

The Carnival Lab of Patras is responsible for constructing the artistic wagons (floats) for the Patras Carnival Parade, the most famous carnival in Greece.

The Carnival of Patras, is the largest carnival event in Greece & one of the most important carnivals in Europe, where a lot of fantastic & impressive happenings, theatrical events, dances, parades & games are being developed from the Opening Ceremony to the End of the Festival.

The Lab is one of the cornerstones of the local carnival tradition & constitutes a kind of signature mark for the RWG & the city of Patras. The Lab itself dates from the 1950s & is owned by the Municipality of Patras. The Lab is not an actual incubator aiming for the support of start-up firms. Nevertheless, it is an interesting case because it is experiencing a transition period which forces it to seek external financial resources & differentiate its production.

The carnival industry may be characterized as a kind of cluster, depending for about 50% on non-profit activities. The Lab consists of a group of public servants & freelancers who cooperate in order to produce the wagons for the parade. The Lab also produces small sculptures, street decorations & stage props, & hosts workshops & courses for children & students. The Carnival Lab workshop & offices employ 6 temporary & 2 permanent staff members respectively, but in peak season about 10 temporary workers are recruited. The workshop has a surface of 3,000m² & is surrounded by sheds & free space which amount to an additional 2,000m². Its organized by the municipality, while the participants are all private individuals & society as a whole.

Resources needed

The Carnival Lab formulated a business plan which suggests many additional activities or initiatives that may generate income. Sponsorship may be considered an indication of the involvement of both private individuals & firms in Patras. The main resource nowadays come from booklets & carnival statues

Evidence of success

Over 7K students & other interested parties visit the Lab yearly, as well as 3K other visitors.

Patras Carnival is a space of carnival & artistic creativity with pioneer & innovative character.

Patras Carnival is somewhat of a landmark of the city. The participation of carnivalists every year reaches 30K people who tirelessly follow a 4km journey, crossing the main road of Patras. It is estimated that a total budget of 30m.€ is spent in every carnival by visitors & another 3m.€ by the organizers & members of the carnival crews (citizens). It generates 5m.€ in additional tax revenues/year.

Difficulties encountered

The aim of the Lab is to grow from a 100% subsidised existence to financial independence. Financial sustainability is also considered a way to achieve more freedom for the management, with less dependency from the Municipality. Nevertheless, it is a long-term, incremental process.

Potential for learning or transfer

Support to start-up firms is not applicable in the case of the Carnival Lab, as it is not an incubator. Partnerships, however, are important to the Lab. Many ties exist to the local community. It is part of the strategy of the Lab to transform these into more formal & durable partnerships, particularly with regard to sponsoring. Until recently, the Patras Carnival Lab was mainly paid for by the Municipality of Patras. However, this year local shop owners who contributed financially have become 'official endorsers' of the carnival. In return for their contribution they get publicity in the carnival period, which becomes most important when the carnival reaches its 'peak' during the last 3 days. Carnival of Patras has cooperated in exchange programs with Cyprus, Spain, Italy, France, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Singapore, Japan.as also at International Exhibition HELLEXPO presenting & promoting the history of Patras Carnival & the creations of Carnival Lab.

Main institution

Public Benefit Corporation of the Municipality of Patras - Patras Carnival

Location

Δυτική Ελλάδα, Greece (Ελλάδα)

Start Date

January 1950

End Date

Ongoing

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