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ELEUSIS 2021 'EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE': AN IMPACTS ASSESSMENT PLAN

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Référence à la session / reference to the session

S9 - The 'European Capital of Culture' initiative and the new urban challenges

Résumé / Summary

In November 2016, the Greek city of Eleusis was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture for the year 2021, undertaking a big challenge which involves, on the one hand, meeting the expectations and requirements of this European initiative and, on the other hand, seizing the opportunity for urban development and destination promotion.

The research study by the LA.RE.TOUR (Laboratory of Tourism Planning, Research and Policy) of the Department of Planning and Development of the University of Thessaly proposes an Impacts Assessment Plan, taking into account the Eleusis's new Cultural Strategy, which is to enhance the city's cultural heritage and to introduce a sustainable urban model. The paper aims to identify the main effects of hosting the ECoC in order for Eleusis to achieve a better integrated planning, according to its strengths and its development goals. In particular, the long term, cultural, social and economic impacts are investigated, while the methodology for evaluating them is analysed.

The ECoC title will give the city the necessary boost to achieve a image renaissance of its image and to reposition itself as a cultural hub, creating numerous opportunities in different fields (arts, tourism, infrastructure, transportation, accommodation, creative industries).

In addition, as a mega cultural event, it aims to raise the international profile of Eleusis and its region, to increase the number of international visitors, to intensify the interest of local audiences in cultural activities and to foster self-awareness of citizens, civic pride and social cohesion of the community.

As far as the evaluation strategy is concerned, timely monitoring is very important and in the case of Eleusis a 10 year evaluation plan, running up to 2026, is proposed permitting an overall survey and depiction of the potential and actual dynamics of this important cultural event.

A preliminary set of objectives has been outlined as part of the Cultural Strategy and their correlation to several impact examples from the present and future Eleusis21 activities will provide a large opportunity for research that will demonstrate the progress over time in a variety of fields such as culture (including image), economy and society.

In this approach, quantitative and qualitative methodologies are used to be incorporated into an overall evaluation of the ECoC, which will combine the findings from multiple data sources. To ensure comparability a set of key indicators will be used, taking account of baselines and milestones defined in this research study.

The most important lasting impact of the event is the establishment of structures and networks. The ECoC title can bring about important shifts within the local and the central government as far as the cultural domain is concerned. It can also lead to the introduction of new ways of working, new partnerships, and new activity platforms, likely to be sustained in the future.

The ECoC initiative is a mature international event capable of shaping trends in major cultural event hosting, but examining its real value requires a well-coordinated assessment. The issue of evaluation is linked closely to the issue of sustainability. Evaluation is essential to assess the annual results, the projects that should be continued and the priorities that require support, and for these reasons it should be conducted in an independent and expert manner.

The Impacts Assessment Plan took into consideration reviews published by the European Commission over the recent years, several studies conducted by the past ECoC Cities, as well as relevant literature on sustainable tourism and urban development.

The research study, outlined in this paper, foresees a monitoring framework-tool, taking into consideration objectives, indicators, time periods and various data sources, resulting finally to a balanced strategic planning of intervention and evaluation.

Lessons learned will be transparent and accessible to all stakeholders, contributing to the creation of a sustainable legacy for Eleusis and the dissemination of the results at a European level.

Key words

European Capital of Culture, Eleusis 21, Impacts Assessment Plan, sustainable tourism, urban development

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