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Erasmus+ Programme – Strategic Partnership

Project Nr: 2017-1-CZ01-KA219-035417

Liceul Tehnologic “Sfantul Pantelimon” București

Open air museums in Romania (skanzens)

Bran Castle (Romanian: *Castelul Bran*), situated near Bran and in the immediate vicinity of Brașov, is a national monument and landmark in Romania. The fortress is situated on the border between Transylvania and Wallachia, on DN73. Commonly known as "Dracula's Castle" although it is one among several locations linked to the Dracula legend, it is often erroneously referred to as the home of the title character in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. There is, however, no evidence that Stoker knew anything about this castle, which has only tangential associations with Vlad the Impaler, voivode of Wallachia, the putative inspiration for Dracula. The castle is now a museum dedicated to displaying art and furniture collected by Queen Marie. At the bottom of the hill is a small open-air museum park exhibiting traditional Romanian peasant structures (cottages, barns, etc.) from across the country.



Braşov is a city in Romania and the administrative centre of Braşov County. According to the latest Romanian census (2011), Braşov has a population of 253,200 making it the 7th most populous city in Romania. The metropolitan area is home to 382,896 residents. Braşov is located in the central part of the country, about 166 kilometres (103 miles) north of Bucharest and 380 kilometres (236 miles) from the Black Sea. It is surrounded by the Southern Carpathians and is part of the Transylvania region. The city is notable for being an important centre of Transylvanian Saxons in the past, and a large commercial hub on the trade roads between East and West. It is also the birthplace of the national anthem of Romania.



The Village Museum (Bucuresti) is an open-air ethnographic museum (skansen) located in the Herăstrău Park, showcasing traditional Romanian village life. It is one of the biggest and oldest in Europe. The museum extends to over 100,000 m², and contains 272 authentic peasant farms, churches, water and wind mills, cloth mills and houses from all over Romania. It was created in 1936. The objects inside the households – carpets, pottery, rugs, icons, furniture – point to originality of the folk creation, the sensibility and care for the beauty of the rural people.





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BRIEF HISTORY OF National Village Museum “Dimitrie Gusti”

Herăstrău lakeside, in the middle of the Romanian capital, the visitor everywhere have the joy of meeting a “village” really, monuments and artefacts sec. seventeenth century until the early century. XX; Building representative from important areas of ethnography regained a second life at the National Village Museum “Dimitrie Gusti”.

The idea of an outdoor museum arrives in Romania since the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1867 Odobescu, eminent scholar, proposes presenting in Universal Exhibition in Paris in a special pavilion, some of folk architecture. Later, scientist Alexander Tzigara Samurcaș would envisage bringing Ethnographic Museum, National Art, Decorative Art and Industrial Art in Bucharest, founded by him in 1906 of “households authentic and complete in all regions most significant inhabited by Romanian” the project materialized in 1909 by exposing the museum of peasant houses in Gorj county.

In the 30s of the twentieth century, in Europe, there were only two open-air museums: Museum Skansen in Stockholm (Sweden, 1891) and the Museum of Lillehamer Bygdøy (Norway). In our country, at the time, he had opened its doors to the public, the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania Park “Hoia” from Cluj, founded in 1929 by Professor Romulus Vuia with specific regional and Village Museum Romanian (now the National Museum the ‘Dimitrie Gusti’) in Bucharest, the 1936 national character.

Creating Village Museum is the result of intense and sustained research, theoretical and field of museological experiments for over a decade, coordinated by Professor Dimitrie Gusti, founder of Sociological School of Bucharest. As head of the Department of Sociology, University of Bucharest, Gusti organizes between 1925-1935, with specialists from various fields (sociologists, ethnographers, folklorists, geographers, statisticians, doctors) and his students monographic research campaigns, interdisciplinary, a relatively large number of villages (Fundu Moldova – jud. Suceava, Nereju – jud. Vrancea, Dragus – jud.

Braşov, Dragomireşti – jud. Maramures, Clopotiva – jud. Hunedoara Runcu – jud. Gorj, Ruşetu – County. Buzau etc.).

Based on these experiences, the concept of hard work and moral and material support of the Royal Foundation “Prince Charles” in March 1936 in just two months, could build a museological exceptional work. In this short time, teams of specialists and students (the same ones who participated in the campaigns of land), led by Professors D. Gusti and Stahl, bought from peasant villages researched building (house, annexes, churches, technical installations) and interior objects (furniture, ceramics, textiles, tools, etc.) considered representative for their places of origin.

According to the criterion of authenticity and respect local building traditions in effect today, remount the museum building have worked under the supervision of specialists, first of Henry H. Stahl and Victor Ion Popa, craftsmen brought from villages provenance of monuments.

Village Museum official opening took place on 10 May 1936 in the presence of King Carol II, and to the public a week later, May 17, 1936.

In its early stage, and between 1936-1940, the Village Museum had 4.5 ha of land. On this land were fast complex located 33 authentic villages investigated transferred from houses with annexes, a church (in Dragomireşti, jud. Maramures), crucifixes, technical installations, wells and a swing. Their arrangement was made after an elaborate playwright and designer V. I. Popa.

By conceiving Romanian Village Museum as a museum sociological, Professor D. Gusti and his collaborators found that its mission was to show visitors the reality, village life as it was lived by Romanian peasant. Therefore, periodically, they will live in the houses the museum, peasant families from their villages monuments to former owners even started. These “people” came to Bucharest with everything that was necessary for living, including birds and animals.

Great merits of Sociology School led by scientist Dimitrie Gusti will not ever be challenged, but so true are the circumstances that led to the degradation of monuments and museum objects by using their intense given that, at the time, there were no appropriate treatments for conservation and heritage restoration.

In 1940, following the incorporation of Bessarabia, Bukovina and part of the Soviet Union Herta region, municipality of Bucharest decided that in some households the museum to be housed Bukovina and Bessarabia refugee families. That subsequently could not be found other solutions did they remain in the museum until 1948. In these circumstances, the museum was put in a position to no longer be able to continue working. In addition, misuse of monuments through their dwelling, led to the destruction of a large number of household inventory. Chapter losses must be mentioned monuments dismantled in 1937 (six windmills in Bessarabia, a Macedonian house, a house of Kaliakra, a floating mill and a fishery), following the opening of the palace yard for Elizabeth.

1948 when the Village Museum reopens to the public, and its head is called Gheorghe Focsa, a former student of Professor D. Gusti and member of teams monographist marks the beginning of a second phase in the evolution of the institution. The first task that Gheorghe Focsa has assumed at the beginning of its division, was to them evacuate residents who remained in the museum to halt the degradation of heritage. Meanwhile, efforts were directed towards equipping and museum specialists with their own scheme before the war as an employee only institution having an administrator.

Beyond the vicissitudes own communist regime, which our country has passed and that the museum has felt the full, because the professional capacity of director Gheorghe Focsa and his refusal to make concessions constraints and pressures of the old regime, the museum has not only to survive, but also to record achievements.

Were grounded directions of development of the museum, based on multiple criteria: history (representing traditional habitat – and thus popular culture – in its development space, between the XVII – XX), social (now questionable because of the way that fast addressed are made that the exhibition reflects the situation of peasant exploited), geographic (grouping of monuments to historical area) – this plan, which largely applies today, tends to reproduce the map of Romania by grouping of architectural monuments and technical popular criterion on geographical proximity of the settlements of origin in sectors representing the major historical provinces of the country, economic (household typology based on occupations and crafts), artistic (this aesthetic value implicit or explicit), the authenticity and typicality.

Based on these criteria that led implicitly to carry out systematic, research and procurement and eliminating component sociological presence peasant, along with exhibits – objects, open-air exhibition changes its profile, transforming it from ” sociological reserve “in the ethnographic museum.

Through its exhibition of folk architecture and technology, and thus the specific inventory of ethnographic objects, as well as the new concept museological organization, the museum manages to present to the public in a more systematic way than in the past, the image of a village – summary Romania, originality, representativeness, unity and diversity. At the same time, respect and consistently applied the principle of unity in diversity, allowed himself to be captured and differentiations order ethnic as well as interference of popular culture Romanian and other nationalities in Romania, the museum was transferred to a household Székely in Bancu, jud. Harghita, and other Russians Lipovans Jurilovca, jud. Tulcea.

Develop new strategies for development of heritage, combined with the need to increase the exhibition space of the museum, it led to expansion of the area intended to describe monuments, from 4.5 ha in 1936 as held on 9 ha at growth and diversification of collections. Heritage of open-air exhibition is enriched, reaching a 62 complex of folk architecture (compared to 33 in 1936), with 223 buildings (40 houses, 165 annexes, three churches, 15 technical installations and workshops), totaling an inventory of 17,000 items. Among the monuments of land are purchased from farms and houses in the nearby Suceava, Vaslui, Valcea, Constanta, Cluj, Hunedoara, Maramures etc.

Other targets, which the museum specialists and they have incurred in this period, targeted diversification of the institution, exploitation of scientific heritage and research results (land and collections) and experiments museological embodied by editing publications periodic, as the cultural – educational, focusing on dialogue with different categories of visitors (temporary exhibitions, performances and folk festivals, presentations of traditional costumes, circles, catalogs, brochures, guides, postcards, slides etc.). Aging monuments, conservation and restoration problems resulting from microbial attacks and natural degradation inherent led the establishment of a specialized service in the treatment of heritage assets “Laboratory of Conservation and Restoration”. In 1978, the Village Museum of Folk Art Museum merged with the R.S.R., under the title of Village and Folk Art Museum. He will function as such until March 1990.

In the period until the 1989 Revolution, the museum was several times threatened with relocation to another site outside Bucharest, place or being planned expansion of the residential area of Communist rule. He escapes by this disaster, but like all other museums, will have to bear, especially at the end of the 8th decade, the detrimental consequences of lack of funds for research, acquisition and restoration of monuments, and application policy of “self-financing”. Despite these adverse conditions, museum specialists were able to find “lines” financing contracts ethnographic research conducted in partnership with various scientific institutions in the country culturally.

With the Revolution of 1989, the Village Museum regains individuality by separating the museum that merged, the current Museum of the Romanian Peasant. They are rethought and reconfigured all museum activities. In this sense, it was developed a systematic program priorities related to both the development of heritage and cover some segments thematic unrepresented in the permanent exhibition and outdoor collections and a new focus and orientation of research, to provide a scientific basis to all other activities of

the museum, initiating and implementing projects consistent museum pedagogy and interactive forms of communication with the public.

Requirements imposed by reviving the image of the museum and playing some aspects not shown in the permanent exhibition that the impossibility of its development in the space, formed the basis of requests museum for obtaining, from the municipality, the land located between the Arc de Triomphe and the Palais Elizabeth plateau currently under construction. In organizing the exhibition's thematic plan was developed and land were transferred from the first monuments. These monuments, along with other buildings, pending acquisition will allow arrangement on this new land of 3.5 ha, a village civic center and the "alley" of national minorities in Romania, which will complete heritage of its kind illustrated in the old museum. However, in this new sector space activities will be made public and its active recreation.

Research and acquisitions campaigns in recent years have led to the increase of the open-air exhibition and collections. Currently, the permanent exhibition includes 123 distinct complexes, totaling 363 monuments and mobile assets totaling more than 50 000 objects. This meant not only an increase in heritage, but also a diversification of. Among the monuments of museum recently transferred respectively in early 2003, is the church of Timișeni (jud. Gorj): monument of great value for the old religious rural architecture (1773) and for art painting execution. Another acquisition that deserves mention is from 2010, a household with specific Guzuls strengthened in Northern detour.

Besides heritage of open-air exhibition and collections, the museum holds a rich documentary historical-ethnographic immeasurable value. This fund is made up of collections of manuscripts, studies, sketches, drawings, surveys, plans, clichés glass, films, negative black and white and color photographs, originating both from the research team's site monographist who helped found Village Museum and the subsequent investigation.

A multipurpose building, inaugurated in November 2002 constituted for the resolution accordingly, the issue of premises to house collections of heritage objects, the library, documentation and funds for specific activities museum. They were created spaces with modern facilities, laboratories for conservation and restoration and cultural and formative activities: thematic exhibitions and various forms of "animation" heritage or the use of living treasures of Romanian village.

Current requirements on collection development, the coating segments patrimonial insufficient and unsystematic treated for problems created by changes taking place in rural society contemporary, the need to investigate the traditions of perspective approach identity, establishing similarities and differences regional national, European zone as cohabitation ethnic, confessional etc., set new directions in research and led to a reassessment of the objectives of the urgent ethnology. Hence, research programs devoted to the study of interethnic relations in Romanian rural areas where communities live together with other ethnic groups (within the country and outside of the area), the intercultural spaces etc. A large number of research projects have been completed or are underway in some funding or partnerships with specialized institutions or ministries. Annually, National Village Museum "Dimitrie Gusti" publishes scientific publications. The museum's publishing activity was directed towards the publication of specialized books and archival funds of the institution.

Museum pedagogy programs and all public activities certify fulfillment and exercise vocation National Village Museum "Dimitrie Gusti" by "vivum museum" museum that leverages a dynamic way everything is authentic and representative in our popular culture. Entered into museum tradition Fair artisans Creation Camp "Summer in the streets," Winter Festival habits "flowers of frost" Days of ethnographic areas, Culture Days different peoples, supported by the Embassies of the countries concerned, etc. attract large numbers of visitors and contribute every year to increase public National Village Museum. Through a variety of publications, broadcast by the museum bookshop: guides, brochures, albums, postcards, slides, CDs, video cassettes and audio etc., the public is invited to discover the museum and its values and implicitly those of folk to know and cherish them. The objects of folk art, creations of craftsmen contemporaries made

available to visitors through the museum store, have not only the significance of objects memories, but also designed to help educate the public on the line of good taste, the discernment of values, non-transferable, what is authentic from what is kitsch.

Less present before 1989 scientific life and international museum, the museum has managed in recent years to be an active partner in the relationship with different institutions with vocation similar to his own, in Europe and in other parts of the world. The proof is so present foreign specialists at colloquia international character organized by the National Village Museum “Dimitrie Gusti” sessions Association Open-air museums and the participation of researchers and curators institution in scientific events made by institutions in other countries, as a line of research collaborations with various European partners.

Also, we can not overlook the fact that, over the years, National Village Museum “Dimitrie Gusti” provided support for the organization of new museums and departments of ethnography in the country (Department of Ethnography Museum of Alexandria, Union Museum in Alba Iulia, etc.). He played a key role in the development of museums and outdoor Romania and achieving the first museum of the same kind in Moldova (Chisinau).

Unfortunately, recent history museum has seen two dramatic events: Fires of 5 September 1997 (the Transylvania) and 20 February 2002 (the Moldova and Dobrogea), which affected a number of monuments and objects related inventory. Through the efforts of the entire staff of the museum, with the support of museums in the country and the financial support of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the sponsors, the restoration works carried out in buildings which have suffered from the disaster, were finalized within a relatively short and monuments were donated to the visitation.

Recent changes in the organizational structure of the National Village Museum “Dimitrie Gusti” by creating new divisions and compartments, ensures a balance between all the institution’s activities and their efficiency.





The main entrance of the ASTRA National Museum Complex open-air museum.

"ASTRA" National Museum Complex (Romanian: *Complexul Național Muzeal "ASTRA"*) is a museum complex in Sibiu, Romania, which gathers under the same authority four ethnology and civilisation museums in the city, a series of laboratories for conservation and research, and a documentation centre. It is the successor of the *ASTRA Museum* that has existed in the city since 1905. Its modern life started with the opening of *The Museum of Folk Technology* in 1964, now *The "ASTRA" Museum of the Traditional Folk Civilization*.

The Romanian cultural association ASTRA decided in 1897 to establish a museum of Romanian civilisation as a "*shelter for keeping the past*". The museum was opened in 1905, under the supervision of Cornel Diaconovici, in what is today the ASTRA Palace in Sibiu, built through a public subscription with the specific purpose of creating a museum. In 1929, in Cluj, an open-air Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania was created, and in 1932 the Village Museum was opened in Bucharest by Dimitrie Gusti.

In 1940, after the loss of Northern Transylvania to Hungary due to the Second Vienna Award, a plan was proposed to establish a new ethnographic museum in Sibiu to replace the one in Cluj. World War II and the new communist government of Romania delayed the establishment of the new museum by 20 years, in which period the old *ASTRA Museum* was closed due to ideological reasons. Due to the work of Cornel Irimie in the late 1950s and early '60s, the Romanian Academy decided to pursue the project of establishing the Sibiu open-air museum, having folk technology as its main theme. The *Folk Technology Museum* (the Romanian word is more literally "technique", because in Romanian *technologie* has specifically modern connotations) was established in [1963] and was opened to the public in 1967. Until 1990 the museum worked as a branch of the Brukenthal Museum Complex and in this period it increased the number of houses and buildings. Beginning in 1971, it started to orient itself towards folk civilisation by also including elements of folk life such as houses and community buildings. Since 2001 the museum has functioned as a museum complex, also comprising the "*Franz Binder*" *Museum of Universal Ethnography*, the "*ASTRA*" *Museum of Transylvanian Civilisation*, both opened in 1993, and the "*Emil Sigerus*" *Museum of Saxon Ethnography and Folk Art* opened in 1998. Since 1990 it has used the ASTRA name to reflect its heritage.

The "*ASTRA*" *Museum of Traditional Folk Civilization* (Romanian: *Muzeul Civilizației Populare Tradiționale "ASTRA"*) is located in the Dumbrava Forest, 3 km south of Sibiu, on the road towards Rășinari, and is easily accessible by car, bus or tramway. Occupying an area of 0.96 square kilometres, it is the largest open-air museum in Romania and one of the largest in Central and Eastern Europe. It contains houses and workshops of the traditional Romanian folk culture from the pre-industrial era. Over 300 houses and other buildings are situated in the forest around two artificial lakes with over 10 km of walkways between them.



A mill in the Museum of the Traditional Folk Civilization.

The exhibits are organised into six thematic groups:

- food production and animal husbandry.
- production of raw materials.
- means of transportation.
- manufacture of household objects.
- public buildings.
- an exposition of monumental sculpture.

Some of the most spectacular buildings are a group of windmills from the Dobrudja area, a playing area for *popice* (skittles, an early form of bowling) from the Păltiniș monastery, a small mine from the Apuseni Mountains, a few water-mills, a wooden ferry, and a fishery from the Danube Delta. Also there are houses of shepherds, pottery workshops, iron workshops and others. There is also a working inn, a small pub and a dance pavilion. In the museum there is a wooden church from northern Transylvania brought in 1990-1992 from the village of Bezded in Sălaj County.

A series of festivals and fairs take place in the museum annually, the most popular one being *The Folk Craftsmen's Fair* which takes place each summer around the Saint Mary's Dormition, an Orthodox holiday in the middle of August. Also, permanent and temporary exhibitions can be seen in a special pavilion inside the museum.



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