

Festival palette of cross-border regions:

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

(Study report, 2021)

The Study “Festival palette of cross-border regions” has been made within the implementation framework of the project “Big Music for small cities” financed by the Programme of cross border cooperation Russia – EU “Karelia”. It was carried in May – July 2021 and concluded by a questionnaire of representatives of 50 organizers of festivals being arranged in the cross-border regions of the Republic of Karelia (Russia; 35 festivals) and the Northern Karelia (Finland; 15 festivals). In the side of the Republic of Karelia the interviewed festivals were selected for the study according to the following criteria: minimal three-year experience in festival arrangement; musical art priority, aggregation of several venues opened for citizens and having tourist potential into one festival. Thus, “young” and non-music festivals, and well-distributed children’s ad-hoc contest-festivals having professional-pedagogical objectives were excluded from the preliminary list of over 70 festivals. From the side of Finland interviewed festivals were selected by the geographic point, those that arranged in the border region – the Northern Karelia (totally 20 festivals, and 15 of them were surveyed).

The questionnaire is enclosed.

Study results

Geographical spread, experience and seasonality of festivals’ arrangements.

22,9% of examined participants from the Russian side run in the capital of the Republic of Karelia – Petrozavodsk; 65,7% run in one of the municipal regions of Karelia; 11,4% - run either in Petrozavodsk or move from year to year to one of the municipality region. Among festivals from the Finnish side 46,7% are held in Joensuu, the capital of the Northern Karelia, and the same amount (46,7%) is in another municipality of the Northern Karelia, and 6,6% either in both locations or “migrate”.

By experience of arrangement, the festivals have distributed as follows:

25,7% of not more than 5-year experience in the Republic of Karelia (Russia), and 33,3% of festivals in the Northern Karelia (Finland);

Between 6 and 15-year experience – 45,7% (26,7% in the Northern Karelia, Finland);

Over 15 –year experience – 28,6% (40% in the Northern Karelia, Finland);

Referring to seasonality of festivals, the Finnish side shows the peak in July – August (40%), the Russian side reveals more even spreading though a bit more is held in the first half of a year, than in the second.

Therefore, Russian art festivals are less centralized judging by location and season, but it needs to recon significantly larger area and number of inhabitants of the Russian Karelia to compare with the Northern Karelia of Finland. At the same time larger number of Finnish festivals is older (exist more than 15 years).

Strong points of art festivals of the Republic of Karelia (Russia)

94,3% of art festival organizers that have taken part in the study, intend to develop them further.

71,4% of organizers are confident of recognizability of their festivals (regular topic, mission, legend etc.).

68,6% of festival organizers promote them, 45,7% of festivals gain informational and advertising campaigns, on municipal level, 42,9% receive support on the regional level, and 20% - on the national and international levels.

45,7% of representatives of organizers announce annually updated festival conception (another 22,9% tell that this update is highly likely available). 51,4% tell that the staff of participants forms on festival conception. 62,9% of festivals are ad hoc (evidently one or two art forms prevail). At least some festival venues (57,1%) have got entrance tickets. Different financial sources like budgetary, commercial and private are in use when arranging festivals (51,4%). 80% of festivals have got arrangements committees, that represent interests of different festival partners and participants. When arranging festivals sustainable partnerships have formed first of all among budgetary institutions – 60%, with private persons 54,2%, between governmental structures and governmental levels 51,4%. Festival organizers of the Republic of Karelia mention

open air festival venues – 42,9%

special educational or communicative programmes (master classes, training courses, “round tables” etc.);

production of souvenirs with festival labels – 34,3%

special selling spots – 25,7%

special tour packages (tours) – 25,7%

evident share of spectators (roughly more than 10%) consists of visitors from other areas (other districts, regions, countries), has been mentioned by organizers of more than a quarter of festivals (25,7%)

Problems and directions of art festival development in the Republic of Karelia (Russia)

The most evident problematic situation appeared in informational support of festivals: 60% (!) of festivals haven't got neither WEB pages nor resources for their creation; only 8,6% of surveyed festival organizers have complied with their functioning WEB pages. At the same time nearly one third of festivals (31,4%) do not arrange any promotional campaigns in practice.

Special conditions for disabled people among guests or participants are available only in 14,3% of festivals.

About 45,7% of organizers haven't got any experience in fundraising (grants, budgetary programmes etc.) for festival arrangements. Another 8,6% of organizers have got negative experience in it.

34,3% of festivals form the entry list either spontaneously or it does not change from year to year.

Partnerships of festival organizers with non-commercial organizations were performed least of all (only 22,9% of surveyed mentioned that).

Organizers themselves marked the following positions among the most perspective directions and festival development methods:

65,7% - creation (upgrade) of the unique festival brand (regular topic, mission, legend brand style etc.);

62,9% - incorporation of a festival in the system of festivals of the Republic of Karelia, Russia, or international (areal, seasonal, thematic etc.);

60% - use (enhancement) of new financial sources (applications for grants or budgetary programmes, use of new entry tickets etc.);

60% - forming sustainable partnerships with professional communities, business and non-commercial organizations;

57,1% - exchange of experience among festival organizers;

51,4% development of annually updated conception (topic, venue, participants etc.);

45,7% - making tour packages based on festivals;

42,9% - development of special educational programmes for participants;

40% - arrangement and holding informational – promotional (marketing) campaigns for festivals;

Summarizing information about art festivals held in the Republic of Karelia (Russia) it is worth saying that the evident share thereof holds on the up to date rate , with most variety of methods raising attractiveness (recognizability of a festival, development of conception, good promotion, souvenir production, arrangement of paid services and selling spots, and other indicators). Though the demand for support of art festivals' development is quite large, and it bears multifaceted character but the weakest point is the WEB page situation.

One more obvious problem lays in negligence towards the needs of disabled people.

Strong points of art festivals in the Northern Karelia (Finland)

93,3% of the organizers have taken part in the survey plan further development of art festivals.

73,3% of the organizers have been confident of recognizability of their festivals (regular topic, mission, legend etc.).

Only 20% of the organizers have been confident of the annually updated conception, and another 40% have chosen the answer “more likely than not” .

The pool of participants is formed on conception in 53,3% of the festivals.

73,3% of the festivals have got WEB pages in the Northern Karelia; and another 13,3% of festivals will make them soon. It is important to mention that 72,7% of existing festival WEB pages will have qualitative upgrade soon.

Informational and promotional campaigns for the festivals of the Northern Karelia run

On the municipal (local) level for 86,7% of festivals;

On the regional level for 66,7% of festivals;

On national or international level for 53,3% of festivals;

Entry tickets to the festival or certain venues exist in two thirds (66,7%) of the art festivals in the Northern Karelia;

Not less than 60% of the festivals combine different sources for financing and 53,3% - use funds gained from fundraising.

For organizing a festival 80% of festivals make arrangement committees entitled to combine interests of different partners. 80% of festival organizers conclude the most sustainable partnerships with noncommercial organizations.

73,3% of festivals held in the Northern Karelia are universal i.e. they perform different arts. Also the festival organizers mark available open air festival venues in 53,3% of the Northern Karelia festivals; special educational or communicative programmes like master classes, training courses, "round tables" etc. in 40% of festivals;

Special selling spots in 26,6% of festivals;

53,3% of festivals provide conditions for disabled people

Evident share of spectators (roughly more than 10%) consists of visitors from other areas (other districts, regions, countries), has been mentioned by organizers of nearly a half of festivals (46,7%)

Problems and directions of art festival development in the Northern Karelia (Finland)

Judging by the collected responses, the art festival organizers of the Northern Karelia do not use production of souvenirs with festival brands and special tour packages (tours) for raising attractiveness.

40% of festivals do not update the annual conception in the Northern Karelia and another 40% of festivals do not change the pool of participants.

Organizers themselves marked the following positions among the most perspective directions and festival development methods:

80% - arrangement and holding informational – promotional (marketing) campaigns for festivals;

66,7 % - use (enhancement) of new financial sources (applications for grants or budgetary programmes, use of new entry tickets etc.);

60% - incorporation of a festival in the city (region) system of festivals;

53,3% - creation (upgrade) of the unique festival brand (regular topic, mission, legend brand style etc.);

46,7% - forming sustainable partnerships with professional communities, business and non-commercial organizations;

40% - development of annually updated conception (topic, venue, participants etc.);

In comparison with art festivals held in the Russian side border areas (Republic of Karelia) it is worth mentioning that festivals of the Northern Karelia (Finland)

- The stake is on the universal but not ad hoc character of an art festival;

- Marketing technologies (WEB pages, promotional and informational campaigns of higher rate,) are much more in use and that allows to attract evident share of visitors from other areas, regions and countries (46,7% of festivals, from the Russian side 25,7%);
- Non-commercial organizations act as key partners;

At the same time in the side of Finnish festivals there might appear an acute issue of their “Oldness” (decrease of renewability), and an attention must be paid to disuse of resources like production of souvenirs with a festival label and making tour packages.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The systems of art festivals that have turned out in cross border area both in Russia (region - Republic of Karelia) and in Finland (region - Northern Karelia) reflect local traditions (recognizable festivals) and international ambitions of organizers. The overwhelming majority of organizers (more than 90% in both sides of the border) intend to develop their festivals further.
2. Festivals of the Finnish side are universal from the art variety point and bear evident open air and summer feature. They use modern marketing technologies for promoting in Internet and mass media more actively and non-commercial organizations are their key partners. Art festivals of the Russian side often specialize on few arts and bear local (municipal) feature. Organizers in the Republic of Karelia ready to update festival conceptions more often and to learn more.
3. From the awareness and development points both organizers of the Republic of Karelia (Russia) and the Northern Karelia (Finland) ready to work on recognizability of their festivals, connect to new networks (communities) of festivals, learn to draw additional financial resources (first of all do fundraising), and make new sustainable partnerships with business, NCOs, government, professional communities etc.

With reference to presented conclusions, the following recommendations would offer:

- a. Educational programmes on previously mentioned topics would have a high demand among festival organizers in every side of the border and probably in certain forms there might be joint trainings of Russian and Finnish participants.
- b. Arrangement of special projects focused on creation of festival networks (systems) with different scales (municipal, regional, national, international) and in different themes, seasons, and what so ever specific characters will be useful and demanded;
- c. Festival organizers of the Republic of Karelia (Russia) need a programme for support of festival WEB pages’ creation and arrangement of informational and promotion campaigns for the festivals.