

Project: The Spirit of Danube

The project is financed by the European Union through Phare CBC România-Bulgaria 2006 program in partnership with the Ruse Art Gallery, Bulgaria and the Museum of „Lower Danube” Călărași.

European Union is defined by a multitude of cultures representing national, regional or ethnic collectivities which convive for centuries on the continent. From this perspective the „community” contributes to the flowering of Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time, highlighting the common cultural heritage (Article 151 of the Amsterdam Treaty).

At cross-border regions, however, common cultural-historical heritage , certified for Danube-Pontic region, is put into difficulty by language barriers, conjunctural aspects not always conducive to cooperation.

They can become barriers for the cross-border partnership (collaboration), the Danube itself proved to be enough for separate development of riverain regions – a single bridge, Giurgiu-Ruse, connecting them, and the Romania-Bulgaria 2007-2013 collaboration operational program confirms the lack of common identity of the Danube area, marginalized because of low investment, thin capitalization and the inability to attract investment, at the same time rich in tradition and cultural heritage which will be the bond for cross-border cooperation.

The project aims to foster interaction between local communities of the three cities in a cross-border (transborder) context.

Furthermore, the partners decided to coopt as associate the Silistra Art Gallery which will have a well defined role in carrying out certain activities. The project intends that this interaction to be of interdisciplinary nature introducing to the autonomous cultural space the economic and educational sectors from the target area and creating the framework by which new projects and cross-border actions to be identified and defined.

Through the actions outlined in the project, these local communities will know themselves better and will be able to put in value the aspirations and projects related to the Danube, in the context in which an overwhelmed economic globalization seems to compromise the forms of economic development based on local synergies. The photographic art - being both suggestive and accessible for the people living in the cross border area, approached as target groups on the framework of the project - has been chosen as a mean of communication between the project and local communities.

Round this topic which esures the success of the message were constructed promotion activities : the itinerant photo exhibition with 30 photographs taken by photographer-artists, selected by competition from all the riverain localities bordering the Danube, this one representing the most important activity of the project.

These photos will cover three areas: anthropological, cultural, economic. There will be prizes worth 1000 euros, respective, 750 euros and 500 euros to the best three

photographs selected by the jury. Elements of visibility and promotional materials will be widely disseminated in the host cities.

Objectives of the Danube Delta Spirit project

General objective

The overall objective of the “The Spirit of Danube” project is to increase cooperation at local and crossborder scale, to develop synergies based on shared identification among local communities of the cities of Constanța, Călărași and Ruse. The project aims to have a direct impact on the perception of shared elements and problems of the Danube area, by means of photographic images as arguments of the crossborder identification stimulating synergies.

Specific objectives

Specific objectives of the project, which will be achieved during the implementation period are the following:

1. Increasing awareness of belonging to the crosscultural European space among the Romanian and Bulgarian communities located in the crossborder area points out by the project on how the Danube River has influenced and continues to influence the life on both river borders
2. Increasing the visibility of the common cultural heritage of the Danube area, as a factor having a huge importance in the development of the cross-border regional consciousness
3. Identification and promotion of a common framework for developing cross-border collaboration projects in the Danube area

Project Activities

In order to reach its determined targets, the project will develop a series of activities to promote common cultural values related to the Danube as the base of defining elements of identity and, integrated into these process and of promoting activities of interdisciplinary interaction and impact at cross-border level.

Activity A 1

Documentary Research on How The Danube Delta has influenced The Riverain Communities including the Cross-Border Fields .

Period: August-September 2008

The documentary research activity aims to achieve a synthesis material as an integrated perspective on how the Danube river influenced the development of Romanian and Bulgarian communities. This material will go through by combining data produced by three distinct but complementary and interdisciplinary researches - in anthropology, culture and economy realized by Bulgarian and Romanian

experts concerning the crossborder area, the economic one regarding development strategies.

The results of the two components of the synthesis research will show that not the simple presence of the common elements related to the Danube give identity to a region, but their interconnectivity with the entire socio-economic *and* cultural spectrum of local communities, as well as how the river influenced the ways of defining their identity over time and history.

Activity A2

Organizing a photographic competition based on the partnership between the local communities involved in the project

Period: October-November 2008

The purpose of this activity is to select a set of 30 photos selected to take part at an itinerant exhibition, in the purpose of promoting the identity elements of “Danube Spirit” to riverain communities. Equally, the organization of this contest is viewed as an efficient mean to initiate at a larger scale - in the cross-border zone -, the project’s series of promotion activities and to create premises of sustainable development of artistic networks and shared activities in the art-photography domain between Romanian and Bulgarian artists.

Activity B1

Itinerant photo exhibition

Period: November 2008-May 2009

The exhibition will be built around common values generated by the Danube for the entire Romanian-Bulgarian cross-border area, representing a basis of common identification elements in the crossborder area.

The implementation of the itinerant photo exhibition pursues to promote “Danube Delta Spirit” identity elements, going after a broader impact on communities, to the level of change in social perceptions of the influences that Danube might have as a generating factor of local synergies.

Given the project’s unity and the intention to send a unitary message and image in the 4 exhibition host cities (three cities of the project’s partners and one city of the associate), these must be defined and organised in detail, to ensure its replication in the communities represented in the project framework.

Activity B2

The „ Spirit of Danube ” volume

Period: February-May 2009

The purpose of making this volume is to promote and disseminate the project’s results among the public actors towards the development opportunities and cross-border collaboration, starting from the Danube factor.

Activity B3

Stimulation plan to develop transborder activities related to the Danube river

Period: November- December 2008

Developing a stimulation plan of cross-border activities will contribute in time, to strengthen the common framework of transborder collaboration, with an emphasis on cultural identification and integration. The stimulation plan of activities related to the Danube is conceived as an important step in fostering collaborations between all the public actors interested in developing large projects based on the concept of European symbol represented by the river.

Activity B4

”The spirit of Danube Delta” final symposium

Period: July 2009-10-05

The final symposium aims to finalizing the efforts of values promotion related to the Danube, as well as generating of local and cross-border synergies by presenting the project's conclusions. The role of this presentations is to a) facilitate networking among different local actors who took notice not only during the exhibition releases in the 4 locations, but also participating at this activity marking synergetic effects of the entire project, b) prove their openness to further cross-border collaboration, assuming the stimulation plan of cross-border activities and c) their future involvement in the development of new wider projects related to the European symbol represented by the Danube river.

All the project partners have participate at the event: the representants of the associate partners, Romanians and Bulgarians, with two specialists for each part, as well as the four experts who produced the documentary research. The guests to this event must represent the academic world – art and culture, local community of cultural, economic and educational areas, as well as representatives of other museums, cultural research institutes, universities, durable growth centers in the cultural field sustained by the project. Their participation at the event will be made on their own financial sources. It is estimated the attendance of 50 persons, plus 15 media representants from Constanța at the press conference.

Activity B5

Dissemination of the project results

Period: June-July 2009

The purpose of this activity is to increase the chances of implementation, extension and creation of new partnerships capable of promoting, but also identifying new values in connection to the Danube as a factor in the development of regional cross-border consciousness.

In the last two months of the project, the Art Museum of Constanța will prepare and donate a replica of the itinerant photo exhibition to a number of 10 institutions (the 3 partner museums and another 7 museums and / or local authorities in the relevant localities, riverain to the Danube). In addition to this, there will be sent a material to a

total number of 20 local actors in the domain , containing a strategic plan to stimulate the activities related to the Danube. This material will be made both in Romanian and Bulgarian languages .

Partners in the project: “ Spirit of the Danube”

- Constanta Art Museum
- “Lower Danube” Museum, Călărași
- Art Gallery, Ruse

Useful resources

- Stimulation plan to improve cross-border collaboration in the Romanian-Bulgarian border area.
- Research report
- List of senders for the photo sets