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Mountains and the City – International Mountain and Adventure Film Festival

1. Best practice selection criteria

Mountains and the City is a good example of innovative activities focused on the environmental issues and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle in harmony with the nature. As the activities are aimed not only at professionals, but also lay public, they have the potential to change their attitudes towards the nature, lead them towards its appreciation, protection and preservation, and to motivate them to spend more time in the mountains. Although one part of the activities is focused on school children, the festival is targeted mainly at adults and uses media as an attractive means of informal adult education. The festival and its accompanying activities are situated in an easily accessible place (a shopping centre), so, they can reach out to the lay public including individuals who spend most of their lives in the city. They are also likely to change the attitudes of people who otherwise would not get relevant and sufficient information about the presented issues. The project is beneficial for individuals as well as for the whole society.

2. Organization(s) / person(s) the best practice can be related to

The author of the idea to organize a mountain and adventure festival in Slovakia is Alan Formánek, who founded the Vancouver International Mountain Festival, too. Tamara Greksáková with the team of “Štúdio zážitku” turned this idea into reality in 2000. Later on, the association Hory a mesto came into existence, which is the organizer of the Mountains and the City festival.

3. Stakeholders and beneficiaries of the best practice

The main target group of the activities are:

- active professional and amateur film makers, as well as any other people interested in mountaineering films;
- professionals, climbers, photographers, travellers;
- children and youth living in towns and cities;
- general public interested in adrenaline, adventure and traveller films, expositions, presentations, lectures and workshops.

Every year, the international mountain and adventure festival Mountains and the City is organized in one of the multiplex cinemas in Bratislava, which is the partner of the festival in the particular year. These cinemas represent an ideal place for such a type of festivals as they are situated in shopping centres which do not only offer multiple screens within a single complex, but also sufficient space for the accompanying activities. Another advantage of situating such educational projects in shopping centres is that they are accessible to everyone, many people visit them and, thus, they give an opportunity to join the activities even to an accidental passerby. So, the festival and its activities have the potential to educate the lay public of all ages and backgrounds.

The festival is financed from multiple sources (e.g. Slovak Audiovisual Fund, Environmental Fund (an organisation of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic), Visegrad Fund, US Embassy, multiplex cinemas, and other partners).

4. Objectives and activities of the best practice

The aim of the festival is to educate the general public in the field of mountaineering and adventure sports by means of film and multimedia presentations, various accompanying activities and to lead them towards a healthy lifestyle by showing them the beauties of the nature and introducing them examples of best practice. The organizers would like to create a platform for widening and deepening the knowledge of both professional public and other individuals interested in mountain sports and films and building new contacts.

The visitors have a unique opportunity to see inaccessible places and unrepeatable performances of mountaineers, polar explorers, mountain

bikers, watermen, pilots or travellers through the eyes of film makers or photographers; or to experience a mountain adventure by themselves within the accompanying activities of the festival. The presented films and activities are divided into several sections or thematic blocks (Earth, Water, Rock, Air, Snow, Bicycle, Environment, Surf, etc.), within each of them, space is given to multimedia presentations of Slovak and foreign guests, interactive lectures, workshops (not only) for photographers, competitions, thematic expositions, travel lectures, climbing competitions, and rope attractions.

5. Area(s) affected by the best practice

The Mountains and the City international film festival involves activities from the field of non-formal adult education. In a broader sense, it can be considered a form of cultural education, as it affects individuals' system of values and changes their attitudes towards the nature. They gain new knowledge during presentations and workshops, the presented films give them the opportunity to visit inaccessible places, and the accompanying activities give them an opportunity to experience things they would probably never do. There is also a chance that people visiting the festival will become more "environment conscious".

6. Territorial scope of the best practice

The main part of the festival is situated in Bratislava and is attended mainly by its inhabitants but people from every region of Slovakia travel to visit it, too. The festival has also been held in other towns in Slovakia several times, therefore, it is a project realized on the national level. The movies, as well as special guests and other professional come from the whole world, so, from this aspect, we can speak about the international dimension of the festival Mountains and the City.

7. The conditions (human, financial, technical) required for the best practice

Financial requirements: Organizing a film festival and the provision of attractive accompanying activities for visitors are financially and personally demanding, therefore, it is necessary to collaborate with partners willing to participate in the realization of the project on the coverage of costs, find local sponsors and to apply for grants as well.

Spacial requirements: It is important to find an appropriate place where the festival can be held. As mentioned above, multiplex cinemas in shopping centres represent the ideal solution as they have a sufficient spacial capacity for all the activities.

Personnel requirements: As there are many activities included in the whole project, a good realisation team and a large number of personnel including volunteers are needed.

8. Results and short-, mid- and long-term impact of the best practice

The activities of the festival have already contributed to the development of general public's knowledge on the topical issues of environment protection and preservation by making use of such a popular media as films and by providing attractive activities not only for professionals.

In the film competition, a growing tendency both in the number and the quality of the presented Slovak films can be observed, so, naturally, the number of visitors is increasing year by year. As claimed by the organizers, the number of Slovak films entering the competition has tripled since the first years of the festival and now, it forms approximately one quarter of all the participating films.

9. Sustainability of the best practice

To ensure the sustainability of the project and its development, partner institutions, further financial grants and donations, dedicated staff and volunteers are necessary.

10. Adaptability of the best practice

The festival is easily adaptable to the conditions of any other country, its activities can be implemented into the program of any environmental film festival. Its uniqueness lies in the accompanying activities.