

1. AIMS AND OPERATIONAL FEATURES

1.1 Background

Almost 40 per cent of the population of Greece lives in the Athens conurbation which contains over three million people. Greece has a single tier of local government and the Athens area is administered by 52 municipal authorities. Territorial units (nomoi) carry out the devolved administration of central government functions, including supervision of the local authorities. In this relatively centralised system, the Ministry of Culture directly provides many of the halls, theatres, companies and museums in Athens.

1.2 Designation and rationale

The City of Athens launched the European Community's programme of European Cities of Culture in 1985. In November 1983, the EC Ministers of Culture had met for the first time and agreed to a proposal made by the Greek Minister, Melina Mercouri, that, in order to present a warmer image of the Community, a city should be designated each year as European City of Culture and its role in European civilisation be highlighted. The first place in the queue was given to Athens and its designation was confirmed by the Council of Ministers on 22 November, 1984.

There was no model upon which to base the planning of the initiative and it was not until October 1984 that serious organisation began. The project was inspired and created centrally within the Ministry of Culture and characterised by the close personal involvement and commitment of the Minister, in this case the exceptional figure of Melina Mercouri. Within the Ministry was an autonomous office under the direction of her brother, Spiros Mercouri. Through this office was carried out all the planning, preparation, co-ordination and implementation. As it was to emerge, this brother and sister combination proved to be an unusually favourable circumstance in the development of the ECC programme.

1.3 Objectives and broad approach

In defining the aims of Athens 85 a broad approach was adopted. The intention was that the event should provide:

- a meeting place for artists, intellectuals and scientists;
- a substantial stimulus to Greek cultural life; and
- a means of allowing every citizen "to participate in the shaping of European consciousness".

The latter aim embraced the ambitious theme of democratic participation in cultural life. But this was expressed in the specific context of the Minister's wish to bring forward the cultural dimension in the work of the European Community. "It is time for our (the Ministers of Cultures') voice to be heard as loud as that of the technocrats. Culture, art and creativity are not less important than technology, commerce and the economy." The Minister wanted to improve communication amongst artists and the intelligentsia in Europe.

These aims were translated into three main action areas:

- an expanded programme of cultural attractions and performances in the established venues in Athens and further afield;
- a project to spread activity throughout the 52 municipalities of the region; and
- improvement to the region's physical infrastructure for cultural activities.

1.4 Arrangement of the event

A coordinating office with a staff of 14 was established within the Ministry under the Project Director. Government supervision of the office was exercised through an executive committee consisting of the General Secretary of the Ministry, the Directors of Fine Arts, International Relations and Finance, and a Chief Accountant. A number of advisory bodies, consisting mainly of professionals in the various fields, were set up to contribute ideas. The committees covered drama, music (classical and popular), dance, cinema, exhibitions and conferences.

The municipal authorities had only limited experience of cultural policy, with modest spending levels and frail infrastructure and so was thought unnecessary to involve the "municipalities" formally in the initial planning of the event. Nevertheless, reducing over-centralisation of cultural life in the middle of Athens was set as an aim of the year. In due course, the Attic municipalities came on board and they emerged as beneficiaries of Athens 85 in terms both of improved infrastructure, increased interest in cultural provision and some commitment to policy development in the field.

The role of the Athens 85 Office was primarily to initiate and fund its own projects, but also to coordinate and schedule performances, exhibitions and events deriving from other sources. Many of the latter required little or no financial contributions from the ECC Office. The numerous contributing agencies made for complex administrative arrangements with many partners playing a part. Key elements were:

- the Athens Festival event itself;
- projects supplied by foreign governments and institutes;

- performances and exhibitions generated and paid for by national institutions e.g. the orchestras, theatres, museums and galleries;
- projects mounted by Greek academic and cultural organisations; and
- the programme of exhibitions mounted by the Athens Municipality in its Municipal Gallery and the Municipal Cultural Centre.

Overall scheduling and presentation of the event was, then, the responsibility of the Athens 85 Office, which relied on the Ministry of Culture, other ministries and local authorities for support, as well as linking organisationally with the Athens Festival for a range of operational purposes. Event management was generally in the hands of venues, but the Athens 85 Office ran a touring programme with the municipalities and, in the case of the newly-constructed Petra Theatres, the Athens 85 Office itself managed the two major presentations of Peter Stein's Orestia and Peter Brook's Mahabharata.

1.5 Framework of relationships

Many Greek academic and cultural organisations mounted their own contributions to the event, most of which were included in the official list of activities. "We sought to mobilise the best talents. We wished to bring out the City's cultural face and richness, as well as the connection to the cultural history and future of its people." Local associations were encouraged and assisted to bring forward individual or collective initiatives.

2. **FUNDING**

2.1 Available resources

The Athens 85 Office received funding for the event from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. A sum of Drachma 1 billion was requested; Drachma 0.765 billion was approved, but "apparently Drachma 0.69 billion" was finally delivered.

Additional resources were provided direct to Athens 85 projects from a range of sources;

- the European Community; no budget existed at that time for the ECC programme, but a small grant was provided of ECU 108,000 direct to the Ministry;
- the Athens Festival: this annual event, which programmes Greek and international companies (concerts, plays, opera and dance) in the Herodus Atticus antique theatre and at Lycabettus, is managed by the National Tourist Organisation with funding received from the Ministry of Economic Affairs; the grant was boosted for 1985 to take account of the extra

requirements of the year;

- Delphi European Cultural Centre: this organisation made a contribution of Drachma 63 million towards the cost of seven foreign theatre companies appearing in Athens 85.

By the same token, the infrastructure programme was supplemented from a number of sources. The Ministry of the Merchant Navy provided Drachma 105 million through the Piraeus Port Authority for the conversion of the Old Custom Building into an exhibition space. The Ministry of Public Works undertook improvements in connection with this building project and in a number of other parts of Athens but no estimate of their spend is available. The University of Athens devoted Drachma 30 million to the restoration of various spaces to be used for exhibitions and other purposes.

2.2 Role of member states

Contributions from fellow EC member states were an exceptionally important ingredient in Athens 85. The Minister herself appealed for help through ambassadors and directly to fellow ministers of culture. Despite short notice, the response was generally positive, especially from Germany, France and the United Kingdom, and this was sharpened by the spirit of competition which developed between Greece's partners. A number of the events had already been scheduled for the Athens Festival, but more companies could be added and the foreign exhibition programme was specially contributed in its entirety.

As an example of the level of support proffered, the UK sent eight companies (including the National Theatre and the Royal Opera) two exhibitions and made various other contributions to a pop festival, conferences and exhibitions. France sent three companies (including Peter Brook) and three exhibitions (Delacroix, Rodin and Picasso). Germany sent eight or nine companies (e.g. the Schaubuhne Theater and the Munich Residenztheater) and several exhibitions (e.g. Schliemann, German Expressionism and Kathe Kollwitz). The cost to the partner countries has been estimated at Drachma 260 million, as follows:

	Drachma million
Germany	94
France	78
UK	6
Italy	30
Netherlands	10
Spain	3
Ireland	1

2.3 Sponsorship

Before 1985 business sponsorship of the arts had been confined mainly to support for the Athens Festival from Greek branches of foreign companies; it was an important step during 1985 that a number of Greek companies (four state-owned banks) provided sponsorship totalling Drachma 80 million for an exhibition ("Greece and the Sea").

2.4 Expenditure

The combined total of the Athens 85 Office budget and these identifiable extra resources committed to the event was some Drachma 1,333 million. No figure is available for the regular public expenditure on the cultural system in Athens with which it might be compared. An indication is that the Athens 85 grant was over three times the grant given to the National Tourist Organisation for its various cultural programmes for the tourist market.

The bulk of the Athens 85 office's budget was committed to programming which took Drachma 510 million. Exhibitions were the single most important area of spending at two fifths of the total. Roughly one fifth of the programme budget went each to drama and music (including opera) and the remaining fifth was spent on dance, conferencing and the matching grant programme for the municipalities.

2.5 Infrastructure

Infrastructure projects cost Drachma 271 million, of which Drachma 137 million came from the Athens 85 budget. These projects were an important preparation for the policy of "spreading" activity throughout the Athens conurbation. The infrastructure initiative was managed by the Athens 85 Office. It included improvements to 12 municipal cultural centres, undertaken after a full technical and financial audit of the venues in the Athens region. Four existing theatres received improvements, and new facilities were erected at Petra in a quarry, especially for productions by Peter Stein and Peter Brook. A floating theatre was constructed at Glyfada. Exhibition facilities were included in the infrastructure programme, such as refurbishments to the old University and a major conversion of the Old Customs House building carried out by the Piraeus Port Authority to house the "Greece and the Sea". In a different category were the projects to build ship replicas.

3. **PROGRAMMING**

3.1 Scale and distribution

The event ran from June to December. The programme analysis for Athens 85 enumerates 633 performances (excluding cinema), 102 exhibitions and some 20 conferences. It was policy to ensure that events were well-diffused across the

Athens conurbation. Only 253 performances, less than 40 per cent of the total, actually took place in central Athens. The "suburbs" received 205 performances and there were some 38 performances further afield (e.g. at Epidaurus). The exhibition programme was spread into the Athens "suburbs" but not to the same degree as the performed arts programme. As part of the "suburbs" programme, 35 exhibitions were presented, including an open-air sculpture show which toured six centres. But over half the exhibition programme was mounted in central Athens. The Athens 85 Office also ran a special touring programme in conjunction with 18 municipalities. They were given matching programme grants totalling Drachma 45 million which resulted in 135 performances, mainly popular Greek singers, with a few theatre events.

3.2 Content

Given the short nine month planning time, there was little scope, even if the budgets had been available, to purchase programming in the international market for the performed arts, especially in the sphere of music where the necessary lead times are longer than available in this case. This was reflected in the music programme which had a few prestige events, but little of European interest. The bulk of spending was on popular Greek artists, with a strong pop and rock element, including a rock festival and a Soviet rock opera.

The drama programme achieved much more, with an outstanding roster of "producer drama" (e.g. Hall, Bergmann, Strehler, Brook, Stein). Theatre companies from 23 countries took part. Some 55 per cent of the drama budget was nonetheless given to the projects of 38 Greek theatre companies, mainly productions of ancient and classic texts. Work was toured systematically in the Athens region.

The dance programme was much smaller, but all the major Greek dance groups took part. Some opportunities were given for new and experimental work. Over half the dance budget was spent on a few visiting groups, which included Japanese and British companies.

The key exhibitions initiated by the Athens 85 Office gave the programme a bedrock of coherence. They addressed a series of Greek historical themes, for example, Greek Thought and Classical Education, Byzantine art, Greece and the Sea and the Evolution of Athens (past, present and future - four architectural exhibitions) one dealing with planning matters for modern Athens. Some attention was paid to 20th century and contemporary Greek painters e.g. Movement, Regeneration, Quests, and there was an important historical exhibition of the work of Schliemann. The National Gallery benefited from the contribution of foreign governments in an eclectic programme ranging from Rodin to Dutch landscapes via the Pre-Raphaelites.

3.3 Theme

Despite last-minute planning, the overall programme of Athens 85 did create an opportunity to explore the historic place of Greek thought and drama in a European

context. The Schliemann exhibition, Tippett's King Priam and the Schaubuhne Orestia were examples of this. By the same token, one of the architecture exhibitions explored the place of the City of Athens in the European imagination. The dialogue was not limited to European participants and an Indian drama company brought a performance of Antigone. The conferences organised by Athens 85 explored such themes as the Mediterranean, Technology and Democracy.

3.4 Artists' opportunities

The presentation of "the best that Europe had to offer" set a stimulating framework for Greek artistic life. Many additional engagements were given to Greek artists but the creative boost to the City was more modest. The constraints of the timetable prevented much in the way of new commissions or premieres by foreign companies. The work of some 100 Greek painters and 50 sculptors was shown. Perhaps, the European context for the visual arts was the least well-served overall.

4. **IMPACT**

4.1 Promotion

Promotion of the event was handled by the Athens 85 Office. In practice, this meant that the public relations were undertaken through the Minister's Press Office. The personality of the Minister gave focus and coherence to the subject. The level of marketing activity and print was modest. No special arrangements were made for ticketing which was handled separately by each of the various venues.

4.2 Media reactions and debates

Reactions of the media/press to the initiative were not subjected to analysis at the time. It is reported that the Greek press was initially very sceptical. Critics characterised Athens 85 as an expensive indulgence dealing mainly with prestige events. But a more constructive attitude emerged as the scale and variety of the programme began to be appreciated. In contrast, the foreign press seemed to take a more positive line. Interest was shown by leading journals from the UK, France, Germany and Italy. Their reporting picked up the significance of the European Community's move into cultural activities as well as the commercial and political benefits which might arise for Greece and Europe out of the exercise.

4.3 European dimension

Protocol was handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Twelve Ministers of Culture attended the opening ceremonies, including two from Belgium, plus Ministers from Switzerland and Liechtenstein. The German Minister of Foreign Affairs was present. The Greek President and Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of France gave addresses. This is where Francois Mitterand said "Year One of Europe starts today".

It is said that during the year "the Greeks had a feeling for the first time that they were participating in something truly European".

4.4 Attendance

Detailed attendance figures for Athens 85 are incomplete. It was estimated shortly after the event that total attendance amounted to over one million for performances and 800,000 for exhibitions. Available returns show 644,000 attendances at performances and 700,000 visits to exhibitions. Some of this attendance was for events which were planned for 1985 initially outside the framework of the ECC, including established ones such as the Athens Festival which attracted 166,000. The available attendance figures for performances excludes a two-day rock festival but includes the popular concerts mounted with the municipalities which drew, according to the available returns, 242,000. Figures for exhibition attendance were much influenced by the 200,000 children attending the exhibition on the "Birth of Writing". Open-air sculptures attracted an estimated 90,000. Other notable visitor numbers at exhibitions were:

	Thousand
Democracy and Classical Education	80
Cyprus	80
Schliemann's Collections from Troy	55
Greece and the Sea	56

The relatively modest attendance at Greece and the Sea was somewhat disappointing. This was attributed to the reluctance of Athens residents to explore cultural events in an unfamiliar location such as Piraeus.

4.5 Impacts

Most but not all the events included in the Athens 85 programme were additional to the regular cultural programming of the City. Obviously, the Athens Festival was an established event and some of the exhibitions would probably have happened in any case without the ECC. The bulk of the programme was placed outside the established winter pattern of provision. The exhibitions filled the June to December period, in two cycles, but the performed arts programme was concentrated almost entirely into the months of June, July and August. Significant exceptions were the visits from international theatre companies which continued until November.

No figures are available for a "normal" year with which the impact of Athens 85 programme might be compared. The overall result was clearly positive but the degree of market stimulation cannot be measured accurately. The Athens Festival attendance was 27 per cent higher in 1985 than 1984, and the National Theatre's receipts rose by 30 per cent. Perhaps most of the attendance at exhibitions, and the municipalities' programme and a proportion of the funded and supporting projects (say around one million attendances) might be judged to have been additional. There is evidence of substantial retrenchment in the following year. The Athens Festival

attendance dropped by 24 per cent to its 1983 level, the National Theatre's receipts fell by 32 per cent and the National Archaeological Museum saw a 23 per cent decline in attendance in 1986.

4.6 Tourism

On the basis of existing evidence, it is not possible accurately to assess the scale of any tourism impact from Athens 85. Arrangements were made with the National Tourist Organisation over the Athens Festival which forms part of the programme mounted by the NTO to promote "cultural" entertainment in historic settings for the tourist market, such as Son et Lumiere shows in Athens, Rhodes and Corfu and wine festivals in other centres. According to the Athens 85 Office, the NTO was not persuaded initially that the intensive cultural programming being proposed had tourism potential. The wider development goals set for the initiative were not understood in a tourism context. Time was too short to address these fundamental issues fully and, as a result, little, if any, specialist tourism promotion was undertaken of Athens as European City of Culture.

Tourist overnights in Greece showed a 2 per cent rise during 1985. There was strong growth in the European (+7 per cent) and Rest of the World markets (+40 per cent). The effect of the US "boycott" of Greece, following the terrorist incident in June 1985, was felt mainly in 1986 and subsequent years.

Tourist data on the City of Athens are not available. But the Athens airport tourist arrivals did show 8 per cent growth in 1985, better than for Greece as a whole. The 10 per cent fall in attendance of the Athens Son et Lumiere may be an indication of deeper difficulties in the conventional Athens tourist market. Twenty seven per cent growth in Athens Festival attendance during 1985 and a good market response to other Athens 85 events contributed to a favourable result overall. Apportionment of the growth between tourist markets and Athens residents cannot be made on the basis of existing information. The airport data are a positive indicator and it is not implausible that Athens 85 had some positive impact on the specialist tourist public for arts events, in both Greek and foreign markets, but the scale of the impact cannot be determined.

5. **CONCLUSIONS**

Athens 85 as the first ECC promotion had no existing formula on which to model the initiative. The wide scope of the approach taken in Athens defined many of the elements which were to be adopted by subsequent cities later in the programme, such as the role for conferences, infrastructure initiatives and the cultural development intentions.

Some positive outcomes of the year can be identified. They include:

- an exceptionally rich three to six months benchmark season, which gave a great professional stimulus to Greek artists (especially in drama) and showed that a market existed for a substantial extension to the regular winter season;
- an opportunity for Athens to enter into a dialogue with the rest of Europe (and with some other territories) on the philosophical and creative legacy of the Greek inheritance; the catalogues from the exhibition programme provide a lasting record of aspects of this;
- a significant new public was created for live popular music programmes in the outlying districts; the touring programmes started in 1985 have continued;
- extra opportunities for Greek companies and individuals to present their work during 1985; a number of exhibitions were subsequently toured to venues in Europe and North America, which extended their impact and established new professional linkages;
- the way was paved for the development of cultural policy in the municipalities, building on expertise and know-how acquired in collaborating in the Athens 85 initiative; this included growing awareness of the needs and opportunities in some of the poorest parts of the city;
- infrastructure improvements of lasting value, including new facilities which have remained in use for additional seasons and festivals; one of the theatres erected in the Petra Quarry was moved to suburb of Athens where it houses a summer festival;
- credit gained for Athens from the energetic and successful launch of the ECC programme, which stimulated other cities to wish to apply; the positive international press interest was helpful to Greece at the time; and the effect is said to have been particularly appreciated among the Greek communities abroad.

Whilst Athens 85 was of importance to the artistic community in Greece as a benchmark year in programming terms and for the extra engagements given at the time, the creative boost to the city was, perhaps, more modest. Few new commissions were given to Greek artists and the event did not generally lead to new sustainable opportunities and creative linkages at the professional level in a European framework. Nor was much international critical interest shown in the contemporary Greek aspects of the programme. At a practical level, the necessary follow-through for realising the market potential demonstrated (somewhat surprisingly) by the year had not been planned in advance. No professional assessment of the market increase was undertaken, despite the suspicion that this demonstrated a significant opportunity in tourism terms. Accordingly, there must be a question about both the immediate and longer-term economic impacts of the event. A more certain outcome would have needed a longer lead time and specifically planned measures.

Athens 85 did not set the management model for the subsequent ECCM programme. It was unlikely that programming elements contributed so generously by fellow member states of the Community could be replicated in other cities later in the ECC

series. Subsequently, the event planning tended increasingly to involve city administrations rather than being retained in the Ministry as in the Greek case.

Some of the impacts of Athens 85 were of lasting significance within Greece, such as the infrastructure improvements and the stimulus given to the municipalities, which in several cases set their sights on increasing cultural activity. The Athens Municipality became more active culturally and efforts were made to sustain the touring programme in the wider region. Selected exhibitions from the Athens 85 programme were toured in Greece and abroad. The Ministry itself sought to maintain an increased international presence with its programme of distributing exhibitions to venues in Europe and other parts of the world, including future European Cities of Culture.

It has been reported that the outcome of Athens 85 was strong at the political level. As was said previously, the Greeks had "a feeling for the first time that they were participating in something truly European". It seemed appropriate at that particular moment for the community partners to demonstrate their esteem for Greece in a project which showed the host nation's openness to Western Europe. Though few of the European partners envisaged repeating such an exercise year after year, it may well be the case that the cultural dimension, which one source at the time called this "curious but distinctive landmark" in the evolution of the Common Market, was instrumental in advancing political relationships between Greece and its European partners at that time.

Athens 1985, income and expenditure

	DR billion
Athens 85 office	
Income	
Ministry of Economic Affairs	690
Expenditure	
Programme	510
Building projects	137
Overheads/other	<u>43</u>
	690
Contributions from other sources	
Programme	
Sponsorship	80
European Community	11
Athens Festival supplement	110
Foreign governments/institutes	<u>262</u>
	(463)
Infrastructure	
Pyraeus Port Authority	105
Municipalities	45
University of Athens	<u>30</u>
	180
	(643)

Source: Athens 85.

Athens 1985, attendance*

		Thousand	
		Performances	Exhibitions
Athens	117	-	-
Funded projects	114	114	677
Other projects	121	121	21
Municipalities programme	<u>242</u>	<u>242</u>	<u>2</u>
	644	644	700

Source: Athens 85.

* Available detail only; estimates prepared at the time claim performance attendance of over 1 million and an exhibition attendance of 800,000.

Athens 1985, events, by area of city

	Performed Arts			Exhibitions		Number
	Venues	Events	Performances	Venues	Showings	
Athens centre	14	142	253	23	58	
Suburbs	16	157	205	20	35	
Beyond Conurbation	4	19	38	2	3	
Municipal programme	<u>18</u>	<u>137</u>	<u>137</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>	
	52	455	633	48	102	

Source: Athens 85.

Athens 1985, timing of programmes

	Concerts	Theatre	Percentage per month	
			Dance	Exhibitions*
June	28	17	15	23
July	44	24	38	16
August	16	32	36	8
September	8	15	9	17
October	2	8	-	19
November	1	3	2	10
December	-	2	-	8

Source: Athens 85.

* Openings.

Greece, cultural attractions, attendance

Attendance (thousand)	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Athens Festival*	132	131	166	89 ^b	120
Athens son et lumiere	155	192	172	96	124
Other tourist spectacles*	239	232	227	249	183
National Archaeological Museum ..	..	..	793	613	588
National Theatre ^c (receipts DRm) 8.3	15.5	20.2	13.7	19.8	
Attendance (index 1984 = 100)					
Athens Festival	100	100	127	68	92
Athens son et lumiere	81	100	90	50	65
Other tourist spectacles	103	100	98	107	79
National archaeological museum ..	..	..	100	77	74
National Theatre ^d (receipts DRm) 54	100	130	88	128	

Source: National Tourist Organisation; Ministry of Culture.

* Herodotus Atticus and Lycabettus.

^b Epidaurus; son et lumiere Rhodes and Corfu; wine festivals in Daphni and Alexandroupolis.^c Without Lycabettus.^d Central and New Stages.

Greece, tourist market, overnights^a

Overnights (thousand)	1984	1985	1986	1987
Domestic	4,399	4,193	4,008	4,024
Europe	4,921	5,264	5,193	5,209
United States	839	710	186	324
Rest of world	<u>416</u>	<u>584</u>	<u>493</u>	<u>596</u>
	10,575	10,751	9,880	10,153
Athens tourist arrivals ^b	2,092	2,256	.. ^c	.. ^c
Overnights (index 1984 = 100)				
Domestic	100	95	91	91
Europe	100	107	106	106
United States	100	85	22	39
Rest of world	<u>100</u>	<u>140</u>	<u>119</u>	<u>143</u>
	100	102	93	96
Athens tourist arrivals ^b	100	108	.. ^c	.. ^c

Source: National Tourist Organisation.

^a Excluding camping.^b Eastern and Western Airports.^c Not available due to abolition of traveller's card.