

## Permaculture Forum 2024

Evaluation report – part of Monitoring & Evaluation for  
Budweis2028 European Capital of Culture

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Basic information about the Forum & research



When: 14-15.02.2024 (and “Oslava” – 13.02.2024)

Where: Ceske Budejovice, Beseda venue

By whom: B2028 ECoC team

For whom: mainly culture actors from Budweis and the region + ECoC team and curators, but inspirations coming from experts coming from all places, including abroad

What for:

1. Presentation of the ECoC program with the underlying idea / philosophy for every year + special focus on how topic presented every year is linked to ECoC goals and values -> informing and engaging people into ECoC
2. Bringing new inspirations and good practices on the topic undertaken (2024: sustainability as care / connection / creation), incl. from other ECoCs, local and international experts -> encouraging people to reframe their perspective, not necessarily pushing to do concrete things, but more of providing opportunity to learn about alternatives and some new trends, bringing focus on topics that are important for the ECoC and across Europe, resonating with other people on the spot, finding motivation to change things

Sources of data for this report:

- information about the project available online and in internal project sheets
- participant observation in the Forum (Aleksandra Koltun)
- an online questionnaire sent out to all Forum participants, including speakers and organisers; data gathered from 16 till 26 February 2024; in spite of numerous requests and reminders only 43 answers gathered (38,7% of attendees)
- interview with Anna Horejsi, project coordinator



## Who took part in the Forum?

94 people registered through an online form to participate in the Forum. 22 of them did not show up (they did not sign a list of attendance at the entrance). Additional 39 people appeared at the Forum without previous online registration, providing their personal data in a paper form at the entrance.

These numbers are worth noting for the fact that out of all Forum attendees, more than 35% simply turned out on the spot without a previous notice. This fact did not pose any trouble during the 2024 edition of Forum (especially that there were 22 people who registered themselves finally did not appear on the spot). However, in future, if the overall number of people attending the event grows, 35% of unexpected guests may cause trouble, from providing the right amount of catering, to safety matters inclusively.

Important to notice is the fact that the paper attendance form, offered at the entrance to the Forum, included several questions over personal data, such as one's name and surname, e-mail address, gender. The information provided through the form was visible to other people. According to B2028 team, this way of checking attendance in the Forum was a pre-requisite from the National Recovery Plan, which co-funded the event. Needless to say, it was not only highly insensitive (by asking for one's gender), but also inconsistent with the rules of personal data protection.

Overall 111 people took part in the Forum (either a single day, or both of them). Almost half of them (45 people; 40,5%) were, people engaged in its organization: as B2028 team members, partners, speakers etc. 20 people (18,0%) came from 14 different NGOs; next 19 people (17,1%) - from 12 public institutions. If we take out people anyhow engaged with the Forum or the B2028 ECoC, then we have 66 people representing 42 organizations. Majority of these organizations were seated in Budweis and the region (23 out of 42; 54,7%; 9 organizations were seated

elsewhere in the Czech Republic; 1 – abroad; for 9 names it was impossible to find information online).

Even taking into consideration that one of Forum's goals was bringing together the ECoC team and project curators, attracting 66 people (around 60% of all participants) from outside cannot be considered an outward success. This relatively low attendance may result from the fact that Forum's promotion was launched quite late, only in December 2023, as the coordinator stated, much due to general unfavorable working conditions in the team at that time. However, thinking about future editions, it is necessary to strengthen efforts to attract not only more people not straightforwardly engaged with ECoC, but also to bring in a larger variety of organisations from the whole region.

Table 1. Registered participants of the Forum by type of organization represented

organisers*	45	40,5%
nevládní organizace	20	18,0%
veřejná instituce	19	17,1%
other / not known	10	9,0%
firma	7	6,3%
public administration	5	4,5%
instituce tertiárního vzdělávání - univerzita	4	3,6%
vzdělávací instituce - školka, škola.	1	0,9%
total	111	100,0%

\* CB2028, Revue Prostor, Borovka, speakers, translators, photographers



## Transversal topics

Diversity of forms employed & people engaged [~rozmanitost]

The Forum included a lectures with presentations (a single day), workshops (a separate day), as well as a more relaxed gathering on an evening preceding the proper Forum (with short pitchings about ECoC projects and a concert). The results of post-event survey showed that most people were happy with this form of the event. However, some pointed to the fact that there were too few opportunities to network, and that all lectures squeezed in a single day were a bit too tiresome (they could have been mixed with workshops, which, themselves, could have lasted longer and been more in-depth).

Nearly all presentations and workshops were focused on various facets of sustainability in one's own organizational and personal experience. Only Broumov's presentations seemed much less specific and not organized around the leading topic, but more – around the whole post-ECoC program of the town. This however is mainly observation from the evaluation coordinator; the issue did not emerge in any significant manner in the post-event survey. Quite the contrary, both presentations from the Broumov team, and also presentation and workshop delivered by Shawn Antoni Wright (The Penguin Project) were among the things that people surveyed liked most about the Forum.

Oftentimes, the topics covered in lectures showed very concrete ways of realizing the idea of sustainability in practice (locally, in the Czech Republic, and abroad); some of activities also dealt with more philosophical / psychological way of dealing with the issue (with examples of international projects and initiatives).

European dimension [~otevřenost]

There were 10 talks included in the program of the Forum, with 12 speakers. Out of them 3 were from Budweis or the region, 6 were from other parts of the Czech Republic (with majority from Broumov, the city competing with Budweis for the

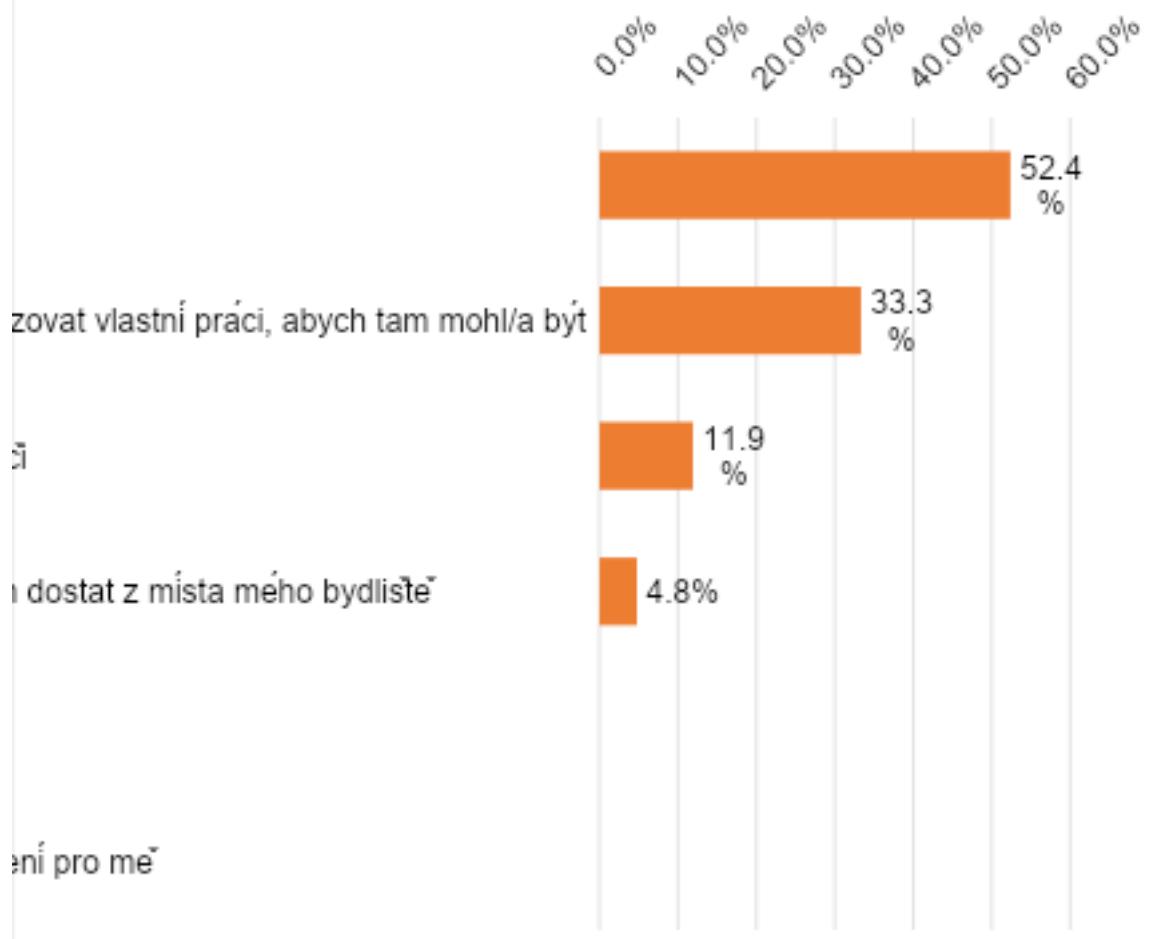


ECoC title and, currently, one of cooperating partners), and 3 were from abroad. Four workshops were delivered, 3 by the international guests (same as mentioned before), 1 by a local expert.

#### Inclusivity and accessibility [~přístupnost]

Out of 43 people that filled in the post-Forum survey, 20 admitted having some kind of trouble in their personal or professional life when planning their attendance. For 14 people these were organizational issues at their work; for 5 people – issues concerning care for the kids or other dependent persons (one could provide more than 1 answer to this question). Importantly, there was not a single person that needed to take a day off from their job to take part in the Forum; also, no one declared trouble with registration online.

Figure 1. Museli jste kvůli účasti na fóru přeorganizovat něco ve svém pracovním a/nebo soukromém životě?



\*multiple answers possible

Registration to the Forum was accessible through an online form. The form included a question whether a person wants to take advantage of childcare during Forum. Eventually, during the “Oslava” (an informal opening of the Forum on the preceding evening) there were numerous families with more than 20 kids, including babies, toddlers and teenagers. The minors could participate in numerous activities offered on the spot, in an open space close to the main stage (apart from simply exploring the whole place in a relaxed atmosphere). Kids’ activities took place simultaneously to some presentations and finished before the concerts. This resulted in, occasionally, high level of noise; a point that was raised by some survey participants. During the following days kids’ activities were organized in a separate room which was adjacent to the main stage; thus levels of noise were lower.



The registration form did not include any question concerning accessibility tools, which was previously agreed by the B2028 team as one of minimal standards for accessibility for the ECoC program. Also, there was no up-to-date information about the accessibility of building and the events' site, nor explicit information on being open to address various needs and stay in contact with people interested.

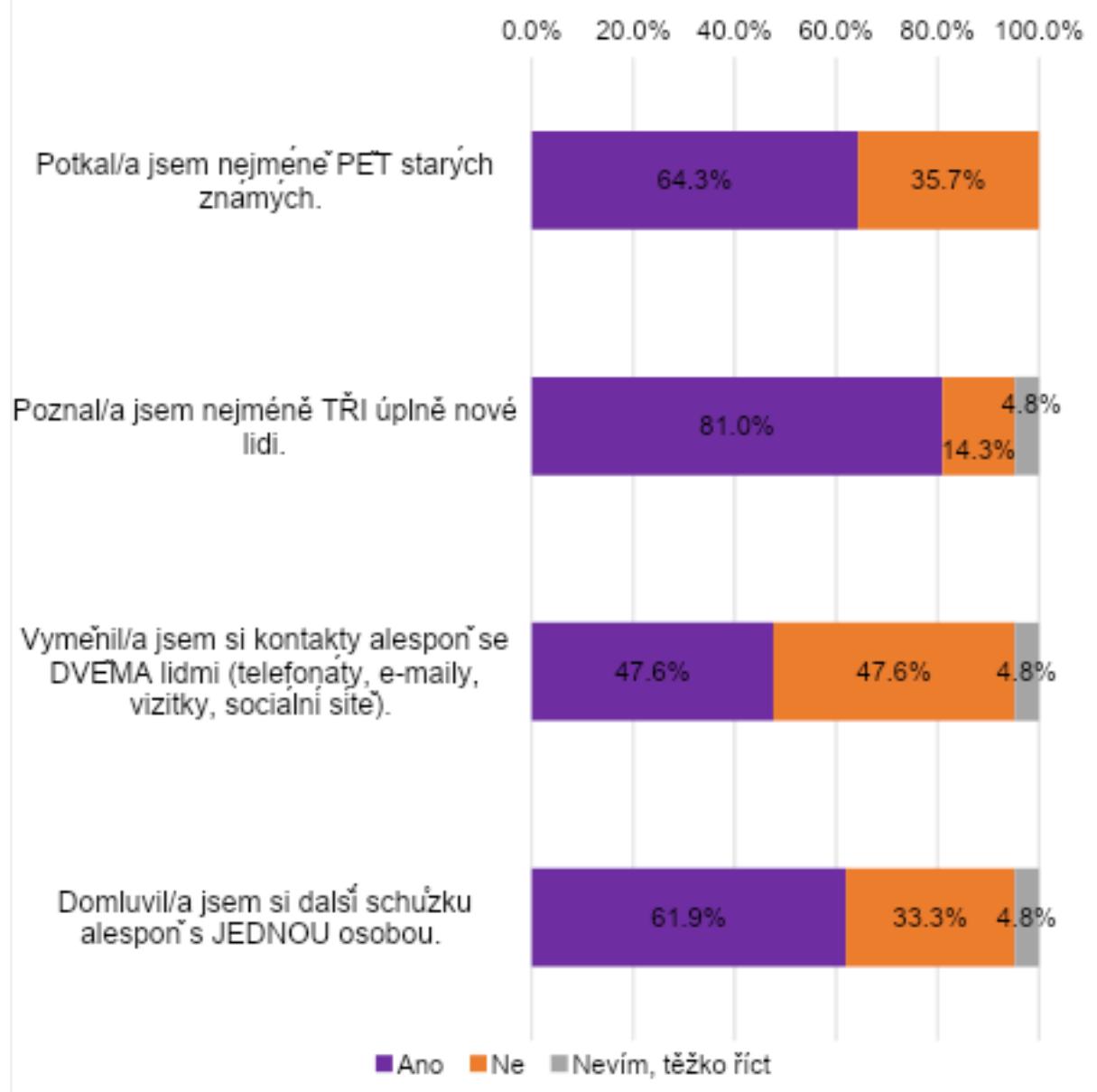
Information about the Forum, together with the registration form, as well as a summary of what had happened on the spot was available in English. During the Forum there was always a simultaneous Czech-English translation available.

Worth pointing out is the fact that some individuals complained in the survey about the names of activities in the program. They found them too complicated and abstract, and had trouble with understanding what the program was supposed to be about or what activities it consisted in.

#### Networking [~spoluvytváření]

Among the survey participants there were more people that met new persons (81,0% research participants declared having met “three new people” than those who met old acquaintances (64,3% declared having met “five old friends”). Also, 61,9% survey participants admitted having arranged a meeting after the Forum with at least one person”; 47,6% - having exchanged contact details with at least two other people.

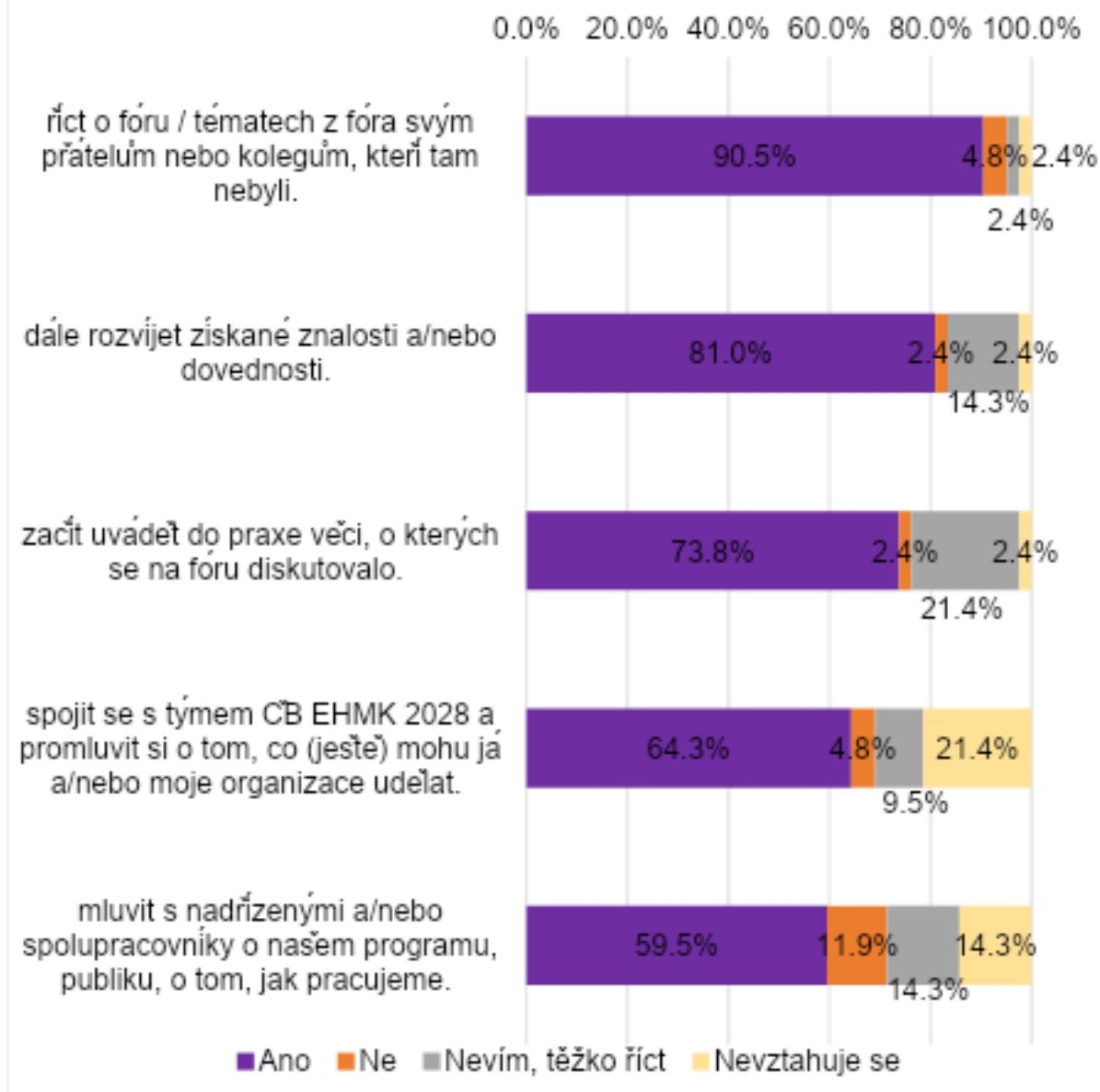
Figure 2. Během fóra ...



### Learning and getting inspired (~myšlení)

Majority of survey participants declared willingness to take up several actions after the Forum. More than 9 in 10 people want to tell what was happening in the Forum to colleagues that had not attended it. 8 in 10 people want to further develop knowledge and/or skills gained. Around 74% declare willingness to turn things they had learnt in the Forum into practice. Two thirds say they would like to visit B2028 team and talk about the ways that they can get engaged into the ECoC program.

Figure 3. Po skončení fóra chci...



Although the above results sound very optimistic, the open-ended questions showed that there is still much to be done about both networking and knowledge sharing.

First of all, a significant proportion of people surveyed pointed to the fact that there could have been more occasions to meet people, from simply having a networking session, to doing things together (e.g. in longer workshops). The following answer, provided to the question over what one would like to know more about, captures this issue very well:

“Více se propojit s ostatními kulturními organizacemi z ČB a zjistit co máme společného a v čem si můžeme pomoci. Bohužel ale forma přednášek tomu nedávala takový prostor.”

...and an answer to what one found missing in the Forum:

“Mozna vyjmenovat pred nějakou pauzou, z jakych instituci jsou lidi v sale.. protoze nekdy chceme s nekym navazat kontakt, ale treba vubec nevime, ze tam je.”

Second of all, people researched expressed the need to have more information (broader, with more time devoted to a single topic), and also, more practical, concrete information on the topics covered in the Forum. Specifically, they wanted more guidance on practices and solutions that could be implemented in their work and organisations, on the local level, in everyday operations. The following statements concerning “what they would like to know more about” demonstrate this in more detail:

“(...) Chtěla bych se tedy dozvědět, jak si před sebe stavět výzvy v sebevzdělávání a nezbláznit se z toho, jestli existuje nějaká instituce, která systematicky vzdělává lidi pracující v kultuře, možná i jak si konkrétně lépe organizovat čas?”

“jak přenášet udržitelnost ve všech podobách do praxe v českém prostředí”; “dobrých příkladech ze zahraničí od zajímavých kulturních odborníků, které mohou inspirovat lokální kulturní scénu k rozvoji”.

Third of all, people participating in the survey pointed to insufficient information about the ECoC: from what it generally consisted in, to ways of cooperating, funding, engaging within the activities planned in Budweis. One can see that in the following statements over what the people researched found missing in the Forum:

“Praktické informace např. od organizací z měst, která titul EHMK obdržela v minulosti, které by pomohly nastavit rámec příprav projektů, jejich fázování, poukázaly by na užitečné "zkratky" a naopak na slepé uličky které sami objevili,

ukázali by případně i možnosti a modely spolufinancování projektů, které oni využili atd.”

“procesní, finanční a časové přípravě projektů tak jak je ústav EHMK ČB má rozpracované a předpokládané atd.”.

At the same time, it is necessary to point here that majority of people who answered the open-ended questions either expressed their satisfaction (and lack of any critical remarks), or praised the Forum – for the things they got to know and felt inspired with, for creating a relaxed, non-intimidating atmosphere, for good organization. The following statements are answers to a question over general remarks concerning the Forum:

“[Forum] Pomohlo mi, že i nejúspěšnější v oboru kultury zažívají frustraci a hledají nové cesty. Stejně, jako já.”

“Díky moc za to. Za příjemnou neformální atmosféru a přitom profi organizaci, a taky za prezentování důležitých hodnot, které v mainstreamu nedostávají tolik prostoru. Gratuluju a fandím!”

“Navštívila jsem celkem dost konferencí v Praze a Londýně a tohle fórum mě mile překvapilo. Příjemné prostředí, příjemní aktéři, téma, která jsou potřeba tak moc diskutovat. Ráda se zúčastním příště znova i za nějaký poplatek.”

The issues presented above, concerning networking, knowledge sharing and informing about ECoC, were often expressed not as criticism, but as friendly remarks towards making things even better. Nonetheless, all three topics were well-visible in accounts of a significant proportion of people. Therefore, they should be treated as important indications for organizing the Forum in the future.

#### Environmental sustainability



Although B2028 team did not have full control over the catering (it had to be arranged by the venue), it met the environmental sustainability standards (no-meat + local, seasonal products prevailing, no single-use dishes).

When it comes to printed materials, there were large, colorful posters presented out-and in-doors (with event's program) as well as A4-size, also colorful programs placed across the venue (next to registration point, on the tables). The contents of both pieces were identical. Overwhelming majority of the A4 programs were not used, very many were simply thrown away immediately after the event. A question immediately arises – what for were they printed, especially if the posters presented the program in a clear, visible manner, while the event itself consisted of a relatively small number of activities, in a single place? And also – what happened with the prints that were not used after the event, especially that the print was one-side only?

## What did survey participants think of Budweis2028 ECoC?

Apart from asking about the experience of participating in the Forum, the questionnaire included questions concerning more general attitudes towards ECoC in Budweis. These questions were asked only to those people, who declared living in Budweis or the region (29 people).

More than 90% of people researched declared that being happy with the fact that Budweis got the title. The rest of people researched, around 7%, admitted having “their fingers crossed for this”, but not being ready to engage themselves at the moment. There wasn’t a single person expressing doubts or any negative attitude towards the Budweis 2028 ECoC.

Table 2. Aggregated answers to the question “Které z následujících tvrzení nejlépe vystihuje váš postoj ke skutečnosti, že České Budějovice získaly titul Evropské hlavní město kultury 2028?”

Skvělé!! Jdu do toho!	27	93,1%
Super, držím palce, aby to vyslo, ale sám/a se do toho (alespon zatím) nezapojuji.	2	6,9%
Eee, to nedává moc smysl.... Já se k tomu nepřipojím.	0	0,0%
Ne, to je úplně absurdní. Bylo by lepsí, když se to nestalo.	0	0,0%
Težko říct, nemám na to žádný konkrétní názor.	0	0,0%

When asked about the benefits that the ECoC title could bring to the person, their organisation and/or the local community, respondents talked mainly about general strengthening of the culture sector and the city. This could consist in better networking (connecting people and organisations, creating things together), with special focus on better communication with the officials, building new cultural infrastructure and getting closer to new audiences, becoming more recognized as

city and as culture actors in the country as abroad. Importantly, among all these benefits there was also gaining new knowledge and skills, self-development, and having opportunities to learn, experiment, test new things.

On the other hand, when thinking of what could prevent a person from getting involved in activities of B2028 ECoC, respondents mentioned primarily workload and lack of time, as well as the danger of political agenda looming over what the real values and need or lack of political support for the project. An important topic was fear of not getting the colleagues on board – their lack of interest, understanding, motivation, like in these two statements:

“Asi vysvetlovani uvnitr nasi instituce by mohlo byt prekazkou, resp nepochopeni zamestnancu, o co jde a proc by se meli chtit zapojit. Narizeni je jedna vec, ale dostatecna motivace a sparvna komunikace je vec druh a je naprosto nezbytná, aby to nedrhlo. Tzn proč se zapojit, proc to chceme, jaké zmeny to prinese a co z toho budeme tezit, proc do toho investovat a jak se investice vrati, kdy to začne-skončí-neskončí? (Ne)vrati se veci do normalu-pred EHMK?”

„Některé z cílů mi přijdou hodně abstraktní, respektive já sama je asi chápou a umím vizualizovat, ale dost často cítím ohledně toho skepsi ze strany mých kolegů. Bojím se tedy toho, abych nezůstala nadšená pro věc sama a tým v mé organizaci neodpadl.“

The answers to the question over „Co by se muselo stát, abyste vyhodnotili EHMK v Budějovicích jako NEÚSPĚCH?“ showed how strong was the fear for disintegration of the program from the declared values (often linked to the politicians taking over the whole initiative). This disintegration could consist in simply failing to achieve the goals, but also too much commercialization, too much focus on ones' careers and personal brands, putting too much pressure on attendance (but at the same time – failing to engage general public, going unnoticed, meaningless for the locals), lack of cooperation with culture actors from the region and, in general, lack of partnerships between organisations. An important topic was also lack of legacy,



that is, achieving no lasting effects after 2028 (from infrastructure, to established European cooperations, to stable political and administrative support for culture).