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The influence of European City of Culture on regional tourism

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to answer the question of whether the European Capital of Culture has an impact on the tourism in a region. The text is focused on 10 places, which was titled ECoC in 2009-2013. In the article are shown short presentations of all these 10 ECoCs, but statistical data refers to the regions of these cities (by NUTS 2 classification). Four different variables are analyzed – numbers of tourist establishments and bed-places and total numbers of nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments by residents and non-residents. To determine changes in these figures two kinds of indexes were used – chain and fixed base index. There is no denying that this analyze refers only to the small part of tourism sector, but even this kind of results may show same trends and be basis for some conclusions. Furthermore, even though limited dimension of research, this study can be especially interesting, because it refers to the issue of whole regions and this subject is rarely discussed topic.

Keywords: European Capital of Culture, tourism, tourist accommodation establishment, bed-places, NUTS 2 regions

1. INTRODUCTION

European Capital of Culture (ECoC) program started in 1985 on the initiative of the Greek Minister of Culture – Melina Mercouri. Its main objective was to integrate the citizens of Europe through culture and their mutual understanding. Since 1999 international

cooperation in the organization of the European Capital of Culture has been intensified and the idea has become a Community initiative. ECoC is a title awarded by competition to one of the cities in the European Union for a period of one year. With several years in advance the European Union indicates the countries, in which this event will be held in specific year. The state authorities are required to choose a particular city or in some cases region. The selection criterion is future vision of place presented to the committee, not state of the candidate. This gives the opportunity to apply for the title of European Capital of Culture also small or former industrial cities, which do not have a rich cultural heritage [1].

For over 30 years the idea of this has enjoyed unflagging popularity and, based on the reports of the Cultural Commission of the European Union, it can be said that the European Capital of Culture is one of the most prestigious and well-known cultural events in Europe. The recognition and the expected positive effects of the European Capital of Culture title cause fact that the candidates are not discouraged by necessity of involvement in this initiative very large financial resources. Common opinion that the main sponsor of the event is the European Union is not true, because the EU usually gives to the organizers about 1.5 million euro for this purpose, which is only about 1-4% of the total budget (own estimates based on reports of the Cultural Commission).

The main sponsors of the ECoC are mainly city, regional and national authorities. These funds are considered to be an investment - if the event is well organized, it will return in cultural and socio-economic benefits, as well improve the international image of the city, region or even country. The influence on the development of tourism, mainly of a cultural tourism, and resulting from this economic profits is considered as one of the most important benefits of ECoC.

2. EUROPEAN CITY OF CULTURE AS A FACTOR OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

Tourism is one of the fastest growing international service. The growth of the sector is stimulated by many factors, including the organization of international and global large-scale events, which attract a large audience and arouse public interest [2]. ECoC is an example of this type of large-scale events.

Cultural mega-events have the potential to generate a large number of visitors and therefore they affect local and regional tourism. They also create new tourist destinations and build or improve the image of the place. Moreover it might be said that cultural events organized on a large scale, e.g. festivals, can strengthen local pride in the culture and increase the activity of the inhabitants and consequently give some extra benefits, such as increasing the number of foreign tourists and encourage them to use local and regional services and products [3].

During this one year of ECoC numerous cultural events, festivals and conferences are organized and that can affect the increase of interest in the city for lovers of art and culture. All such events may lead to changing the image of the place and attract new, often foreign audiences. ECoC is an initiative known internationally, which undoubtedly create favorable circumstances to the growth of the number of arriving foreigners and this consequently is very important for the local economy [4]. The aims assigned to ECoC are not only to organize cultural events, but also to promote local and regional cultural heritage.

Tourists, whose main travel theme is heritage and they want to participate in such events, are referred to as cultural ones [5]. For cities titled ECoC it is a beneficial situation, because those tourists are generally better educated, often have higher incomes and are more willing to spend more money to fulfill their needs than the average travelers [4]. Therefore it is expected that they will generate higher revenues in a region.

Therefore it may be claimed that culture play a key role in the functioning of a city or region and the ECoC has a great potential for development of tourism, especially the cultural one. The event of this type can improve the image of the place, stimulate its cultural life and arouse public interest both in a country and abroad [6]. On the other hand, certain conditions must be fulfilled to this kind of cultural event, so it will cause mainly positive effects. First of all, cultural investments will improve situation in infrastructure, secondly local services and tourism products should be upgraded and properly prepared. It is also necessary to integrate different complementary markets.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of the article is to determine the impact of the European Capital of Culture on tourism in the region, where the event is organized. Secondary data, literature and websites were used in the study. In addition, there were also used official reports of the European Commission regarding the European Capital of Culture in 2009-2013. Statistical data on tourism were obtained from the Eurostat database.

The studies were conducted for 10 European Capitals of Culture in the years 2009-2013: Vilnius (Lithuania), Linz (Austria), Essen/The Ruhr (Germany), Pécs (Hungary), Tallinn (Estonia), Turku (Finland), Guimarães (Portugal), Maribor (Slovenia), Kosice (Slovakia), Marseille/Provence (France). Data for Istanbul, titled European Capital of Culture in 2010, are not available in Eurostat database, so this article do not include this EcoC. Research units are regions by NUTS 2. For each European Capital of Culture was selected region, where the project was held (except Essen/The Ruhr, which is located within 3 different units of NUTS 2).

In the analysis were used two ways of determining the dynamics of the tourism sector - the chain index (showing changes of selected variables in relation to the preceding year) and fixed base index (including the base year). In the chain index changes are set for 3 years before and 3 years after the event (with exception of year 2016 – Eurostat does not present this data yet), and in case of the fixed base index as the base year was taken a year 4 years before the event. In both cases there are shown indexes for years of events as well.

4. RESULT

4.1. European Capitals of Culture in 2009-2013

The article focuses on the 10 ECoCs. They are various units, both in terms of its status for the country, size and cultural backgrounds. Table 1 presents the basic description for all of the places and their classification by NUTS 2, as well as year of the event.

Table 1. European Capitals of Culture in 2009-2013

	City (State)	The year of ECoC	Region by NUTS 2	Description of ECoC
1	Vilnius (Lithuania)	2009	Lietuva	The capital and largest city of Lithuania. The main cultural, scientific and economic center. Vilnius city center is a valuable historical complex of monuments. The city also has a rich tradition of pilgrimage center [7].
2	Linz (Austria)	2009	Oberösterreich	The third largest city of Austria. One of the most important economic centers of the country, having low unemployment. It has the image of the business, industrial, but provincial city [7].
3	Essen/The Ruhr (Germany)	2010	Düsseldorf	The Ruhr region is one of the largest urban areas in Europe and the largest industrial area of Germany. Essen is one of the two main cities of the Ruhr [8].
4	Pécs (Hungary)	2010	Dél-Dunántúl	The fifth largest city of Hungary. Its development initially was influenced by the mining industry. Currently important academic and service center [8].
5	Tallinn (Estonia)	2011	Eesti	The capital and the largest city of the small and sparsely-populated Estonia. Administrative, financial, cultural and industrial center of the country [9].
6	Turku (Finland)	2011	Etelä-Suomi	The oldest and one of the largest Finnish cities, where the shipbuilding industry is an important part of the local economy. One of the main ports of the country [9].
7	Guimarães (Portugal)	2012	Norte	A city with centuries of tradition, sometimes called the cradle of Portugal. The city is located in the most industrialized part of the country and known for example for the textile industry. Furthermore, Guimarães has a significant cultural sector [10].
8	Maribor (Slovenia)	2012	Vzhodna Slovenija	The second largest city in Slovenia. The city is famous for its wine tradition and the richness of the natural environment, which, together with numerous monuments, wellness and winter sports infrastructure, creates a favorable ground for the development of tourism [10].

9	Kosice (Slovakia)	2013	Východné Slovensko	The second most populated city in Slovakia and the largest urban center in the eastern part of the country. The local economy is dominated by the steel and food industry. At the same time the city is considered to be an important center of history, culture and science [11].
10	Marseille/Provence (France)	2013	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	The second largest and one of the oldest cities in France. The place known for its unique cultural and architectural heritage and important role as a Mediterranean port [11].

Source: own study based on reports from the European Commission regarding the ECoC in 2009-2013 and publication Geografia turystyczna, red. J. Warszyńska, Warszawa 2001 [12].

4. 2. Changes in the tourism sector in analyzed regions

Four different variables were used for analysis of changes in tourism in time. In the article data on the number of accommodation establishments, the number of bed-places, the total number of nights spent in accommodation establishments by residents and non-residents (in regions by NUTS 2) were used. In the case of tourism infrastructure (establishments and bed-places) only chain indexes were used, and to analyze the number of nights both chain index and fixed base index were calculated, what should better reflect the impact of ECoC on tourism in the region.

Table 2. Changes in number of establishments by NUTS 2 regions.

	ECoC	Chain index in years [%]									
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Vilnius	-1,7	2,7	2,5	2,6	-0,5	-2,7	204,3			
2	Linz	-0,4	2,6	-3,6	0,9	-1,7	-0,9	-0,3			
3	Essen/The Ruhr		-0,6	1,9	-3,3	1,3	1,1	0,6	-0,6		
4	Pécs		-8,8	-0,8	-4,7	-2,5	-11,9	71,0	-0,3		
5	Tallinn			6,5	4,1	4,6	1,5	6,9	6,6	7,5	
6	Turku			-0,9	-2,7	-3,2	2,8	10,6	1,3	2,1	
7	Guimarães				-3,2	-1,3	3,3	1,1	55,7	1,8	7,2
8	Maribor				0,9	-1,5	-0,2	90,7	0,2	3,3	2,0

9	Košice					-1,2	-2,3	13,0	-2,8	-4,4	5,8
10	Marseille/Provence					-0,5	0,5	-0,1	1,4	0,1	2,8

Source: own study based on Eurostat database [13].

Table 3. Changes in number of bed-places by NUTS 2 regions.

	ECoC	Chain index in years [%]									
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Vilnius	2,0	4,5	0,7	7,0	1,1	4,0	78,6			
2	Linz	0,2	-1,0	2,2	1,8	-0,6	1,2	0,4			
3	Essen/The Ruhr		-1,6	3,3	-5,8	2,8	1,9	1,1	-0,4		
4	Pécs		-0,1	-5,5	-5,8	11,4	-23,6	51,4	59,5		
5	Tallinn			5,2	5,4	1,2	2,8	2,9	4,7	4,7	
6	Turku			-3,3	0,4	-1,3	4,5	9,4	4,4	2,0	
7	Guimarães				-3,9	0,0	4,2	0,2	2,6	9,2	4,7
8	Maribor				0,6	4,3	2,8	8,9	-0,6	2,1	1,5
9	Košice					-1,1	-0,5	13,2	-1,0	-1,9	1,0
10	Marseille/Provence					-10,1	-0,1	-0,1	2,0	-0,1	-0,9

Source: own study based on Eurostat database [13].

Based on the data relating to the number of accommodation establishments it can be concluded that in 8 out of 10 regions there was an increase in the year of event organization in relation to the preceding year. It is worth noting that only in the region NUTS 2 of Maribor city was a huge increase, amounting to 90%. In subsequent years in this region there was a slight increase in this number and therefore it can be concluded that the effect of the development of tourism infrastructure in the form of accommodation establishments remained in the short time. An interesting fact is that this very large increase in the number of places coexisted with significantly lower increase in the number of bed-places (approximately only 9%). So it can be assumed that the newly established accommodation facilities were tiny, offering only a few bed-places. In the region of Vilnius there was observed fairly steady growth in the number of objects in a period of 3 years, which was probably a result of the early preparation to the ECoC. In the 2 years period after the event there was a decrease of this value and in 2012 a rapid increase can be noted, which, in the context of the previous trend, may be an effect of ECoC. In year of the event in the Vilnius' region the number of

bed-places has increased more than the number of establishments, so it can be supposed that they were very small accommodation objects. Before and after the ECoC organization year a fairly steady increase in the number of accommodation facilities in Tallinn was noted. However, in this region there was the weakest growth in the year of event. It can be assumed that this happened due to the fact of preparation of accommodation infrastructure over longer time. The improvement of the situation in subsequent years may indicate an effect ECoC. The region of Kosice is interesting, because the number of objects had decreased in ECoC year, but before the event there was a significant increase. This phenomenon can be explained by the enthusiasm, accompanying the preparations for the ECoC, which was manifested by establishment of new accommodation facilities, which did not always survive this short period of time. There were declines in the values of the index in the half of the analyzed regions in the years preceding the events, but also these values increased in the event's year - it is supposed that in these places this positive changes were induced just by the organization of the event. The positive impact of the organization of ECoC can be seen in the region of Turku and Guimarães too, where a significant increases in the number of objects in a year after the ECoC (over 50% in Guimarães) was noted. Also in subsequent years such positive trend has remained. An interesting situation was also observed in Pécs, where despite a fall in the number of objects in the event year, the number of bed-places had increased. Thus it can be said that the tourist market of the region was dominated by establishments offering a lot of bed-places.

For the analyzed period in Eurostat database there are also available data on the number of nights spent by residents and non-residents (foreign persons) at tourist accommodation establishments. Of course, they do not reflect the number of tourists and do not include visitors, who visited the region just for one day, without an accommodation. However, these figures illustrate some aspects of the tourism sector in the regions.

Table 2. Changes in total nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments by non-residents by NUTS 2 regions (chain index)

	ECoC	Chain index in years [%]									
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Vilnius	8,1	6,3	1,0	-14,2	12,6	19,8	42,3			
2	Linz	0,8	1,4	1,5	-4,8	-3,0	6,6	5,7			
3	Essen/The Ruhr		0,7	7,6	-8,5	11,4	7,5	5,0	1,7		
4	Pécs		-5,2	-4,2	-13,5	-13,1	-13,8	22,7	16,6		
5	Tallinn			0,6	-6,5	16,9	17,0	2,0	2,3	0,3	
6	Turku			4,7	-12,3	2,6	15,5	10,7	7,2	-9,1	
7	Guimarães				-5,8	10,1	7,3	2,9	19,8	17,4	17,8
8	Maribor				-4,9	-0,9	8,0	12,6	-2,4	0,8	3,0

9	Košice					-4,7	7,5	0,4	5,9	-11,1	9,7
10	Marseille/Provence					32,1	6,6	3,2	3,4	-2,3	0,2

Source: own study based on Eurostat database [13].

Table 3. Changes in total nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments by non-residents by NUTS 2 regions (fixed base index)

	ECoC	Fixed base index in years [%]									
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Vilnius ^A	8,1	14,9	16,1	-0,4	12,2	34,4	91,3			
2	Linz ^A	0,8	2,2	3,7	-1,3	-4,2	2,1	7,9			
3	Essen/The Ruhr ^B		0,7	8,4	-0,8	10,6	18,9	24,9	27,0		
4	Pécs ^B		-5,2	-9,2	-21,5	-31,8	-41,2	-27,8	-15,8		
5	Tallinn ^C			0,6	-6,0	9,9	28,6	31,1	34,1	34,4	
6	Turku ^C			4,7	-8,2	-5,9	8,7	20,3	28,9	17,2	
7	Guimarães ^D				-5,8	3,8	11,4	14,6	37,3	61,2	89,9
8	Maribor ^D				-4,9	-5,7	1,8	14,7	11,9	12,9	16,3
9	Košice ^E					-4,7	2,5	2,9	9,0	-3,1	6,3
10	Marseille/Provence ^E					32,1	40,8	45,3	50,2	46,8	47,0

Base years: A – 2005, B – 2006, C – 2007, D – 2008, E – 2009.

Source: own study based on Eurostat database [13].

Table 4. Changes in total nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments by residents by NUTS 2 regions (chain index).

	ECoC	Chain index in years [%]									
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Vilnius	16,3	16,3	-1,9	-29,0	6,0	13,4	121,2			
2	Linz	2,5	2,2	4,7	1,8	-0,1	1,8	2,4			
3	Essen/The Ruhr		-7,4	4,3	-13,4	5,3	3,0	2,1	0,4		

4	Pécs		4,0	1,1	-6,4	-9,5	-10,8	63,2	10,9		
5	Tallinn			-5,1	-17,2	8,3	10,3	4,3	6,0	3,6	
6	Turku			-1,4	-4,0	0,5	4,3	0,4	-3,5	-1,4	
7	Guimarães				1,4	-3,0	-1,9	-3,2	6,0	6,1	10,7
8	Maribor				1,3	-1,0	1,2	-2,7	-3,3	-2,4	3,6
9	Košice					0,9	-2,9	3,0	7,8	-6,0	10,5
10	Marseille/Provence					67,6	4,2	-1,0	-2,5	-2,9	2,4

Source: own study based on Eurostat database [13].

Table 5. Changes in total nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments by residents by NUTS 2 regions (fixed base index).

	ECoC	Fixed base index in years [%]									
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Vilnius ^A	16,3	35,3	32,8	-5,7	-0,1	13,3	150,5			
2	Linz ^A	2,5	4,8	9,7	11,7	11,5	13,5	16,2			
3	Essen/The Ruhr ^B		-7,4	-3,4	-16,4	-11,9	-9,3	-7,5	-7,0		
4	Pécs ^B		4,0	5,1	-1,7	-11,0	-20,6	29,6	43,7		
5	Tallinn ^C			-5,1	-21,4	-14,9	-6,2	-2,1	3,7	7,5	
6	Turku ^C			-1,4	-5,4	-4,9	-0,8	-0,4	-3,9	-5,3	
7	Guimarães ^D				1,4	-1,6	-3,5	-6,6	-1,0	5,1	16,3
8	Maribor ^D				1,3	0,3	1,4	-1,2	-4,5	-6,8	-3,5
9	Košice ^E					0,9	-2,0	0,9	8,8	2,3	13,0
10	Marseille/Provence ^E					67,6	74,6	72,9	68,6	63,6	67,6

Base years: A – 2005, B – 2006, C – 2007, D – 2008, E – 2009.

Source: own study based on Eurostat database [13].

The largest decline in nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments in the event year is noted in the Vilnius' region and it is particularly large in the case of residents. Both chain and fixed base indexes calculations brings the conclusion that the year 2009 was critical

for the region. Such a bad situation can be explained by the economic crisis that started in 2008 and strongly affected the Lithuanian economy. It also led to the collapse of the Lithuanian airline fly LAL, which not only had been one of the sponsors of the ECoC, but served most foreign arrivals. Nevertheless, based on the report of the European Commission, it may be concluded that the ECoC title helped the city of Vilnius to partially protect the tourism sector from the very negative impact of the crisis [7].

The decrease in night spent by residents in the event year in comparison to the previous year is observed in regions of Pécs, Guimarães, Maribor and Marseille. The most interesting is the case of the Marseille, because this slight decrease occurred with improvement of this value expressed in fixed base index. This is the result of a large increase in 2010, but the ECoC did not maintain this positive trend. The largest increase in the chain index in year of the ECoC is observed in Tallinn, but it can be said that even this event did not cause enough positive impact so number of nights spent could equal the base year. The situation is similar in the Ruhr, where although residents spent more nights in the event year, the situation was worse than four years before the ECoC. Positive, growing trend for several years after the event, which can be the result of increased interest in the region, improving its image among the residents, was observed only in 3 regions - the Ruhr, Tallinn and Guimarães.

According to tables 6 and 7 it can be stated that the organization of ECoC had positive influence on foreign tourists in a greater extent. Only in the case of the Linz region number of nights spent by non-residents declined (compared to the previous year), while the corresponding figure for residents had increased. This fact is consistent with the information from in the Committee report, because it turns out that in 2009 the number of arrivals from for example the USA significantly decreased. Nonetheless, it is supposed that the title of ECoC was anyway some protection for the city itself - Linz is a business city, so the crisis could lead to a significant reduction in visits related to the business sector and consequently cause a collapse in the tourism sector. According to the report in the city of Linz total number of nights spent increased in relation to 2008 and the number of day visitors increased by 382% [7].

The opposite situation was observed in the case of Guimarães, Maribor and Marseille/Provence regions, where the decline in the number of nights spent by residents was accompanied by an increase in nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments by people from abroad, but in regions of Maribor and Marseille there was a decline in the next year after growth during the event. For 4 of 10 regions the positive upward trend in the number of nights spent remained for at least two years after the event, but it was the strongest in Turku and Guimarães regions. Moreover it seems that the organization of ECoC was a turning point in the negative trend for Turku in this field.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the presented data it seems reasonable to conclude that in most cases obtaining the ECoC title had a positive impact on the tourism sector in the region. However, it turns out that usually the improvement was not spectacular and did not result in a continuation of this trend in the next years. When it comes to tourist accommodation infrastructure most regions had been trying to prepare for potential tourists and increased the number of establishments and bed-places in the event years. Some of them even had decided to take such

steps before, and therefore the greater increase in such numbers had occurred even in the years preceding the event. Analysis of changes in the number of nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments leads to the conclusion that the organization of ECoC events stronger affects the number of non-residents tourists than residents. It may consist of factors such as: improving the image of a place among the foreigners and the fact that residents are more likely to participate in events related to the ECoC as a visitor, so a person not using accommodation. It also have to be considered that the study covers ECoC for the years 2009-2013, so several years after the outbreak of the economic crisis, which certainly had a negative impact on the tourism sector. It can therefore be assumed that the positive impact of ECoC on the regions appeared as a partial mitigation of the effects of the crisis. A special case is the Vilnius region, because the ECoC year (2009) was a critical and very unfavorable period for organization such kind of event, therefore none positive impact on the region was observed.

Comparing the reports of the European Commission, which presented the effects of the ECoC, with data available in Eurostat database it can be stated that the organization of ECoC definitely has better influence on the city itself than on the region by NUTS 2 classification. Based on the reports it appears that in all of the cities that participated in the program in 2009-2013 there were a positive impact on the tourism sector in the city, which cannot be claim in the case of the analyzed regions. It may be assumed that the regions are simply too vast units so the city's ECoC title could strongly affect them. In addition, these cities are usually major tourist centers of these regions and so such event has the strongest impact on those centers.

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