**O4b, Manual for the use of BT and PM**

FAIE, v1

**The Spichlerz Local Activity Association and the idea for the good practice**

The Spichlerz Local Activity Association is a Non-governmental organization located in Czernica, a small village (around 2 200 inhabitants) in the Silesian voivodeship.

The history of the Association began in 2011 by founding an informal group researching the genealogy of the local noble family von Roth – Hugo von Roth baron mainly, who used to own the Czernica village. Since these activities were met with interest by the local community, the group decided to found an association (2012). The organisation is active in the field of local heritage, local culture, traditions and identity. Its research includes cooperation with the local senior citizens – as the bearers of the traditions and memories. The Association members are both the locals and people who moved to Czernica from bigger cities. The team of the Association pays a lot of attention to taking care of good cooperation and understanding between the local people and the newcomers and offers a space for the realization of various ideas of the local inhabitants. There are inhabitants of all generations who are members, co-operants, and/or participants of the activities of the Association. Currently, the Association has 40 members and 50 volunteers and cooperates with 40 seniors.

Beginning from 2016, the Association manages the Culture House "Zameczek” in Czernica, having its headquarters in the renovated, XIX-century former castle of the von Roth baron.

The Association decided to implement the inspirations from the Benchmark Tool (BT) testing in planning and delivering the cyclical winter event - the "Czernicka Christmas Tree” meeting. In 2021, the event was planned as much bigger and involving many more stakeholders than in previous years – evolving into a Community Christmas Market.

**The Benchmark Tool experience and the expectations**

Asked about which work areas have been sensitised by the Benchmark Tool in the organisation, it was underlined that the most important for the Spichlerz team is working for the local community and building partnerships with other organisations and non-formal groups. They felt they should be more attentive with planning - careful not to get into the routine. The team decided to design and create a new event with some new partners to test this new approach.

Among the expectations/desires named through participation in the benchmarking process, there was the one to be more aware of how the Association’s actions impact the local community and to design/implement their activities as responding to specific local needs, respecting the specificity of all audience groups (including groups with fewer resources)”.

The main changes expected during the testing phase (i.e., implementing the practice method in practice) regarding the organisational structure, the programme and the networking and cooperation area *were named as follows: "We expect to develop ourselves during the event's organization. The new offer we provide should allow us to test our partnerships and our internal structure. We would like to see how we could cooperate and communicate better*”.

As the Spichlerz team underlines*, "Testing the Benchmark Tool (BT) allowed us to become more aware of several areas of functioning of the Association. It also helped us to plan and name our activities more consciously. The BT inspired us to introduce interventions, especially in the two BT areas: Programme and Networking and Cooperation”.*

**The planning, designing and implementation of the event – the Community Christmas Market 2021**

The planning started around October 2021 and concluded with the event itself, on December 12th in Czernica. The event was organised by joining efforts of several other organisations, institutions, enterprises and informal groups cooperating with the Association, including the local authorities and the regional media. The audience was being reached through the personal invitations, the local radio, local TV, newspapers and internet portals. All the partners were involved in the direct promotion of the event, using their channels of communication and advertising.

**The programme:**

Concerning the programme, while planning the event, special attention was paid to adjusting the scheduled programme of the event for the needs/expectations/interests of very various groups of participants – taking into account people of all ages and interests.

As one of the Spichlerz leaders recalls*, "For us, very important was the space for participation. We have analysed this element thoroughly while planning the event. We have started assuming that the event could be fully participatory for the local community only if we would include the partners – representatives of the local community – already at the concept - planning stage. Such an approach always is a challenge. This was the first stage of building the common mission of the event, instead of just presenting the people with the division of tasks – who does what and who is responsible for what. That seems to be easier, faster, and more simple. Here, we have started to work together at an early stage, designing the concept of the event altogether – asking about the needs, and the vision of the event. This way, we achieved that the co-organisers became truly co-responsible (…)."*

**The networking & cooperation**

Speaking about networking, the Spichlerz team concentrated on the quality and effectiveness of cooperation with the local organisations, the local authorities and the local community.

There were numerous local organisations, non-formal groups, local enterprises and local authorities involved in the process:

The Gaszowice Commune gave the patronage; supported the promotion; lent the ‘picnic’ tables and benches to sit for the guests.

The Astrohunters enterprise prepared the lecture about exploring the sky and a "search for the first star," making accessible one of the telescopes, answering all the questions about the astronomical observations.

The Zameczek Culture House was preparing the surrounding park where the event took place, presenting the thematic groups meeting in the Zameczek (children, youth, seniors).

The Koło Gospodyń Wiejskich "Czerniczanki" (The Village Womens’ Circle) were responsible for planning, idea giving, and preparing cakes and cookies served to the guests.

The local craftsmen prepared the Christmas decorations that could be bought during the Market. There were also some local food producers present with their products.

The Village Mayor and the Village Council were responsible for promotion, concepts giving, and organisational works.

The volunteers of the Association took care of the animation for the kids.

The U-RWIS Association from the neighboring village organised the meeting with Santa Claus for the children.

The Horyzonty Kultury Social Cooperative was responsible for promotion, running the cafe the day of the event, and organisational works.

All the partners were involved in the direct promotion of the event, using their channels of communication and advertising. The local media were concerned.

At the end of the event, there was a concert by a local, well-known music band. All the space of the Castle and the surrounding the park was used.

One of the Association leaders summarises: *"This common event would never have such a significance, dimension, and importance if not so many small, local, truly involved entities. This showed us it has a meaning and importance. The previous years the Christmas events were being organized in smaller partnerships; sometimes, we have been organizing it just on our own… This was the first time we cooperated so widely. It had a significant impact, resulted in many more participants of the event, a very positive receiving of the event; we have received many positive comments afterward, also in the media (…) I believe this success was possible mostly because of the genuine involvement of so many local partners."*

It was agreed that the whole process of testing the renewed approach to designing, planning and realizing the community event, as inspired by the Benchmark Tool, will be constantly monitored to catch the most important conclusions and highlights: At the very beginning, the expectations of the key - team of the organisers were recorded. In the middle of preparations, there was some reflection on the process in motion. In the end – there an evaluation meeting was realized.

**Perspectives and recommendations**

Asked what kind of changes have been identified through the consideration of the benchmark during the practice methods implementation in terms of the organisational structure, the programme and the networking and cooperation, the Spichlerz team summarises:

*“Definitely, we noticed that sharing tasks and responsibility made our project richer. We had to involve more people, who represented all the partners in the decision-making process”.*

*“The programme was created in cooperation. Some elements were added in the process, and some were excluded during the organization. We have built one event from many small parts; everyone was important. Our focus was on creating a complex event in partnerships”.*

*“We have learned how to agree in different fields. The project included many small activities, which combined created an integral event. Every partner had its own "field of expertise," we all had to trust that our partners knew their task and were ready to do it correctly."*

Among the solutions developed during the implementation of the new activities, the new way, that the Spichlerz team would like to keep for the future projects are: Believing in trusting the partners and allowing them to work in their mode; clear and constant communication; the practice of the regular meetings with the partners – open for discussing every phase of the next cooperations, exchanging ideas and propositions. The strategy of communication with the audience using multiples channels, based on various partners' communication paths, is also to be continued.

To summarise, the Benchmark Tool was appreciated most for having the rising awareness effect, giving the organisations‘ team a space to reflect on the current course of the organisation – and thus opening space for changes.

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**PHOTOS** [[folder](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AdmMSnI0MhDY4gKIDcyMWsRzMLIRyfx8)]

Find out more:

The webpage of the Spichlerz Association: <http://www.sdlspichlerz.pl/>

Facebook: <https://pl-pl.facebook.com/SDLSpichlerz/>

The webpage of the Culture House “Zameczek”: <https://kulturaczernica.weebly.com/>