

Young people's attitudes towards the European Capital of Culture project

In this study I attempt to introduce young people's attitudes towards the European Capital of Culture project, their willingness to participate and how they could, with their creativity, contribute to the success of ECoC. I will outline these using empirical observations based upon our questionnaire survey made in 2007, supplementing them with the data of a survey conducted among young people (between 18 and 35) in Pécs at the beginning of 2009, further adding the results of yet another research, in which we collected data among university students in September 2009.

About the researches

The first survey, which is the main focus of the study was conducted by the Department of Sociology of University of Pécs. We carried out the research with the participation of our faculty students. About 600 self-completion survey questionnaires served as the basis of the analysis. The undergraduates of the Medical School, the Faculty of Business and Economics and the Faculty of Humanities filled in the questionnaires.

The research was carried out for three reasons. Firstly, to find out the extent of the knowledge the students had about the European Capital of Culture project and the extent of their interest in it. Secondly, we examined their thoughts and opinions about the probable effects of the project, and their confidence in its success. Thirdly, we asked them what they could or would do for the success of the project, with what kind of creativity they could contribute to the European Capital of Culture project and to what extent they would want to be involved in doing tasks even if it meant as volunteers.

The Sien Foundation and The „Pólusok” Social Science Association together realised the second survey in this topic in 2009 (Kákai – Vető – Tarrósy 2009). The prime goal of the research was to map young people's feelings, opportunities and experiences related to the ECoC. The sample of 399 participants represents the young population of Pécs according to gender, age and education. The data was taken in various districts of the town with the help of pollsters.

The third survey was also conducted by the Department of Sociology in 2009 among nearly 100 students, majoring in sociology and social studies.

The Department of Sociology places great emphasis on the importance of getting to know the students' opinions, because they are not just the recipients of the local cultural capital transmitted by the university, but they enrich it with their creativity, ideas, and with their open-mindedness.

Therefore we consider it very important to measure the opinion of the university students about the ECoC project. They could be a relevant target audience of the project - as a consequence of their age-group, and their number (there are more than 30000 students). They can be the main target group of the programmes and outings as participants, and they can enrich the project with their ideas and creativity. In addition, they can help visitors to form a good impression and positive judgment of the town by helping the tourists with information about how to get around the city, as most of them speak foreign languages. And they can also contribute to the information flow of the town: they can popularize the programmes with the help of their national and international connections.

Of course, this is a mutual relationship, because the youth and the students can not only contribute to the success of the ECoC, but they will also benefit from it by taking part in high-standard programmes, and they can enjoy the infrastructure afterwards, build national and international scientific connections, come to know foreign cultures etc.

The results of the researches

Interest of youth about ECoC

According to the data of 2007, 44 percent of the students of the examined faculties marked four or five on a five-level scale. So we can conclude, that more than two-fifths of the respondents are interested or very interested in the project, and altogether four-fifths of them (81.3%) are at least moderately concerned with the programmes of ECoC. We can state, that the students, who are residents of Pécs are more interested in the project, than those who only study here and do not have a permanent address in Pécs.

According to our experience, the majority (51 per cent) of students who filled in our questionnaire gather information about ECoC from the internet. Nearly one-third of them get their information in informal ways: from friends, acquaintances, while one-fourth of them turn to the local media, and almost the same proportion to the nationwide media. Slightly less than one-tenth of them gather information at the university.

We also analysed from where, what source the students would like to get information about the project. The collected data indicates that half of the respondents would like to find more at the university and on the internet. Approximately two-fifths of them would prefer to be informed about an event of such great significance by the nationwide media, and one-fourth of them from local media.

Table 1: From where, what source the students (would like to) get information

| Sources | Gather information 2007 | Would gather information 2007 |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| From the internet | 51,9% | 49,4% |
| From friends | 33,3% | 8,7% |
| From the local media | 26,7% | 28,9% |
| From the nationwide media | 22,5% | 39,0% |
| From the University | 8,2% | 48,5% |

The data which was collected in the beginning of 2009 is analogous with these results. They reflect that the internet together with personal connections (with friends and acquaintances) are the main sources of information for young people in regards to finding information about cultural programmes.

Accordingly, it is very important to pay special attention to the websites that advertise the programs and events. They should be well-organized, and frequently updated, because the internet serves as the main source of information for young people. The other important conclusion is that the students would also like to pick up information from the university about ECoC. Since the students want to gather information from the university and since the internet is a popular opportunity to get this, it would be desirable to use the university's website to inform the students about ECoC.

Based on our data we can conclude, that the university students have only slight information about the other ECoC towns. In 2007, the vast majority of the students (62 per cent) could not even guess which other towns had received the title of ECoC. Only 14 per cent of the respondents knew appropriately, that

Essen would be one of the other ECoC towns in 2010, 17 per cent heard about Istanbul, and just one-tenth of them could name both Essen and Istanbul.

The support of the ECoC and the expected impact

One third of the students who participated in the survey in 2007 could not decide what the ECoC meant to them. 42 per cent of those with an opinion, principally expected a cultural boost. To approximately a tenth of them the ECoC title meant continuous programs, everyday entertainment and the opportunity for the city to be recognized internationally. Almost the same proportion of the respondents refers to the ECoC as a grand investment, and a chance for new establishments. In a lower rate (6.3% and 3.8%) they associate it with the arrival of foreign tourists and the renovation of parks and other public areas.

On the basis of the 2009 data, one can safely conclude that the support of the ECoC is remarkable among the youth. The vast majority of the 18-35 year old age group (three-fourths of them) rather or completely agree that Pécs deserves the title of ECoC.

Most of the respondents expect rather positive effects from the ECoC. Four-fifths of them expect only advantages, or more positive impact than negative. Only an insignificant minority (2,5 per cent) of the students who filled in the questionnaire thought that the ECoC would have more negative than positive effects, 5,7 per cent of them presumed, that there would not be any impact, and 13,8 per cent of the respondents guessed that the ECoC would have the same amount of positive and negative effects.

The representative 2009 sample of the young population of Pécs also shows that a remarkable proportion of youth expects positive effects in connection with a cultural boom and tourism. 91 per cent of the respondents figure that tourism will prosper, 89 per cent calculate that the ECoC will improve the reputation of the city. According to 88-88 per cent of them the ECoC will help develop cultural institutes, and will play its part in establishing new ones. 86 per cent of the young people participating in the survey presume that the ECoC helps develop entertainment opportunities, and almost the same proportion thinks that it will develop cultural possibilities too. Also a high proportion (83 per cent) presumes that new programmes will be introduced in the city in consequence of the ECoC, and new workplaces will start up. 81 and 80 per cent of the respondents figure, that ancient monuments and art relics will be in better condition, and more money will flow into the city. 70 per cent of the students prognosticate that the state of the environment will change for the better.

Most of the young people in the sample are optimistic, regarding not only the positive or mostly positive effects of Pécs winning the ECoC title, but also according to four-fifths of them this project will have long term impact on the life of the city.

According to the findings of the survey made in 2009, a significant majority (87 per cent) of the young people figure, that cultural life in Pécs will be colourful and lively. One-fifth of them think that after 2010 it will be easier to find a job, 16, 15 per cent of the youth respond that the creative industry will improve, and that contemporary artists will have more assignments and will be given more space in consequence of the ECoC, after 2010.

Taking upon tasks in ECoC

The data of the survey in 2007 showed that one-third of the respondents would take part in the ECoC as volunteers. Studying the data, important differences can be observed in connection with the gender. Higher proportion of the female students would participate in the ECoC, than the male students. The difference between the two genders is almost 10 (8,7) per cent. The empirical research findings yield the conclusion that those who believe in the success of the project would be willing to take part in it in a higher proportion.

Most of the students would take a share of the tasks with organizing, „anything”, giving information, interpreting, handing out leaflets. The students mentioned the cleaning works, and one of them said that he would volunteer to pre-taste food in gastronomic events.

Similar results were found in 2009: 29 per cent of the youth of Pécs would volunteer for tasks. Most of them would like to organize events, hand out leaflets, or work in the area of marketing, tourism and interpreting, translating.

According to the data collected in 2009 among the students majoring in sociology and social studies, half of the respondents would work as volunteers. This proportion supposedly does not represent all the university students' opinion, because our department's attendees took part in data collection and conferences in the topic of ECoC, so we can suppose, that their motivation is higher than the other students'.

The students' ideas

We also asked our students, what kind of programmes would be popular in their opinion, that have not been part of the offers so far. In their answers, they mentioned screen lightdrawing on the wall competition, graffiti competition, introduction of students' inventions, a street-art exhibition, a carnival in Pécs,

and a series of discussions where scientists of the same field would dispute their different views on a certain topic.

Our students made up many interesting and smart slogans which could popularize Pécs among the young people. Some of them are as follows:

Pécs 2010 – culture without age limit

Be there, where the attention of Europe is.

Pécs- our city, the city of Europe

Pécs – the bottom of the Mecsek, the top of Europe

Pécs the capital of the CoolTour and your capital

Pécs now

Pécs is much more than a city. It is the city

Pécs, the protean city with a history of more than 1000 years (Pécs, a city with 1000 faces and a history of 1000 years)

Pécs- where culture enchants you

Taking all things into account it is found that a significant proportion of youth and the university students would contribute with deeds and ideas to such a monumental public event as the ECoC project. For this reason, it is highly important to mobilize the youth, to listen to them and invite them to this event, because without their ideas and creativity a much poorer, and a much duller ECoC would welcome the interested visitors.

Reference

Kákai – Vető – Tarrósy (2009): *Young people's opinion about the ECoC project - Pécs, 2010*. Pécs: Sien Foundation, IDResearch Kutatási és Képzési Kft. Internet:
http://idresearch.hu/userfiles/File/progifuzet_sien.pdf (letöltve: 2009. 10. 12.)