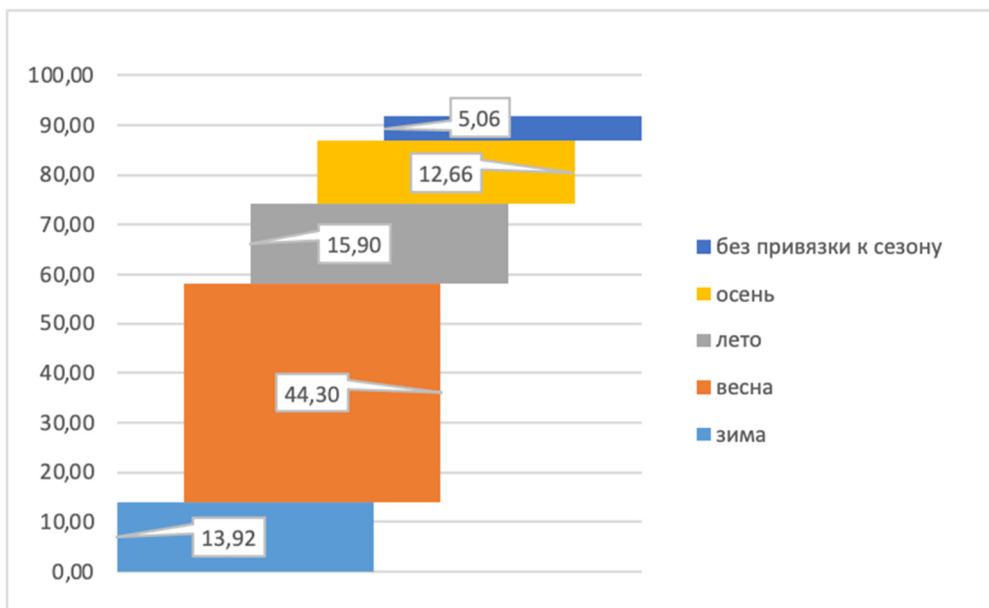


Illustration 3. Distribution of festivals by year seasons

Dark blue untied to any season

Yellow – autumn

Grey – winter

Orange – summer

Light blue - winter

Festivals are more universal with regard to variety of art kinds and forms in the Finnish side and they run mostly in the open air during warm seasons. Festival organizers in Finland more actively use modern marketing technologies for promotion in Internet and mass media, more efficiently attract tourists from other areas, and non-commercial organizations become their main partners. Russian art festivals often specialize on short list of art kinds and forms and draw upon professional cultural ensembles and alongside with it they are local (municipal) or regional.

2. Key issues in development of festival activity in cross-border area

Working meetings conducted with representatives of partner organizations in the framework of the project “Big music for small cities”, CBC Programme Russia – EU “Karelia” wherein discussed essential issues and inquiries addressed by art festivals from cross-border area and results of research work “Festival palette of cross-border regions” allow summarizing the following key issues in development of festival activity in the Northern Karelia (Finland) and the Republic of Karelia (Russia):

1. Limited cooperation between festivals exists on both sides of the border; cooperation between festival organizations is also limited. It is linked with high competition between festivals struggling for financial support. Festivals of the Northern Karelia apply for support to one and the same sponsors; festivals of the Republic of Karelia participate in the same calls for receiving grant funds or compete in receiving budget subsidies for festival arrangement. One more thing that explains the minimal cooperation between the festivals is that they often fall under different genres and art directions. This reason also leads to the fact that close cooperation between artistic teams of most festivals has no sense. Moreover, there is no cooperation between festivals of the Northern Karelia and the Republic of Karelia and it results in mismatching of their schedule arrangement (the common Calendar of festivals does not exist), exchange of art groups and artists does not function, spectators haven't got any coordinated logistics. In fact, citizens and festival teams of

the Northern Karelia and the Republic of Karelia haven't got any information about festivals of each other. At the same time the background for cooperation is available and 60% of Finnish organizers and 62,9% Russian organizers commit to incorporate into new system of festivals. Here it should be noted as well that art festivals are not integrated into organizations which could expand the information realm, generate festivals data into a joint calendar. There is no such organization in the Republic of Karelia. However, in the Northern Karelia there are at least two web-resources where one can find a joint festivals calendar: <https://www.visitjoensuu.fi/en-FI> and Visit Karelia (<https://www.visitkarelia.fi/en/>; <https://www.visitkarelia.fi/ru/>).

2. One of the main issues is lack of marketing policies applicable to art festivals. The most obvious problematic situation worked out for marketing support of festivals in the Republic of Karelia. About 60% of festivals haven't got any WEB pages, they are not presented in Internet, as well as they haven't got any resources for creating those WEB pages; 8,6% of festival organizers are satisfied with their WEB pages. At the same time organizers of almost one third of festivals (31,4%) of the Republic of Karelia practically do not make any informational and promotional campaign. In general, as well as in the whole Republic of Karelia there is no marketing conception for support and promotion of festival activity. Though among Northern Karelia festival organizers the request for development and arrangement of new informational and promotional (marketing) campaign for festivals leads with 80%.
3. At present, data collection is not carried and social and economic effects of festivals benefiting territory and business are not analyzed. System for statistic and informational support and indicators for running monitoring do not exist. Grounding on these data one could tell about efficiency of festivals for developing local communities, obtaining economical profit for the areas of festival location. But so far there is no statistical data, therefore there is no coordination and for a total it leads to uneven geographic, seasonal and thematic distribution of festival activities in the cross-border area. One more result is that nearly all festivals in the Republic of Karelia haven't got any sustainable system for financial support.
4. Crisis of creative ideas and demand for definition of actual thematic niches for festivals especially for open-air festivals exists. Festival movement must be a tool of regional marketing because festivals reflect that has already been in the territory. With reference to previously mentioned, festivals need not only infrastructure and financial cushion, but the primary task is an idea of the festival, that is actual for the area and might attract spectators. Demand for creation (upgrade) of the unique image of the festival (orientation, mission, legends, identity/corporative style, and other) has been announced by festival organizers from both sides of the border of the cross-border area (Republic of Karelia – 65,7%), and from the Finnish side (Northern Karelia – 53,3%).
5. When considering a festival as a community of humans, the demand for different communication formats assembling representatives from different segments of social-economic and public activities on different stages of festival progress, becomes more significant. For example there has been formed the inquiry for strengthening cooperation between festival organizations and travel agencies. 60% of festival organizers in the Republic of Karelia and 46,7% of festival organizers in the Northern Karelia have highlighted in sociological study an importance of establishing sustainable partnerships between professional entities, business and non-commercial organizations (probably governmental bodies). Defined issues and inquiries haven't concerned constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, restrictions have seriously affected on arrangement of festivals within the period since April 2020 until the end of 2021 at international and national and regional levels.

3. Strategic map of festival activity development in the cross-border area

Strategic map is an abstract method of presenting specific activity sphere (in this particular case – festival activity) and a strategy for its development. This abstraction assists to focus on those priorities that are the most important for transferring festival activity to the new capacity that allows considering it as one of the high priority trends and significant factors of social-economic and cultural development of cross-border area. The main assignment for the strategic map is to visualize the strategy for festival activity development driving it to the certain succession of projects and activities to be implemented in the framework of strategic trends. Visualization improves the process of consultation and implementation of the strategy.

Mission of the festival activity development in the Republic of Karelia and cross-border area is transformation of festival activity into an instrument for raising attractiveness and image of the area and into a valid factor of social-economic and cultural development of the cross-border area.

Strategic objective for the festival activity development in the Republic of Karelia and cross-border area shall be creation of the environment and terms for development of festival activity in the cross-border area and support for initiatives relating to arrangement of festivals and support, development and promotion of functioning and newly created festivals in the cross-border area. Implementation of core values, mission and achievement of the strategic objective will effect in the framework of the following

Strategic directions:

- Strategic direction – “creation of ground conditions and infrastructure for support of arrangement and staging art festivals” assumes strengthening infrastructural provision of festival activity and a system for support of festival arrangement by means of a resource and consulting centre of festival activity to be established therefore, and creation of the corporate facilities and equipment center for using festival, exhibition and concert equipment and network of companies offering it, development of production center network and an association of professional organizers of festivals, establishing a foundation for fundraising and festival activity support.
- Strategic direction “expanding the quantity of festivals and facilitating private creative initiatives on arrangement of art festivals” assumes creation and launching mechanisms for stimulation, motivation and intensification of festival activity, securing growth of “critical mass” of initiatives on arrangement of festivals owing to development of a system for educational and awareness raising activities in a festival activities field, sustaining youth creativity and other age, professional, social and ethno-confessional groups of citizens, supporting national cultures and folk art, creation of a system for promoting creative teams.
- Strategic direction “development of festival networking” assumes securing network collaboration of subjects participating in creation, explanation, planning and arrangement of festivals, and also creation of common professional community (cluster) in the field of festival activity by means of forming a system of cooperation for festival organizers, creation of the corporate festival calendar integrated into the European festival calendar, creation of the common data base of festival locations, sponsors, partner-companies, system of festival and transport and tourist logistics, creation and promotion of partnership network of festival activity, establishment of association of festival activity grounded on joining efforts of professional and creative unions and alliances like the Union of Artists, Cinematography and Authors Guilds, ethno-cultural centres, military history clubs and organizations, theater and concert centres.
- Strategic direction “creation of multifunctional IT-platform for festival activity” assumes creation of digital platforms providing acceleration of communication and simplifying procedures of organization, approval and arrangement of festivals by means of
 1. Creation of a mobile app “art festival navigator” focused on wide range of visitors (spectators/users of the festival content). This app will connect international festival

database, a festival calendar, and online booking of tickets and services and festival logistics system for drawing an optimal route to different festivals, and a system for prompt informing about festivals and services.

2. Creation of a professional IT-platform for planning and arrangement of festivals with stepwise algorithm of organization and planning of a festival including access to databases containing participants, partners, sponsors, producers and their selection dependent on themes, and peculiarities of the certain festival.

Strategic directions have been specified in the strategic map of festival activity development in cross-border area and in the Republic of Karelia (Annex 3). The next level specifying the Strategy is a road map of implementation of projects and activities displayed in the strategic map of festival activity development in the Republic of Karelia (Annex 4). Estimated financial capacity for strategy realization has been grounded therein and it concludes approximately 200 million Rubles in the Russian side of the cross-border area. The Annex 5 performs the festival design matrix, the framework thereof necessary key planning and arrangement parameters have been tied into one system in accordance with different types of festival specialization. When implementing the strategy for festival development it is necessary to take into consideration existing legal frames, regulating activities in the spheres of culture and public events (Annex 6).

Implementation of the strategy for art festival development in the cross-border area shall result in

- Creation of the consolidated festival cluster involving festival organizers, their spectators and creative teams, travel agencies and logistic companies and artisans;
- Creation of the festival ecosystem covering integrated informational resources and databases (creative teams, artists, festival locations, partners, equipment etc.), corporate calendar of festival activity, online booking and ticket selling and transfer service aggregator and other services, with an access to them via the specialized WEB portal;
- Legending art festivals that includes combination of festival themes and national celebrations, historical locations and annual events of international, national and regional themes, etc.;
- Widening cooperation between festival organizers and travel agencies, adjoining tour packages and tours to the international festival calendar, joint production of "festival" tour packages;
- Expanding festival functionality by means of combining with other trends and themes of activities like youth, scientific, ecological, sport, professional-artisan activities;
- Forming a system of marketing services for facilitating festival activities (inter alia more precise positioning of festivals definition and specification of the target audience (target market), development of instruments for enlarging target audience, the system of integrated promotion of festivals);
- Diversifying financial sources for festival activity and use of new instruments for acquiring new financial resources (including crowdsourcing, fundraising, funding instruments, public private partnership etc.)