

Finno-Ugric Capitals of Culture: Opportunity to Valorize and Popularize Finno-Ugric Cultural Heritage

Rationale

A key gap in contemporary Finno-Ugric movement is lack of cultural events and programmes that engage, mobilize and inspire the entire Finno-Ugric world. However, such programmes are needed for several purposes, including: 1) to strengthen a sense of common Finno-Ugric identity, 2) to raise the status of Finno-Ugric movement in our own regions and countries, and 3) to raise awareness of the Finno-Ugric movement and - through that – of individual Finno-Ugric peoples, in the wider world. The programme of European Capitals of Culture provides a useful example that can be adapted to the Finno-Ugric world, for the benefit of Finno-Ugric movement and peoples.

Evolution of the Idea

The idea to launch a programme of Finno-Ugric Capitals of Culture (FU-COC) was presented and approved at the 1st International Finno-Ugric Branding Conference, held in October 2011 in Tallinn. Subsequently, draft statutes of the programme were developed by Estonian NGO U-Pööre (U-Turn) which were presented at the Board Meeting of the Youth Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples (MAFUN) in February 2012 in Syktyvkar. The Board unanimously approved the concept of FU-COC, affirming the leadership role of MAFUN in developing and implementing the programme. The draft statutes were further elaborated at the Board Meeting of MAFUN in Petrozavodsk in April 2012. In May, the concept of FU-COC was presented during the Finno-Ugric side event at the 11th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. During the past year, FU-COC has received supportive coverage in Finno-Ugric media. Several towns and villages from across the Finno-Ugric world – from Setomaa to the land of Khanty and Mansi - have expressed interest in competing for the title.

Based on informal consultations with members of the Consultative Committee of Finno-Ugric Peoples it was concluded that a formal endorsement of the FU-COC programme by the 6th World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples, by way of a direct reference in the resolution of the Congress, is needed before formal launch of the programme. Today's presentation is a direct and logical result of almost one year of work that has involved activists representing a large number of Finno-Ugric peoples.

Concept

Meaning of „Capital of Culture“

While FU-COC was inspired by the programme of European Capitals of Culture (ECOC), it was not meant to copy ECOC. The key difference was seen in the meaning of the word „capital“. Whereas ECOC has historically focused on larger cities, many of which have been national capitals, we suggest that FU-COC focuses on smaller locations, excluding national/regional capitals (in the case of Russian Federation: capitals of federal subjects), thus giving an opportunity for cultural and socio-economic development for second cities, small towns and even villages. The title allows its holder to act as a cultural (rather than administrative) capital (metaphorically, a “heart”) of the Finno-Ugric movement, with full support and encouragement of the international Finno-Ugric movement.

Duration

As with ECOC, the title of a FU-COC is awarded for one year, the “Finno-Ugric Year”, ie from one kindred nations’ day (3rd Saturday in October) to the next.

FU-COC programme is initially established for a 4-year period (2013/2014-2016/2017). In case of partners’ interest and positive feedback, the programme can be extended to the next 4-year cycle.

Rotation

FU-COC programme aims to offer an equal opportunity to participate for all Finno-Ugric regions while ensuring that the programme reflects the cultural and geographic diversity of the Finno-Ugric world. Hence, the principle of regional rotation will be utilized in the selection of culture capitals. In the context of the FU-COC programme, the Finno-Ugric world has been divided into four regions (quadrants):

- *North-Western quadrant*: Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Latvia, Russia: Republic of Karelia, Murmansk Oblast, Leningrad Oblast, Tver Oblast,
- *North-Eastern quadrant*: Komi Republic, Perm Region, Nenets Autonomous Region, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Region, Hanti-Mansi Autonomous Region, Taimyr Autonomous Region, Tomsk Oblast, Krasnoyarsk Region
- *South-Eastern quadrant*: Mari El Republic, Udmurt Republic, Republic of Mordovia, Bashkortostan Republic, Tatarstan Republic, Kirov Oblast, Sverdlovsk Oblast
- *South-Western quadrant*: Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Austria, Serbia

FU-COC aims to cover all four regions during the first 4-year cycle of the programme, with the following conditions:

- Two locations from the same quadrant cannot be culture capitals on consecutive years.
- Representatives of all regions can take part in the debut competition for the title of culture capital of 2013/2014.
- During the following years, representatives of all quadrants except the incumbent region can participate in the competition.

Selection Process

Finno-Ugric Capitals of Culture are selected as a result of an international competition by a Culture Capital jury. The jury consists of 3 members as follows: 1) authorized representative of MAFUN, 2) Authorized representative of the Consultative Committee, and 3) independent representative (e.g., UNESCO). It is understood that jury members co-ordinate their preferences and decisions with their respective organizations, ensuring maximum transparency and democratic character of jury’s decision.

Culture Capital applications are to be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Substantive quality of the proposed programme of the FU-COC year
- Availability of resources to implement the program
- Prior experience of the applicant in implementing cultural projects

Capitals of Culture will be selected according to the following procedure and timeline:

- The competition is annual and one Capital of Culture location will be selected at a time.
- The competition for upcoming Capital of Culture is announced at least 12 months before handing out the title
- Detailed documentation of the competition will be published on the home page of MAFUN (www.mafun.info) and will be disseminated as widely as possible in all Finno-Ugric regions.
- Applications of Capitals of Culture are to be submitted at least 10 months prior to start of the FU-COC programme of the prior year.
- Jury will announce results of the competition at least 9 months prior to handing out the title.

It should be noted that the selection process of the next Capital of Culture can become a media event in its own right, thus raising awareness, and interest in the Finno-Ugric movement.

Programme Administration

For administration of the FU-COC programme, a 3-member Programme Bureau will be established with representatives of the following organizations: 1) MAFUN – chairman of the Programme Bureau, 2) Consultative Committee of Finno-Ugric Peoples, 3) Representative of the region (quadrant) currently holding the Capital of Culture title.

Tasks of the Programme Bureau include:

- Organization of the selection process of Capitals of Culture
- Approval of the FU-COC programme and plan of activity
- Advising the current title holder on programme development, marketing and other relevant topics
- Providing necessary support to the selection jury (collect applications, prepare materials, organize jury's work, etc.)

Capital of Culture – Obligations and Rights

The title of FU-COC confers the following *obligations* to its holder:

- To form at least 3-member Organizing Committee (team) for the Capital of Culture
- Implement a diverse and attractive cultural programme that includes
 - At least 12 official programme events a year
 - At least one programme event in every quarter

- One flagship event – key event of the year that brings together a large number of Finno-Ugric activists from around the world

The title of FU-COC confers the following *rights* to its holder:

- To officially present itself as FU-COC, including in information materials, public space and media.
- To use symbols of FU-COC

Symbols of the Cultural Capital

Every Capital of Culture designs a logo which includes the following elements: 1) name of the Capital of Culture, 2) year of the Culture Capital, and 3) text „Finno-Ugric Capital of Culture“. At least two versions of the logo will be designed: 1) in a Finno-Ugric language of the region, 2) in English. Usage of the logo is advisable in all information and marketing materials, public space, websites and other media representing the Culture Capital programme.

Key Issues / Questions

- Rotation principle – is the current quadrant system just and feasible?
- Composition of the Jury – is independent (ie, non-FU jury member necessary? Which organization could that member represent (UNESCO, ... , ... ?)
- Programme administration – what is an optimal composition of the bureau?

A Call for Action

If there is general consensus among World Congress delegates that the FU-COC programme can benefit the Finno-Ugric movement in general, and individual holders of the FU-COC title specifically, the World Congress should formally endorse it. This can be done by referring to FU-COC programme as a strategic priority for the Finno-Ugric movement in the resolution of the Congress. This, in turn, would enhance the opportunities of potential applicants for the title of FU-COC to raise interest as well as funds in their home municipalities, regions and states, for successful application for FU-COC title and, upon receiving the title, for high-quality implementation of the programme. This could be a rare example of using the resolution of the World Congress for goals that unite the Finno-Ugric world in the name of a common and concrete goal, and initiating new processes that can make the Finno-Ugric movement better known and appreciated both at home and in the wider world.

Oliver Loode

Member of Board, MTÜ U-Pööre (U-Turn NGO)

Member of Board, Youth Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples (MAFUN) – Representative from Estonia
Estonian Delegate at the 6th World Congress

oliver@u-turn-ngo.eu , <http://www.facebook.com/oliver.loode>, Tel.: +372 513 2992