

DECISION

On the approval of the Framework Cultural Strategy of the City of Iași until 2025

At June 30, 2015, the Local Council of the City of Iași, in an ordinary meeting;

Considering the initiative of the Mayor of Iași as resulting from the justification of the decision draft;

Considering the favourable conclusion drawn up by the Financial and Economic Commission of the Local Council of the City of Iași;

Considering the favourable conclusion drawn up by the Social and Cultural Commission for Education and Religion of the Local Council of the City of Iași;

Considering the amendments brought forth and approved in the plenary meeting and in the Culture Commission of the Local Council, as written in the minutes of the plenary meeting and of the afore-said Commission;

Considering the report no. 58118/24.06.2015 drawn up by the Department of Funding Programmes of Civil Society;

Considering the Decision no. 445/2014/UE to commence an action of the Union for the “European Capitals of Culture” event for 2020-2033 and to abolish the Decision no. 1622/2006/CE – Celex number 32014D0445;

Considering the Call for submissions for the “European Capitals of Culture” event for 2021 in Romania;

Considering the provisions of the Act on the legislative norms no. 24/2000 with the subsequent amendments and additions;

Considering the provisions of the republished Act 215/2001 on local public administration with the subsequent amendments and additions;

Based on Article 115, Par.1, b, of Act no. 215.2001

DECIDES:

Art. 1 The Framework Cultural Strategy of the City of Iași until 2025 is approved in accordance with the text thereof in Annex 1 which is an integral part of the present decision.

Art. 2 The Strategy for Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the City of Iași – Orizont 2020 will be completed and updated with strategic cultural elements until 2025.

Art. 3 A copy of the present Decision will be given to each of the following: the Mayor of the City of Iași, the Department for Development and European Projects,

the Department for Economy and Local Public Funds, the Department of Funding Programmes of Civil Society, the “Iași – European Capital of Culture” Foundation, and the Prefect of the Iași county.

Art.4 The application of the provisions of the present Decision will be ensured by the Department for Development and European Projects, Department for Economy and Local Public Funds, Department of Funding Programmes of Civil Society, and the “Iași – European Capital of Culture” Foundation.

The Public Information Centre will inform the citizens about the present Decision.

SIGNATURES

MEETING CHAIRMAN

Marius Cătălin Aur

SECRETARY

Denisa Liliana Ionașcu

Total Local Councilors	27
Present	22
For	21
Against	0
Abstention	1

No. 236 of June 30, 2015

THE CULTURAL STRATEGY OF THE CITY OF IAȘI

2015-2025

INTRODUCTION

A place inhabited for more than five thousand years, Iași represents the centre of regional and European dissemination for the vast Neolithic culture of Cucuteni-Tripolie. It was first known as a medieval urban settlement more than six centuries ago.

In Roman times, the Dacian population had interactions with the Alani people, the region being also known for a settlement probably inhabited by an Iazig group (also called “Ași” or „Iași”), a Sarmatian population of Iranian origin that allegedly set up another *Municipium Iassiorum* in Pannonia in the 1st century; according to unconfirmed historical sources, they returned around the 12th century. The first known reference to the city of Iași comes from a 1408 document issued by Prince Alexander the Good’s chancery where he granted trading privileges to the merchants of Lvov, which suggests that the urban settlement, now secondary royal capital, had been an ongoing commercial centre for at least a century.

A secondary royal capital, then centre of the political power of the feudal and modern state of Moldova, the city of Iași has had a flourishing commercial, religious and cultural history and, in the last five hundred years, has been the most important centre of dissemination of Western values and Christian faith in the region, as well as a space of contact and dialogue with other cultures, especially Armenian and Jewish, plus other smaller influences such as Slav, Greek, or Polish.

Like in many other neighbouring countries of Byzantine vein, the Orthodox Church of Greek tradition worked hand in hand with the earthly authority of the ruling prince. It used the Slav language for chancery and prints, and then the Romanian language with Cyrillic script until 1865. For a long time, the Metropolitan headquarters were in the same urban centre as the Moldavian royal court. Iași becomes a political capital during the reign of Alexandru Lăpușneanu (1565), but the Moldavian Metropolitan institution, although always present by the ruler's side, becomes the centre of the Orthodox Church for all of Moldova when Metropolitan Dosoftei moves to Iași (1676).

Thanks to the essential contribution of the monasteries during the 15th-18th centuries to the effort of preserving the written culture and introducing the first educational centres and prints in the Romanian language, the architectural, cultural, and artistic heritage of Iași is characterized by a symbiosis between religion and culture. During this time, urban civilization resides in fortified enclosures – the royal palace and the monasteries, the only structures at that time capable of ensuring protection against various types of invasion (military, or plundering raids). The monasteries of Iași (Royal St. Nicholas – 1492, Golia – 1546, 1660, Galata – 1579, Frumoasa – 1585, Bârnova – 1626, Three Hierarchs – 1639, or Cetățuia – 1672) have sheltered authentic treasures of art and learning, which today gives us the most important and valuable cultural heritage along with the patrimony of other churches and faiths: the Catholic Church (the first cathedral erected in 1879), the Armenian Church (the first written document in 1395), or the Jewish faith (the first synagogue built in 1670 and rebuilt in 1759). Also, the festival of Saint Parascheva, the patron saint of Moldavian Christians, whose relics were bought by Vasile Lupu and brought to the Three Hierarchs Monastery in 1641, still drives the most famous pilgrimage in this part of Europe, the saint's day – October 14th – coinciding with the climax of the City's festival. All these things explain the reliance upon the religious patrimony in developing cultural policies as they are meant to promote and capitalize upon this architectural and artistic treasure so as to make it attractive for visitors and community-enhancing.

The modern period of the city begins with the Organic Act (Rom. Regulamentul Organic) of 1831, an early form of Constitution which entails the need to create the first institutions of the modern state, after the European fashion. The capital of the Moldavian principality until the Union with Walachia (1859), Iași begins to establish cultural institutions with a long national agenda: the first show in Romanian at the Ghyka residence in 1816; the first newspaper in Romanian – “Albina Românească” in 1829; the first public monument in 1840; the first musical in Romanian in 1834; the Philharmonic and Dramatic Conservatory in 1836 (whose students have the first opera show in Romanian in 1838); the Academy Library in 1839; the first Romanian literary journal “Dacia literară” in 1840; the Copou Theatre in 1847; the first Botanical Garden in 1856; the first university in the country (1860);

the first painting collection (1860); the School of Beaux Arts (1867); the Traian Hotel (1882, built after Gustav Eiffel's plans); an ample series of public monuments including statues of Steven the Great (1883), Miron Costin (1888), Gh. Asachi (1890), V. Alecsandri (1905), M. Kogălniceanu (1911); the first National Theatre (1895, built after the plans of Vienna-based architects Fellner and Helmer); or the Elisabeta Square ("Râpa Galbenă", 1900). In the 20th century, except for the Palace of Culture (1925), the new urban and cultural infrastructure takes a slower pace; after 1944 city and cultural planning will be annexed to the communist propaganda canon.

During the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the intellectuals of Iași created the most important currents of literary ideas that would hold the best of the country's cultural and ideological debates. "Junimea", "Contemporanul", or "Viața Românească" bring together great figures of national culture – artists, writers, critics, thinkers, and historians.

To sum up, Iași has an authentic and valuable cultural heritage and stands among the most important hubs of highbrow culture in the region, spreading classical national and European values. This cultural heritage, with its traditionalist perspective, with its preference for excellence and forms of expression of classical origins, with its appreciation of a great historical past, and which is based on historical values and the prestige of the great people here, represents a starting point for a long-term strategy. The strategy envisages creating added value as a result of a series of long-term measures and priorities meant to improve and enhance the cultural activity of the city of Iași in line with the European Union's policies for the next decade, as well as to widen the scope of this activity so as to attract as many citizens as possible.

I. METHODOLOGY

This strategy proposal is the result of a quantitative and qualitative analysis, made by the Brussels-based KEA in 2014, of the cultural and creative potential, and of the data collected in 2009 by the Cultural Barometer of the Cultural Research Centre with the Ministry of Culture. It will also integrate the analysis made by the Axis foundation of the Faculty of Sociology, "Al. I. Cuza" University of Iași, on the needs of cultural consumption, after it is completed next March.

When defining the development framework and the measures and priorities for the future strategy, we relied on the recommendations and the development strategy for the creative domain as proposed by the European Commission through the General Directorate of Education and Culture. The cultural strategy of Iași for the next decade will have to reflect and add to the EU's Strategic Framework of Action in the domain of culture:

- Culture as a development factor that increases the job opportunities
- Creating databases and impact studies so as to help tailor the best cultural policies at local and regional level
- Creating bridges between artists and all the beneficiaries of culture (the public, the political environment, the administration, the private sector, the academic environment etc.)
- Enhancing intercultural dialogue
- Developing European cooperation

Also, it will have to include measures about funding and developing the reference domains targeted by the EU policies: the **creative industries** and the **audio-visual media**.

IV. CULTURE – A FACTOR OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The fifty years of communism that plagued Romania in the second half of the 20th century have left a mark on the way artists and ordinary people perceive culture. Dragged behind the omnipotent machine of propaganda, the official culture, the only one accepted by the ruling party, was completely subsidized, and the canon writers – “comrades” at the side of the communists – had a privileged status (houses, cars, honours and huge royalties, vast circulation and access to all the resources of the nomenclature). After the fall of communism, the savage amassment of capital generated the reverse effect: it caused a widespread primitive utilitarian behaviour in business people and politicians based on the principle that culture eats up resources and, therefore, a city such as Iași should not encourage large expenditures for cultural institutions. In a context of meager budgets allocated for cultural institutions, save for some ample events that usually come with separate funding, it is necessary to operate a paradigm shift in the way the community perceives cultural institutions. This is especially necessary as any long-term strategy implies virtual budgeting; and any attempt to alter the perception of culture in order to distinguish between subcultural entertainment and authentic cultural events, with some kind of educational effect, must be approached in a professional manner.

To begin with, the **cultural potential of a city is a crucial component of the standard of living** in that city. Thus, the business must be aware that it has a duty to support good quality culture, be it only for the implicit rise in the value of their own business or the increased potential for investment. A large city with cultural diversity is at the same time attractive to consumers and investors alike.

Secondly, to local authorities, culture should be a good investment not only for its utility in elections, but also for the prestige and added value it bestows upon the city, as it enhances its quality of life.

That is why culture must be seen as an excellent business opportunity and the municipality has a duty to ensure cultural development goes hand in hand with complementary investments in infrastructure and city planning. Mainly, the City Hall must facilitate the connection between culture and its beneficiaries, be they citizens regardless their level of education, or the business sector.

Measure (M13): to continue and complete the programme of urban regeneration and redefine the urban outline of the “Cultural Axis” from the Palace of Culture to Breazu with investments and modern urban planning solutions supported by the community; and to introduce an acquisitions programme for the City Hall’s private domain with facilities for developers of local touristic and cultural services.

Measure (M14): to rehabilitate and equip the “Braunstein Palace” with the necessary utilities for offices, cafes, restaurants and exhibition areas in order to create a centre for young entrepreneurs in the creative industries.

Measure (M15): to invest in a Contemporary Arts Centre which features the New Media and visual arts, but can host shows and organize residence centres. One such example could be the development of the former “Victoria” cinema.

Measure (M16): to create a sustainable public-private partnership in order to ensure financial support for the cultural agenda of 2021 as presented in the city’s application file for the title of “European Capital of Culture”, so as to be able to apply it even if Iași is not granted the title.

V. THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF THE CULTURAL ACTIVITY IN IAȘI

What all the action plans and long-term strategies launched by the European Union have in common is, naturally, their degree of relevance and promoting a European identity. No cultural strategy can overlook the fact that the big European family means both contributing national features to the European cultural community, and the ability to engage in a dialogue with other cultures, to understand and promote diversity, but above all to participate in joint cross-border projects and co-productions that circulate between all the participating countries.

The European dimension does not only represent the surface layer of cultural heritage, or just the European vocation of the great personalities of the past, or promoting the universal (hence European) values found in a given local culture. These arguments have been used endlessly so far. But it also represents a series of conceptual and logistic details integrated in the long-term programme of the city which need to be drawn up and applied together with other European partners.

Although Iași has completed many joint projects with European partners, especially in education, projects made by schools, highschools or universities, the joint cultural projects are rare. And this scarcity has been highlighted by international project evaluators.

For instance, an event passed as “international” for featuring international guests – such as the International Festival of Education (FIE) – does not score as high as presenting local cultural products to the European cultural market i.e., participation in European events or tours. In such cases, the European dimension is only present superficially, and Iași has had a good share of such events thanks to the indefatigable work of foreign cultural centres; these events brought European values to the local public, while the “Moldova” Philharmonics and the Children and Youth Theatre make successful tours. As for complex events of this kind, there are some representative examples in Iași including the *Periferic* Festival organized by the “Vector” Association, the International Festival of Theatre for Young Audiences (FITPT) organized by “Luceafărul” Theatre (eight editions), the International Festival of Mechanical Music (nine editions), and FILIT (two editions, with excellent budgets).

The higher score span is represented by the joint translation programmes and artist residences for artists all over Europe. Encouraging translation, European

cooperation and mobility are essential directions in the EU strategy for cultural dialogue between member states, and these activities benefit from special funding lines through the *Creative Europe* programme. Translation is, of course, a reality of any editorial programme of private publishers, that is, a *business* component that the European Union does not necessarily prioritize financially. But it does support long-term programmes which encourage a better understanding of European cultures, projects of mutual translation, or joint creative flows. If the prodigious activity of the publisher Polirom can be an argument in favour of translation for its own sake, then the successful project of FILIT (the International Festival of Literature and Translation) could be expanded towards some joint translation programmes between several European countries.

But the highest score, as mentioned above, comes from partnerships between institutions or cultural operators from European countries which join hands in a cultural project contributing their own means (creative, logistic, or financial) and which circulate the end-product in the participating countries and the rest of Europe. A partnership is a signed contract by which cultural entities from at least three countries cooperate usually in a project which is then entered for the European funding competition *Creative Europe*. Such an example is the international project made by TVR Iași dedicated each year to the documentaries about the former European Capitals of Culture.

In brief, such a priority in cultural cooperation with tertiary European partners is finding the necessary means, and creating the adequate skills for collaborations and co-productions. Except for the “Luceafărul” Theatre, which signed the co-production *Kajtus, the Wizard* (adapted after Janusz Korczak) with Polish partners (the Book Institute of Krakow, the Polish Institute in Bucharest), the other institutions still have to catch up and such projects will be an aim for the future.

Measure (M16): to support and maintain *residence centres* for artists, writers and translators who should launch regional and European partnerships and circulate their products in all the participating countries. There is such a programme with the Museum of Literature, but European experience has shown how important these centres are for innovation, for debates and exchanges of ideas, joint projects, or the image of the city.

Measure (M17): to create an NGO-managed database of Iași’s twin cities and all the eligible partners for joint European projects.

Measure (M18): to make a platform of financial support for the institutions and private entrepreneurs who want to make European projects but lack the initial resources.

A special aspect in the development of international cultural relationships is the special partnership between the city of Iași and Kishinev (Chișinău, the Republic of Moldova) and Cernăuți (Ukraine), to which Iași is like an aerial broadcasting European culture and democracy in the following years. As mentioned above, the mere circulation of shows, writers, artists or lecturers between the banks of the Prut river is not enough to give a European dimension to any programme even though it may start, naturally, with the cultural support given to Romanian communities around

the two cities, may continue with mutual invites, but still needs to be reflected in more elaborated projects of cultural and creative cooperation.

Measure (M19): to create logistic support and a way of collecting cultural products (books, albums, movies, educational and cultural DVDs, etc.) to be given to Romanian schools in both regions.

Measure (M20): to create a joint platform for all the creative entrepreneurs in the two regions, which should generate business partnerships with Iași and other European companies. This platform could be managed by private entrepreneurs who should make cooperation projects co-funded by the local and central authorities. Name of the programme: *Creative Bridge*.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed cultural strategy of the city of Iași creates a framework for public debate with the political stakeholders in the local Council and with the citizens who are interested in the cultural development of their city over the next decade.

This cultural matrix defined in the present strategy is an ongoing process; it will meet the chapter in Orizont 2020 in a project that will adapt and grow depending on the local demand and environment.

In accordance with the long-term strategy of cultural development as defined by the European Union, the strategy draft for the city of Iași highlights the following priorities over the next decade:

- to adopt the necessary measures in order to diversify the cultural presence of Iași, and to educate the audience so as to be able to make the difference between value and non-value, to be open to European values and intercultural dialogue, to appreciate creativity and innovation in cultural life.
- to develop cultural tourism through complex interdisciplinary measures and connected funding designed to raise the economic potential of the region
- to support the creative sector in Iași, Chișinău and Cernăuți so that it becomes the drive for regional development and creates new jobs
- to outline a complex programme for 2021 so as to elaborate, in accordance with the present Framework Strategy, an application file on behalf of Iași for the title of “European Capital of Culture” in that year.

As a result of debates in the Local Council and in the public space, the strategy will be completed with an Action Plan which will include the activities corresponding to each measure in line with the established aims.

Also, in an Annex to the Strategy, the conclusions of the sociological study made by the Sociology Department of “Al. I. Cuza” University of Iași will indicate the starting point for a quantitative and qualitative functional analysis of the cultural presence and the consumption of culture.