

## „ASTRA” MUSEUM’S ALTERNATIVE - FOCUS ON NON-DISBURSABLE FUNDS

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After the 2007 accession to the EU, Romanian cultural institutions have been discovering the potential of non-disbursable funds available through international open calls for projects proposals. Financing generally goes from funding cultural events, mobility and training schemes to major investments in infrastructure and logistics. Investments in culture help institutions in keeping their status as major attractions for large audiences and thus reinforce their mission within the communities of origin.

ASTRA project for the EEA Grants includes two major objectives (the project is now undergoing the final stage of evaluation, being rated as third on the national list). First, it intends to build and develop a high-standard storage facility for the movable ethnographic heritage artefacts from the open air museum: ASTRA Centre for Heritage. This is going to be a state-of-the-art storage facility, with low energy and climate controlled, that will also host conservation laboratories and the Centre for Training of Conservators. The second direction focuses on the restoration and active conservation of the wooden structures within the open air museum. It aims mainly at restoring a number of buildings recently transferred within the museum, but preventive conservation activities are included as well. Partners' exchange of know-how (with SINTEF research institute from Norway) is considered of benefit for both parts involved as it includes, besides practical workshops, dissemination activities such as seminars in both Norway and Romania and activities regarding the Network of the Museums Curators of Wooden Heritage that provides further sustainability of the project.

*“Promotion of sustainable development of Romanian rural areas through the revitalization and valorisation of Wood Civilization – LemnArt”* is another project of ASTRA Museum participating in the Call under the POS DRU – Axis 5.2. The project aims at providing modern means (logistics, know-how etc.) for craftsmen from four geographical areas (Maramureş, Bucovina, Vrancea, Gorj) so that they could turn from subsistence agriculture activities to promotion and valorisation of the art and craft of working the wood in order to unlock the regeneration of wide rural communities through proper valorisation of cultural heritage. The project is connected to the wider program of ASTRA Museum – Living Human Treasures - that foresees the rescuing of the intangible cultural heritage through national and international development and the implementation of long term strategies.

ASTRA Museum also actively involves in creating and re-creating a universe for children through programs and strategies for national education and European integration at an early age. Following the UNESCO directive concerning the AIA 2009 (International Year of Astronomy 2009), ASTRA developed a new project addressing mainly children and youth (with local partial financing from Sibiu City Council): *“Astronomical Observatory. Traditional version of the Sky.”* The main goal is to raise awareness of the target group on the ethnographic values that once stood at the heart of the people's explanation of cosmogony, sky, celestial phenomena and which brought forth the modern investigation of the universe.

Last but not least, even if the Museum is not considered to be an eligible solicitant for POR – 5.1 Axis, the Sibiu County Council (the tutelary authority of the Museum), in collaboration with the Project Management Office, submitted the project “Development and modernisation of the infrastructure for touristic valorisation of the ethnographic heritage of ASTRA Open Air Museum - Dumbrava Sibiului”. The main objective is to improve the degree of touristic satisfaction of visitors concerning the ways of accessing the cultural product offered by the museum and also to expand the degree of security of the exhibited monuments and of the mobile heritage collections.

### **Cost versus benefit – according to ASTRA**

Sibiu/Hermannstadt is one of the cities that proved that culture can be a major vector of local revitalization, ASTRA Museum now being considered a good practice example in this respect. This is one more reason to support the idea why the money spent for culture is able to trigger an important return on investment at the community level. ASTRA Museum understands its role as of major involvement in the life of the local community, capable of generating “heritage dividends” that come back at the level where they are supposed to: public space of community life.

