

FLORENCE 1986

1. AIMS AND OPERATIONAL FEATURES

1.1 Background

In terms of population (402,111), Florence is the eighth city in Italy and, before Luxembourg, was the smallest place to undertake the task of mounting a City of Culture. But the Mayor of Florence subsequently wrote, "if the roots of European civilisation lie in classical Athens, the modern world, which put man squarely back at the centre of the Universe, was born in humanist and renaissance Florence, and based itself on the rediscovery of Greek civilisation". The Mayor also conceded that the city is "too often closed within its own cult of the Florentine".

1.2 Designation and rationale

The initiative to pursue the designation of Florence was taken by the Italian national authorities who wished to secure an early place for Italy in the ECC sequence. Florence accepted the designation as "a valuable opportunity to reinforce its image" as a city in the eyes of the world with a well-established cultural reputation. The challenge to Florence was not to advertise itself, let alone harness its fame to a single promotion, but to ensure that "the programme of events should have a very high profile indeed" and be achieved successfully.

The Italian national authorities first proposed at the Council of Ministers in June 1984 that Florence should be European City of Culture for 1985. This proved not to be possible owing to the slippage of Athens from 1984 to 1985. Since both the Netherlands and Italy wanted 1986, the Council of Ministers left it to the two member states to resolve between them. A decision was communicated 28 December 1984 that Florence would take 1986 and Amsterdam 1987. The designation was confirmed 28 May 1985 by the Council of Ministers (1,008th meeting).

1.3 Objectives and broad approach

The task of organising the event was undertaken by the Florence local authority. But, since the national authorities provided some four fifths of the finance, they too had a direct input. This came from two separate ministries, the Ministry of Tourism and Performed Arts and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, with different responsibilities and contrasted approaches. The latter was concerned to use the initiative to address the massive heritage backlog which dominates cultural policy in Italy.

The vision for the Cultural Year came from the City. Their intention was to create:

"a great festival of culture, art and science, which looked both to past and present, from Florence to Europe and from Europe to Florence, opening out the City to the rest of the world".

The 'festival' approach necessitated special programming, and there were three aspects to this:

- extra programming expressly for the European City of Culture provided by the City's institutions;
- some events already planned thought to be sufficiently "representative" to be included in the programme;
- international programme elements requested mainly from other European countries.

Development of the cultural infrastructure was also a theme in Florence 86. This took the form of a significant programme of restoration projects. Some completed refurbishments were launched during the year e.g. the sixteenth century room in the Museum of History of Science. More particularly, plans were revealed during the year for a number of new developments which the City intended to take forward, for example, the new Natural History Museum, the Documentation Centre for Science and Technology, and a Contemporary Art Centre to be housed in disused industrial premises.

The broad approach to developing the event was much influenced by the lack of time for planning. The City had hoped to build a programme from sponsorship and foreign governments support. But no commitment could be made before the local elections in May 1985. In the Italian system of local administration, definitive professional planning could not be undertaken without executive political authority. The election result was inconclusive and a new administration was not elected until October 1985, leaving only eight months to July 1986, for when the inauguration was eventually fixed.

Planning difficulties were compounded by the bitter feuding which characterised public life in Italy and meant that relations between the Christian Democrat Minister of Culture and the socialist administration in Florence were not easy. Discussions with the national authorities, on whom the City was relying for the bulk of the funding, were not concluded until after the event had opened.

At a very late stage in the process, an advisory expert committee of 12 "personalities from the City's academic, literary and artistic life" was established to give shape to the programme and sift through proposals. Its recommendations were concluded in May 1986. Programme ideas came from Florentine institutions (discussed at a public meeting in November 1985), from the Ministries and from abroad. Requests for participation had been issued to member states, and the mayors of all the cities twinned with Florence were summoned to the City twice in the space of three months. Out of 173 events considered, some 50 were chosen for implementation.

Inevitably, the advisory committee concentrated on readily available or already planned events. When the theme of the "Florentine renaissance" was confirmed, other countries had no time to find events to illuminate it. Even when international help could be provided (e.g. from the Spanish, German and Greek governments), the programming result was inevitably heterogenous.

1.4 Arrangement of the event

The City of Florence arranged the event through the established structures of its own administration. The working group consisted of members of the cultural department co-ordinated by the Director, Dr Sandra Buyet. The Florence Councillor for Cultural Affairs was Giorgio Morales. Liaison with the various interests went through the usual channels. The Mayor, Massimo Bogianckino, who had previously followed a distinguished international career as an opera executive, played an active part in planning the event alongside the work of the cultural department of the City.

The existing festivals of Florence (the 49th Maggio Musicale, the 39th Fiesole Summer Festival and the 3rd Autumn Music Festival) were incorporated into the programme of Florence 86. Extra programming was implemented through many institutions in the City. For example, the Teatro Comunale planned an extra dance programme of visiting companies (alongside its own Maggio Musicale and the Fiesole Festival). Music projects were in the hands of, among others, the Teatro Comunale, Amici della Musica, the Orchestra Regionale Toscana and Musicus Concentus. Popular programming was prepared by the Centro Flog (American music) and the Centro Attività Musicali (jazz in Europe). The drama programme was co-ordinated by the Teatro Regionale Toscano, now disbanded. A good number of the exhibitions came ready prepared from abroad and these were handled by the Centro Mostre. This exhibition centre was set up by various public bodies (the City Council, the Regional Council, the Provincial Council and the Tourist Board) with the aim of promoting, co-ordinating, organising and managing exhibitions of art. The City itself took responsibility for some of the exhibition programme, usually in conjunction with another institutional partner, often a museum which ran their own exhibitions.

1.5 Framework of relationships

In planning the event, the principal relationships were within the cultural sector, between Rome and Florence and between the City and its cultural infrastructure. The late planning made wider relationships difficult to develop. The foreign cultural institutes, for example, were not able to provide fully elaborated programmes for implementation. On the other hand, the twinning arrangements (which included a number of cities outside Europe) were utilised and strengthened through the initiative. The very strong programme of conferences necessitated major participation by the University and the many academic institutes based in the City. The European Commission (DGX) itself arranged a major conference in connection with the year on the theme of cultural policy. The lead times were too late for the purposes of the tourism authorities.

2. FUNDING

2.1 Available resources

Total funding for Florence 86 was some Lira 32 billion. Public expenditure on the year totalled Lira 28.75 billion. The latter was mostly contributed by the national authorities, which were responsible for 73 per cent of the total. The Ministry of Tourism and Performed Arts spent Lira 8 billion on theatre and music in the City, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage some Lira 15 billion (under a special law), of which half was for exhibitions, concerts, conferences etc, and the other half restoration works and gallery refurbishments. The Florence City Council voted an initial allocation of Lira 4 billion as an advance to get some of the events underway, before the arrival of funding from the Ministry, but spent some Lira 2.5 billion. In addition, a further sum of approximately Lira 1 billion was spent on publicity and expenses. There were smaller contributions from the Region - Lira 1 billion allocated between the theatre (Lira 450 million), exhibitions (Lira 400 million) and music (Lira 200 million) - and the Province of Florence (Lira 0.5 billion).

2.2 Expenditure

The level of spending might be compared with the budget of the Cultural section of the City Council which was Lira 6 billion in 1986. Roughly one third of expenditure (Lira 9/10 billion) was devoted to the performed arts programme. Exhibitions and the restoration programme took approximately one quarter each. Conferences were a major programme feature accounting for Lira 2.6 billion of the State's spending. Marketing and public relations expenditure accounted for approximately Lira 1 billion. The burden of overheads fell on the City Council and was not separately costed.

The Ministry of Tourism funded most of the music programme (13 out of 19 projects) and some of the theatre initiatives (7 out of 17 projects). The City made its major contribution to the theatre projects (9 were funded by the City). Joint funding was not a feature of the initiative, and only 5 projects appear to have been handled in this way. By the same token, the Ministries took sole responsibility for the restoration projects and provided most of the funding for the exhibitions.

2.3 Capital spending

The programme of restoration had three aspects to it:

- Reinforcement and protection

The Bargello; Orsanmichele (sculptures); Uffizi; the Duomo and Giotto's Campanile; Galileo's House; Ex-Church of San Pancrazio;

- Alteration and modernisation

Accademia Gallery; Uffizi Gallery of Prints and Drawings (fire alarms etc); Uffizi (completion of gallery space in Vasari Wing); the Modern Art Gallery (completion and arrangement of gallery space); the Silver Museum (creation of tapestry room); the Bargello (creation of gallery space); San Pierino (relocation);

- Archaeology

Piazza della Signoria (restoration and transfer to museum of archaeological remains).

The City took forward a number of longer-term projects during the year. Principal examples are as follows:

- Inaugurations and re-openings

Re-opening of the 16th century room of the Museum of Science and History; inauguration of the crypt of San Pancrazio (museum of Marino Marini Donation)

- Plans and projects

National Museum of Natural History (presentation of project and Bill)
Documentation Centre for Science and Technology
Centre for Acoustic Research
Contemporary Art Centre (to show the City's collection of contemporary art)
Competition for utilising the Complesso delle Murate
Law to extend restoration
Extension of opening hours for major museums
European Centre for the Recovery of Stolen Works of Art
Professional School for European Television Newscasters.

2.4 Sponsorship

According to the City of Florence, business sponsorship was raised for Florence 86 to a value of Lira 3 billion from ten companies. Some Lira 800 million was provided as sponsorship for exhibitions at the Centro Mostre. Six companies sponsored individual exhibitions. In addition, sponsors supported the music programme, the relay of the inaugural event on "mondovision" and the restoration of Donatello's Judith and Holofernes. In exchange for sole rights, Assitalia, insurance brokers, gave reduced tariff insurance. A different kind of "sponsorship" took the form of exhibitions, including "Banking in the Renaissance", organised by Florentine companies.

Apart from the financial sector, sponsors were drawn from fashion and other areas of manufacturing, and they included international companies (e.g. IBM and Sweda) with interests in Florence. These elements were positive and the financial contribution impressive given the short lead time. The sponsorship contribution to

the exhibition programme amounted to roughly 10 per cent of costs. Contribution of sponsors to the cost of the overall programme was probably more modest.

3. PROGRAMME

3.1 Scale and scope

The Cultural Counsellor for Florence in 1986 reported that the year of culture provided the City with a programme of events (218 performances and 28 exhibitions) which more than doubled that offered in a normal year. Inauguration of the year took place on 1 July and the programme was for the most part fitted into the second six months of the year, though some exhibitions ran on well into 1987.

The Maggio Musicale (the music, opera and dance festival) was included in the official programme although it had already taken place earlier in the year in May. Together with the Fiesole and Autumn Music Festivals, the 49th Maggio Musicale could not really be regarded as "additional programming" for the City. Excluding the festivals, there were some 142 extra performances, 64 in music, 50 in drama and 28 in dance.

The drama programme related well to the needs of a City in which, lacking as it does a Teatro Stabile (permanent regional theatre), drama production is not strongly established. The Florence 86 drama programme was co-ordinated by the Teatro Regionale Toscano and covered Italian productions of European classics (Shakespeare, Beckett, de Musset, Brecht) as well as a substantial programme of 12 international drama companies ranging from established to less familiar names. These included the English Shakespeare Company (UK), Footsbarn (France), Serapion and the Burg Theater from Vienna, Epigonen from Antwerp, Odin from Denmark, Dramaten from Stockholm and the Stary Theatre from Cracow.

International dance and music programming feature regularly in Florence's established festivals. Nonetheless, an extra dance programme of foreign small scale contemporary dance companies was mounted, including some great names such as Martha Graham and Twyla Tharp. The music programme was put together too late for many international elements to be included. This proved to be a strength and the focus of the programme was on Florentine historical achievements. Mini series were mounted on 14th century Florentine music, Renaissance Florence, 18th century Florence, Cherubini and the 20th century masters, Bussotti and Dallapiccola. The lack of emphasis given to contemporary themes was a common criticism of Florence 86. The closest the music programme came to contemporary work was a series on Serialism 1910 to 1920.

A compact cinema programme was arranged by the Mediateca Regionale Toscana. It consisted of some cycles (e.g. Dark Years of Italian Cinema), celebrations of distinguished directors (Joffe and Tanner), premieres and a conference.

The exhibition programme included a Europolia show of young European sculptors (representing all the EEC countries) and the City's contemporary collection was put on display. But the bulk of shows related to established masters. There were exhibitions of various sizes on Degas (sculpture), Picasso (graphics), German Expressionists and Rubens (drawings). The Florentine contribution was explored again with a major loan exhibition from Detroit on Donatello and his school and a specially prepared exhibition on Andrea Del Sarto. Exhibitions were mounted on other themes, for example, the Heritage, Conservation and "Culture, Technology and the Economy", the latter organised by the EEC. The German, Spanish and Greek national authorities and the Flemish community gave assistance. Kiev and Fez as cities twinned with Florence also contributed exhibitions. Other planned shows from abroad (e.g. a contemporary exhibition from Kassel and Gothic sculpture from Reims), for various reasons, fell through.

The conference programme exploited Florence's appeal as a cultural destination and it brought together a large number of professional meetings which covered many issues of the day in fields such as discrimination, global security, medicine and the role of cities, as well as cultural and historical themes of Florentine interest. "Top names from the world of culture", including several Nobel prize winners, visited the City.

3.2 Parallel programmes, social and educational initiatives

There was no initiative under these headings in Florence 86.

3.3 European themes

The theme of the "Florentine renaissance" and the contribution of Florence to European cultural development which emerged from the deliberations of the advisory committee was criticised by some as "distinctly unoriginal" and by others as "so obvious as to be meaningless". Perhaps the theme was given some meaning in the fitting sequence of European Cities of Culture whereby Florence was chosen to follow Athens.

The City of Florence is home to a large number of cultural institutes, a European University and numerous affiliated units of foreign universities. Their contribution to the conference programme of the Year of Culture gave the City a chance to confirm its international vocation. The City succeeded in its call to foreign governments and twinned cities for projects to include in the Year of Culture, even if this produced a somewhat mixed programming result. As host city for the EEC conference on "A Changing Europe: The Cultural Challenge" Florence registered its awareness of the changing face of culture as it becomes more and more bound up with the development of technology; "all cultural and creative enterprises will soon be presenting new problems, new challenges, new alliances and new threats".

3.4 Opportunities for artists

The lack of emphasis on contemporary themes meant few additional opportunities were given to creative artists within the City or further afield. No international co-productions in the performed arts were arranged in connection with the year.

4. **IMPACT**

4.1 Promotion

Promotion expenses amounted to approximately Lira 1 billion, allocated as follows: print 11 per cent, advertising/publicity 61 per cent; ceremonies, hospitality 28 per cent.

4.2 Media reaction and debate

The City reported after the event that the programme was "very favourably received (quite beyond our expectations) by critics and public alike". There was some debate in the City about the impact and meaning of Florence 86, with critics focusing on the lack of a contemporary emphasis and of a unifying thread.

4.3 European theme: protocol

Successful efforts were put into cultivating the EEC link. This led to the specific EEC contributions to the year in the form of a conference and an exhibition. The Opening Event was attended by almost all Ministers of Culture from the EC. President Mitterand, as in Athens, also attended. Though the event occurred shortly after the Prime Minister resigned, he was able to attend together with the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Culture. The Verdi Requiem was performed at an open-air concert.

4.4 Attendance

The event attracted an attendance of some 779,000. The concert programme was successful with 113,000 visits but this figure includes attendance at the regular festivals and so cannot be counted in its entirety as "extra". Drama and dance each drew around 25,000. The conference programme generated upwards of 5,000 visits. The high volume attendance, as usual, was for the exhibition programme, which drew 600,000 visitors. On the other hand, the musei comunali were rather less well attended during the year, with visitor numbers at 365,859, compared with 452,368 in 1985 and 390,080 in 1987.

No effort was made to establish the profile of visitors to Florence 86. It was noticed during the year that a large number of young people went to the exhibitions. Consequently, the impact of Florence 86 on Florentine markets and on tourism

cannot be assessed. Italy experienced a severe recession in the tourist industry in the 1980s. It was the worst performing EC member state in terms of growth of international tourist receipts between 1984 and 1989. Italian tourism was traditionally based on coastal and ski resorts, mainly in the north of the country. On the other hand, popular city destinations such as Florence, could feel excessive pressure from mass tourism at various points of the year and there is some evidence of crowding out of the quality traffic. Florence 86 could have been a useful tool in relation to these dilemmas, especially since it came at a difficult time for tourism when North American traffic to Europe dropped. The high exhibition attendances imply a considerable interest from tourists, but how far this was new traffic drawn specifically to the City by the Year of Culture and at what time during the year is unknown.

Views in the business community were not fully recorded at the time. It was said that tradesmen claimed there was little benefit from the event, and the business community felt it was in some ways "a missed opportunity". The point was made that little interest was shown in this European event by young people but this is contradicted by the City Council which noticed many young people at the exhibitions. Certainly, the programme did not appear to take much specific account of the needs of this sector of the market.

5. CONCLUSION

The Mayor of Florence claimed that the "international political system can be revitalised by the contribution of major cities". According to the City, the outcome of Florence 86, with a few exceptions, was a positive one on both the national and international levels. Despite the initial planning difficulties, some aspects of the programme were impressive (e.g the exploration of Florentine's historic musical achievements) and well conceived in relation to Florence's particular needs (e.g. the programme of international drama companies). The City reinforced its reputation as a place for meetings and intellectual reflection. The range of events which took place in the City during the year "bore witness to the many cultural facets of the City, demonstrating its great potential in many different fields".

The restoration work on buildings in the City funded by the State allocation of funds is a permanent legacy. The majority of the exhibitions staged during 1986 gave the opportunity (possibly unrepeatable) to clean and restore hundreds of works of art, sometimes thanks to the involvement and generous financial support of private donors and several major banking institutions in the City.

The ties between Florence and its twin towns were strengthened with useful trade, economic and commercial exchanges taking place as well as the strictly cultural contacts. The planning difficulties and short lead time made it virtually impossible to address the strategic tourism opportunities implicit in the year. None of the infrastructure projects and new developments discussed in 1986 has yet been completed. Creative linkages to the rest of Europe and contemporary artistic life received less emphasis than in some other cities. After the Year, the City Council concluded in reviewing the event that the City did not always realise its full potential. "We need to use modern and efficient methods to ensure that the City stays in the first rank of European Cities of Culture" was the critical conclusion.

Florence 86, income and expenditure

	Lira billion
Income	
Italian government	
Ministry of Tourism and Performed Arts	8.25
Ministry of Cultural Assets	15.00
City of Florence	4.00
Region of Tuscany	1.00
Province of Florence	<u>.50</u>
	28.75
Expenditure*	
Programme	
Restoration projects	7
Exhibitions	8
Performances	10
Conferences	3
Overheads/promotions	<u>1</u>
	29
Other sources	
Sponsorship	3.0
European Commission	0.2

Source: City of Florence.

* Approximations.

Florence 86, attendance

	Thousand
Exhibitions	600
Concerts, opera*	123
Dance*	24
Drama	25
Cinema ^b	12
Conferences	> 5

Source: City of Florence.

* Includes Maggio Musicale, Fiesole Summer and Autumn Music Festivals.

^b 3 series of 80 films.