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***ALBA COUNTY: TOWARDS A BALANCED DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
TERRITORY BASED ON ITS CULTURAL HERITAGE***

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**Abstract:** The objective of the paper is to make a brief presentation of the cultural potential of the Alba County, as a major opportunity for future development. As the formulation of the development strategy is in progress, only the analysis stage being completed, this paper will provide some personal ideas on the future development policies that need to address the sensitive issue of cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Cultural heritage, Development strategy, Policy, Tourism.

## **ALBA COUNTY: TOWARDS A BALANCED DEVELOPMENT OF THE TERRITORY BASED ON ITS CULTURAL HERITAGE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Facts:**

The cultural heritage of Alba County, from the cultural landscape of rural areas to the historic town centres of Alba Iulia, Blaj and Aiud cities, is the expression of its identity. It is important for the County Council to spread cultural value of this land through the other EU countries by strengthening the cultural facilities, upgrading and maintaining the quality of public space and reviving commemorative sites.

The cultural heritage of the rural and urban areas is an economic factor which may contribute substantially to regional development. The accessibility within the region, the quality of infrastructure and services, and the last but not least, the quality of the public management, are seen as crucial factors for location decision of new companies, and precondition for tourism development.

At the same time, the access to culture and the participation in cultural life are fundamental rights, therefore the county policy will promote cultural diversity and will protect cultural identity, while ensuring the long term benefits on natural, cultural and economic environment.

#### **What should be done?**

The Alba County is in the process of developing, by the end of the year, its development strategy, based on 4 pillars: socio, economic, cultural and spatial. The main aim of the strategy is to balance both preservation and development of the build and natural heritage. This can play an important role of social and spatial balancing, and in the protection of conservation areas and environmentally sensitive areas.

#### **Objective of the paper:**

The objective of the paper is to make a brief presentation of the cultural potential of the Alba County, as a major opportunity for future development. As the formulation of the development strategy is in progress, only the analysis stage being completed, this paper will provide some personal ideas on the future development policies that need to address the sensitive issue of cultural heritage.

#### **Structure of the paper:**

The paper is structured on the following chapters:

- Chapter 1: Characteristics of the cultural heritage in Alba County;
- Chapter 2: Cultural based opportunities for county sustainable development;
- Chapter 3: Policy recommendations for the an integrated development strategy

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ALBA COUNTY**

In the last decades, development policies have focussed especially in Europe on an integrated approach of cultural, social, economic and environment aspects, where cultural heritage plays a catalytic role for socio-economic development. In this context, Alba County Council will formulate a new policy for an integrated management of the county's potential.

Alba County has a privileged position in the country, as regards the cultural heritage, both from quantitative and qualitative point of view. The county is perceived as a place linked to the whole history, preserving important archaeological and historical vestiges. A series of studies and regulations developed at national and county level were used to build a general framework for the management of cultural heritage, in line with the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent (CEMAT, Hanover 2000).

The 7<sup>th</sup> principle of a planning policy for sustainable development in Europe refers to enhancing the cultural heritage as a factor for development: "Increasing the appeal of settlements and regions for investors, tourists and the general public by enhancing the cultural heritage makes an important contribution to economic development and to strengthening regional identity. Spatial development policy should contribute to integrated management of the cultural heritage conceived as an evolutionary process protecting and conserving the heritage and taking into account the need of modern society".

This chapter will look at the cultural landscape in Alba County classified in two main categories: tangible and intangible heritage<sup>24</sup>, considering their specific features in urban and rural environment:

- The tangible heritage includes: historic monuments, archaeology, architecture, visual arts, museums, and collections.
- The intangible heritage covers the area of temporary visual arts, theatre, music, dance, including also techniques and skills, popular traditions of clothes, local customs/cuisine, local events.

### 1.1. The tangible heritage

At the county level, there are 668 listed monuments<sup>25</sup>, as well as a series of conservation areas of category A and B. All these are spread over urban and rural areas<sup>26</sup>.

**In urban areas**, the most important cities are Alba Iulia, Aiud, and Blaj, representative both for the existing monuments, and national scale events. A second range of towns, Abrud, Baia de Arieș, Câmpeni, Cugir, Ocna Mureș, Sebeș, Teiuș și Zlatna, have a high density of monuments, and archaeological site.

The following examples point out the variety of this urban heritage:

- Alba Carolina citadel - Alba Iulia;
- Urban representatives buildings - Alba Iulia;
- Urban ensembles - Alba Iulia, Sebeș;
- Churches and monasteries - Alba Iulia, Blaj, Zlatna, Sebeș;
- Roman fortifications - Alba Iulia;
- Antic cities - Municipiul Alba;
- Memorials - Alba Iulia, Blaj, etc

The importance of Alba Iulia, the capital city of the county, goes beyond the local level, up to the national and international level. The historic city centre is involved in the programs of the European Institute for Cultural Routes (Millennium Program). As capital of Dacia Apulensis, during the Roman Empire, the city has important vestiges of the Roman civilisation impact. The city image is determined today by the Vauban citadel, placed in the city centre, and accommodating important historic buildings and urban functions (university, library, museum, church, etc.).

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<sup>24</sup> 2003, European Rural heritage, Observation Guide, CEMAT, Budapest.

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, National Institute of Historic Monuments, 2004

<sup>26</sup> 1999, Regional Development Plan (P.A.T.J), S.C. "PROIECT Alba" S.A

**The rural areas** present a diverse valuable tangible heritage at the level of:

- traditional architecture in Arieșeni, Gîrda, Vidra, Avram Iancu, Albac, Mogoș, Ponor, Rîmeț,
- historic centres of rural settlements, in Roșia Montană,
- wooden churches and monasteries,
- castles, houses, and palaces,
- industrial architecture, mining galleries in Roșia Montană,
- Neolithic fortifications and human settlements,
- Dacic fortifications.

Two places in the county are listed on the World Heritage List:

- Călnic is a village site with fortified church, having a considerable value for ethnology, history of architecture, planning, and also social and religious history.
- Căpâlna is a Dacic fortification, having purely military function, with an unique defensive system, characteristic for the classical phase of the Dacic civilisation.

### 1.2. The intangible heritage

The intangible heritage can be identified on the whole county area, with different categories having different concentrations in urban and rural areas.

**In urban areas**, categories like libraries, theatre, music and cinema can be easily found, accompanied by specific events related to important dates in the national history, like in the cities of Alba Iulia, Blaj, Sebeș, Aiud, or to important characters in the national culture/history (Mihai Viteazul, Horia Cloșca and Crișan, Avram Iancu, representatives of the movement called Scoala Ardeleana, etc.)

In the case of Alba Iulia, the intangible heritage of the city is also associated with a series of events linked to the National Day. All related activities, like the beautification of the city, meetings and festivals, contribute to increasing the importance of the moment, in the sense of cultural diversity.

In the rural areas, the traditional expression means were better preserved. Some local communities are well known internationally due to popular artists and traditional crafts. A series of events, like the Maidens' Fair on the Gaina Mountain, the popular costumes of Buciumanilor and the dance of Tarina Abrudului are considered tourist attractions.

The traditional costumes and crafts from Șugag, Căpîlna, Laz, Sâsciiori, Gîrda de Sus, as well as traditional events from Apuseni Mountains are known and promoted at national and international scale, having a major relevance for the national cultural image. In addition, the International Festival „Lucian Blaga”, the International Camp Interart stimulate the actual creativity and the dialogue among cultures.

### **CULTURAL BASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR COUNTY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The purpose of the analysis is to identify interventions opportunities to formulate a policy for conservation and revitalisation of the cultural heritage, and to put it on a world cultural map. The cultural potential of Alba county represents a valuable asset for future development, in economic terms, if an appropriate development policy is in place to protect, preserve, revitalise, promote, and make use, in a sustainable way, of this asset.

To conclude a brief overview of the county cultural heritage, SWOT<sup>27</sup> analysis identified the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, in order to formulate development policies for an integrated county strategy.

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE AN INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The SWOT analysis reveals a series of opportunities for tourism development, both in urban and rural areas:

- The urban area is the environment where both the tangible and intangible heritage contributes to the cultural image. The basic characteristic is the presence of urban ensembles, vestiges and architectural monuments of national importance. Additional value is given by the cultural/historic events that bring together people from all over the country;
- The rural area has a less known heritage, but that can be exploited to create added value. Besides existing architectural monuments and archaeological vestiges, the intangible heritage is well represented at the level of traditions, crafts and events, in a strong sense of cultural diversity.

As a key element of sustainable development, the tangible and intangible heritage has a central role in development policies at European, national and regional level. According to the European Landscape Convention<sup>28</sup> this role can be achieved through the protection, management and planning of landscape, including natural, urban, rural, and metropolitan areas. The county development strategy will need to integrate cultural heritage policy with other development policies, like environment, public infrastructure, and economic development policy, to reach this goal.

**The cultural policy** should guide the future interventions on heritage on three types of actions related to its attached values:

- Economic value, which refers to the use of tangible heritage;
- Emotional value, which refers to the individual and collective perception, and understanding;
- Knowledge value, which refers to a permanent education of the public linked to promotion of the previous two values.

Three types of policy directions derives from these attached values<sup>29</sup>:

- A. policy to renovate/repair to built heritage, and to allow appropriate functions to locate there;**
- B. policy to preserve the character of the tangible heritage, and the traditions, customs, and events (as part of the intangible heritage);**
- C. policy to promote the tangible and intangible heritage to the local communities, in the region, in the country, and internationally.**

To support the long term development strategy, additional policies should be formulated, in an integrated approach, at the level of **infrastructure, economic development and environment**, on the following directions:

- D. policy to improve accessibility of the heritage sites by roads/rail infrastructure works;**

<sup>27</sup> 2006, Alba County Council, Cultural Development Strategy of Alba County, Phase I: Auditing, IHS Romania SRL

<sup>28</sup> The European Landscape Convention was opened for signature in Florence, Italy, on 20 October 2000 in the framework of the Council of Europe Campaign “Europe, a common heritage”.

<sup>29</sup> The policy directions were publicly debated by all key local stakeholders and will be detailed through projects, within the Cultural Development Strategy of Alba County. The first list of projects will be debated end of February 2007.

- E. policy to stimulate business location and development in existing buildings with monument character;**
- F. policy to support employment creation in the field of buildings restoration, and local crafts;**
- G. policy to protect the natural environment, and to prevent industrial pollution that may damage, on the long term, the cultural heritage.**

On top of these, to ensure a performing public management, in the policy implementation phase, an **institutional development policy** will be needed at county and local level:

- H. policy to improve the county operational capacity to manage tangible/intangible cultural heritage;**
- I. policy to improve county/local capacity to attract financial resource for cultural heritage.**

As identified in the SWOT analysis, the issue of financial resources from EU structural funds is a major opportunity for the next period, 2007-2013, to support the implementation of programs and projects, in line with the policy directions stated before.

The National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) sets out the strategy that frames the Operational Programmes, which will be co-financed under the structural funds. In this category, the Regional Operational Programme will be targeted to those areas which are in economic decline, have inadequate infrastructure, but have development potential.

The key aims of the NSRF are to strengthen the strategic focus of Romania's Economic and Social Cohesion and Regional Policies and to make correct and appropriate linkages to the European Commission policies, notably the Lisbon Strategy. The NSRF had its genesis in the National Development Plan, which was developed as a tool to guide national, EU, and other funding sources available to Romania. It justifies and prioritises public investment related to the European economic and social cohesion policy and defines Romania's multi-annual strategic planning and financial programming.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Government of Romania, National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 (draft), April 2006

Priority axis 3 in this programme refers to **development of regional and local tourism, and has as main objectives: rehabilitation of tourist areas, restoration and development of historic, cultural and natural heritage**, and development of business environment in tourism. Other priority axes, like improvement of local public infrastructure, sustainable urban development, promoting active employment measures, promoting social inclusion, etc. refer to the issue of inner city renewal as well.

For the period 2007 – 2013, the structural funds may be one of the funding sources for interventions in historic centres, if projects match the eligibility criteria for financing. Three objectives and three instruments will be available for 2007 – 2013, out of which only objectives 1 and 3 for Romania. Objective 1 and the European Fund for Regional Development (managed through the Regional Development Agencies) could support heritage projects through axis 4 (development of regional and local tourism) and axis 5 (integrated urban projects)<sup>31</sup>.

In addition, the access to CULTURA 2000 program will expand to CULTURA 2007, and to programs for the audio-visual sector, through the MEDIA 2007 program, attracting specific funds, and increasing the opportunities to develop projects that have a cultural impact.

The projects that will be formulated and implemented in line with the above mentioned policy directions will take into consideration on one side the EU funding requirements, and the local needs and communities expectations on the other side. As the access to culture and participation in cultural life are fundamental rights that need to be promoted and respected, a county development strategy should ensure the balance between the cultural, socio-economic and environmental benefits, to reach the ultimate goal of sustainable development of the territory<sup>32</sup>.

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**ANEXES**

**Strengths**

| <b>Tangible heritage</b>   | <b>Intangible heritage</b>   |
|--|--|
| <p>High density of monuments in both urban and rural areas</p> <p>Diversity of tangible heritage, that includes citadels, castles, civil buildings, urban ensembles, wooden churches, monasteries, industrial architecture, rural houses, archaeological monuments and ensembles</p> | <p>Association of urban centres with important moments in the national history (1600, 1784, 1848, 1918), and with important cultural characters</p> <p>Variety and richness of rural intangible heritage (crafts, music, literature, costumes, popular events)</p> |

**Weaknesses**

| <b>Tangible heritage</b>   | <b>Intangible heritage</b>   |
|--|--|
| <p>Physical degradation of monuments</p> <p>Monuments are not part of European routes of cultural tourism (i.e. Vauban Citadel, Alba Iulia)</p>  | <p>Lack of cultural infrastructure and lack of equipments for cultural events in the rural areas</p> <p>Weak involvement of local communities in preserving and revitalising cultural life</p> |
| <p>Weak development of cultural tourism, despite the valuable potential</p> <p>Weak management capacity of local structures, lack of specialised staff in the field of cultural heritage</p> <p>Weak promotion of cultural heritage at national and international level</p> <p>Few sectoral programs and lack of financial resources for heritage conservation and promotion</p> |  |

**Opportunities**

| <b>Tangible heritage</b>   | <b>Intangible heritage</b>  |
|--|---|
| <p>Development of cultural tourism, including urban and rural heritage in European cultural routes</p> <p>Cooperation in a regional/national network of historic centres</p>   | <p>Development of agro-tourism, promoting rural heritage at European scale</p> <p>Increase local contribution to the European cultural heritage</p> |
| <p>Diversification of financial instruments through EFRD and CULTURA 2007</p> <p>Access to bi-lateral programs</p> <p>Regional cooperation among localities on a specific cultural route</p> <p>Raising local communities awareness and private sector interest in historic inner-city development, raising professional interest of specialists</p> <p>Existing instruments and means to educate local population and train labour force in the field</p> |   |



## Threats

| <b>Tangible heritage</b>  | <b>Intangible heritage</b>  |
|---|---|
| Physical degradation of tangible heritage due to the lack of intervention, to the lack of control in private interventions, or to industrial pollution (mining industry)  | Lose of heritage integrity due to population aging and migration<br><br>Decreasing young generation interest to preserve local tradition / lack of continuity |
| Lose of cultural identity, or lack of impact on national / European level<br>Low capacity to access funds for the cultural programs / cultural infrastructure<br>Inter-sectoral competition on EFRD at regional level<br>Low development of tourism infrastructure with negative impact on visitors |   |