

SUMMARY

Museums are long-lasting institutions and in the past, collecting valuable objects was always connected with social elites, irrespective of whether the objects in question were artistic masterpieces, the greatest achievements of civilisation, rare findings or rare biological species. Hence, there was no need for introduction of business models, as the value of the collection was also of indisputable economic value and frequently also the question of national prestige. The increase in the number of museums, their specialisation and appearance of regional and local museums resulted in new expectations both of the public and the users. The increasing social responsibility of museums triggered reflections about the values of the museum and the manner in which it operates, as well as about how the increasingly complex system requires effective and responsible management. It is primarily this change in the social role of museums that motivated experts to use instruments that proved successful in other fields for the management of museum institutions. It opened the door to strategic planning in museum activity. The reasons behind resorting to strategic planning as a tool of economic sciences in the nonprofit sector, as well as in museums, needs to be sought primarily in the change in financing of museums.

Globally, professional organisations are key stakeholders in improvement of museum activity and some provide definitions of the strategic plan for the museum sector. The plan is described as “disciplined striving to make key decisions and activities that will shape what the museum is, what it does and why it does it”¹. A large number of theorists have been involved in the topic of strategic planning and the ways in which it has been transposed into museum field. According to Berns, “strategic plan is a group of comprehensive plans devised for allocation of available resources of an artistic organisation in order to achieve specific objectives arising from the presentation of the mission, the vision and the values and within this range of strategic plans the organisation can have several strategies”². The author immediately connects the strategic plan with another important element, which is operational plan that is “normally restricted to activities that support the everyday work of the organisation”³.

The transfer of strategic tools from the business sector into the museum sector triggered more intensive research about museum operations particularly in those primarily funded by

budgetary resources. The question arises as to whether they are spent both purposefully and rationally, as well as whether there are any benefits there for the entire society.

The beginning of the 21st century saw the onset of the museum management crisis in a large number of countries as a result of reduced financing from public resources. Consequently, we witnessed an increasing need for a greater level of involvement of museums in activities that will enable them to generate revenue. Some analysts identified new practices in European countries, such as the transfer of founder's rights from the state to other bodies in order to decrease the budgetary allocations, or as has been emphasised by P. Boylan "there is a significant shift towards internal decentralisation and delegation of management towards cultural organisations"⁴.

In the 1990's, the Croatian museum sector saw the transfer of founder's rights of several national museums from the state to the City of Zagreb. Simultaneously, after it gained independence, the Republic of Croatia started focusing on formulation of national strategies in the field of culture. The key strategic document of the Ministry of Culture at the turn of the century is the Cultural Development Strategy released in the publication entitled Croatia in the 21st Century: Strategy of Cultural Development.⁵ It still perceives museum activity through the prism of wartime experience, while the drop in museum visitor numbers and closure of some museums were pointed out as challenges, in addition to unprocessed museum materials and the passing of legislation and strengthening of professional conduct in the sector have been perceived as positive processes.⁶

In 2009, the Ministry of Culture started work on yet another strategic document entitled Strategy of Conservation, Protection and Sustainable Economic Use of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2011 – 2015 and the government of the Republic of Croatia adopted it in 2011.⁷ Museum activity was analysed in the document as a part of cultural heritage and fundamental challenges for the museum were identified based on provided information. Besides the umbrella museum act, which was passed in 1998 for the first time, the overall museum activity is comprehensively governed by a wide range of ordinances. In Croatia, legislative framework dictates the application of standards rather than professional organisation. Due to specific circumstances, which differ from European practices, upon determining the status of the national museum in Croatia, one needs to take into account also other facts, besides the fact that the founder of the museum is the Republic of Croatia. Consequently, the analysis includes a total of 27 museums, with 22 of them being owned or co-owned by the Republic of Croatia and the remaining five are core museums of the first level founded by the City of Zagreb. That is also the reason why, in addition to the

strategies of the Ministry of Culture, the dissertation also reflects on strategies of the City of Zagreb concerning the museum activity.

The previously mentioned two founders do not always approach the implementation of strategic planning in museum activity in the same way. The City of Zagreb provided the first incentive in the introduction of strategic planning through organisation of two-year training programme that in 2003 and 2004 was led by experts in that field in nonprofit sector. Nevertheless, the City of Zagreb has not imposed the obligation to prepare the strategic plan for the institutions for whom it is responsible. The obligation of strategic planning for institutions founded by the Republic of Croatia was imposed almost a decade after the training programme organised in Zagreb and the training programme that preceded it comprised of one-day workshops for senior staff of the institutions.

Concerning the objectives that the founders of national museums presented in their strategies for the development of museum activity, the following priorities have been highlighted, which were expectedly included in strategic plans of the museums:

- inventorisation and registration of collections,*
- investment in construction of new museums or renovation of permanent exhibitions,*
- investment in museum storage rooms and workshops and better protection of the museum materials,*
- investment in museum system for achievement of professional standards and development of co-operation between museums,*
- increase in the number of programmes,*
- ensuring quality of the existing programmes,*
- improved planning in museum activity.*

Every plan needs to be realistically laid in order for it to be carried out, bearing in mind the resources and primarily the budget when large-scale investment is being planned in the renovation of the museum, equipping of the storage rooms or construction of new museums. The formal connection between the plan and the budget is present also in the strategic plans of the Ministry of Culture and in the strategies of the City of Zagreb. Nevertheless, the adopted budgets lack the necessary financial resources that would enable the implementation of activities in terms of solving the identified challenges.

The performed analysis of strategic plans of national museums shows that the challenges pointed out in the strategies of the founders are included in strategic plans of museums. Nevertheless, most objectives that implied large-scale investment have not been met. Monitoring and measuring of achievements is crucial for the implementation, decision-

making and steering of processes, as well as corrections in strategic plans in order to ensure a better implementation of activities and goal achievement. Hence, the research includes a comparison of museum strategic plans of the first generation with those of the second and third generation in order to detect what has been successfully implemented. Persistent insistence on monitoring of the individual challenges within the implementation of the strategic plan resulted in positive shifts in the development of the activity. According to the strategic plans of the Ministry of Culture, in 2011 only 15% of the museum holdings had been processed, while the input data in the plan for the period 2019 – 2020 highlight 59% of processed museum objects, irrespective of the fact that the planned dynamics of 10% at an annualised level has not been achieved. Investment in infrastructure, construction and renovation of the museum and equipping of core museums have not been performed within the planned timeframe, since the resources allocated for that purpose have proved insufficient, which was corroborated also by budget analyses.

Strategic plans of Croatian national museums show a lack of experience in the implementation of processes of plan preparation, performance of activities, as well as monitoring and evaluation. Business environment analyses also proved a challenge, among which the most frequently resorted to was SWOT analysis and more rarely PEST analysis. On the other hand, analyses of stakeholders and interest groups have shown that determination of primary and secondary stakeholders is still based on the focus on the community of experts and the stakeholders in the museum sector, while the requests of the users and the public are being considered to a lesser extent.

Upon comparison of the first plans with those of the second or third generation one becomes aware of the shifts in those institutions that have made additional effort analysing the environment and creating estimates of own resources. Thanks to that, they more clearly formulated their strategic objectives both independently and assisted by consultants. Some museums have not made any qualitative progress. According to the results of the performed comparison, 48% of analysed samples showed improvement in terms of both the planning process and implementation of results. Nevertheless, in 41% of the cases no significant progress has been identified, while 11% cases are non-comparable. Summing up the comparison results on 100% of the samples of the monitored museums, 13 of them showed improvement in strategic plans of the second and the third generation, from implementation of the methodology established in the form provided by the Ministry, performed analyses of the environment, objectives that show progress in the implementation or more elaborated indicators. Eleven museums retained an unchanged level compared with that recorded in the

previous plan, while in three cases the comparisons were not applicable, since the institution prepared only one strategic plan or two plans were prepared within a short timeframe and they followed the previous experiences of other museums. Nine museums in the second and the third generation of strategic plans more clearly expressed the ambition to prepare EU funding applications, while some of them also listed programmes for which they are planning to apply. Several national museums have successfully applied to several EU invitations to tenders that support investment in the heritage sector such as those within the Operational Programme Competitiveness and Cohesion.

Target vs. achievement analysis showed the discrepancy between strategic plans that focused on normal operating activity and those that are planning to launch investment. The latter provide strategic plans with a required dose of ambition, irrespective of the fact that there are considerably greater challenges in terms of their implementation, since it depends on the support provided by the founder and their preparedness to allocate financial resources. The preparedness of the museums for application for EU funding that supports investment is a possible path towards the achievement of targets that envisage investment in museum renovation, irrespective of whether we are talking about exhibitions, comprehensive reconstruction or construction of a new museum. Strategic planning can hence be a useful tool that may more clearly assist in steering the museum towards target achievement. Museums whose targets were focused on normal operating activity were faced with an apparently easier task in terms of plan implementation. It has been noted that even highly undemanding targets remained unachieved. It is important to highlight inventarisation and registration of museum collections, which have been continuously addressed as challenges at all levels. Notwithstanding the fact that they are considered as normal operating activities, their scope and conditions in which they occur depend on the status of museum storage rooms, museum equipment, as well as the required experts able to complete this type of work within the set deadlines. Critical attention needs to be paid to involvement of consultants and the perceived practices that their analyses were not tailored to meet the requirements of individual museums that had engaged them, but they used identical analyses in several museums instead. The assistance provided by consultants resulted in formal improvements in the very concept of the plan, but it has not significantly contributed to the methodology of its implementation.

The conducted research showed that strategic planning in national museums was not based on the principles of participatory approach and hence the synergistic effect was missing without which it is impossible to achieve more ambitious targets in museum activity, primarily

those that require investment. Irrespective of the fact that the founder envisaged evaluation of strategic plans at the Ministry of Culture, it was performed only at the formal level of plan content. It did not include target implementation and neither did it monitor their implementation. The result of such an approach to strategic planning is a lack of motivation to continue with these practices, since the Ministry of Culture realised that it, as the founder, was not able to connect strategic objectives of museums with allocation of required resources, while a large number of planned activities in museums remained non-implemented. Consequently, the question arose concerning the meaningfulness of continuation of such practices. However, in the conducted survey, museum sources said that they found introduction of strategic planning useful for several reasons and primarily in terms of building competences of the institution to consider its development from the strategic aspect.

¹ Denis Cameron et al., *Strategic Planning Manual*, 16.

² Berns, *Menadžment i umetnost*, 170.

³ Idem.

⁴ Boylan, „Current Trends in Governance and Management of Museums in Europe“, 201.

⁵ Biserka Cvjetičanin and Dražen Katunarić, ed., *Hrvatska u 21. stoljeću: strategija kulturnog razvitka* (Zagreb: Ministry of Culture, 2003), <https://www.culturelink.org/news/publics/2009/strategy.pdf> (accessed on the 5th January 2018).

⁶ Idem, 101–103.

⁷ Ministry of Culture, *Strategija zaštite, očuvanja i održivog gospodarskog korištenja kulturne baštine Republike Hrvatske za razdoblje 2011.–2015.* (Zagreb, July 2011), http://www.min-kulture.hr/userdocsimages/bastina/STRATEGIJA_BASTINE_VRH.pdf (accessed on the 6th January 2018).