European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards (2025)
1142-Education, Training and Skills 3. Education, Training & Skills

ASTRA Center for Activities and Regional Resources

QwJPVOWx

Entry details

General information

Main country of application	Romania

In case there are other official partners involved in the project, please list the country(ies) they come from

> Museene I Sor Trondelag, Trondheim, Norway
> Future Capital, Sibiu, Romania

Brief description of the project

> ASTRA Center for Activities and Regional Resources offered new life to a six century old guild hall, restoring and reusing it, making it fit for the needs of the contemporary communities. Through the training and certification program ASTRA Museum became a trailblazer in the preservation of traditional crafts by rendering the dignity of knowledge bearers from the rural area. Over 40 craft persons are now qualified to enter the labor market in the buildings' rehabilitation and restoration, with honest pay for valuable work, assisting heritage communities to maintain traditional buildings using the right materials and craft skills, ensuring social sustainability

Start date of the project	2020-09-16
Completion date of the project/initiative	2024-05-30
Website(s) of the project/nominee	https://muzeulastra.ro/ https://casaartelor.ro/en/
Facebook page of the project, if any	https://www.facebook.com/casaartelorsibiu/ https://www.facebook.com/muzeulastrasibiu
Instagram page of the project, if any	https://www.instagram.com/explore/locations/1986701601573597/muzeul-civilizatiei-populare-traditionale-astra-sibiu/?hl=en
Any other relevant social media	https://www.youtube.com/user/Mjurnal72

Does the site or heritage in question have national/regional/local cultural heritage designation or protection status in its country?	Yes

If yes, please specify:

> The House of Arts is a listed monument, class A, under the national protection

Is the site or heritage in question included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, either as a single World Heritage Site or as part of one larger site?	No
If relevant, is the site/heritage accessible to the public?	Yes

If relevant, is the site/heritage accessible to people with disabilities?

> The restauration of the building rendered it accesible up to the exhition organized in the attic, via an elevator. At the ground floor, there are also accesible restrooms.

Contact details

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Entrant's position	Deputy manager
Organisation of the entrant	ASTRA Museum
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Organisation of the owner	ASTRA Museum
Name of the project leader	Ciprian Anghel Stefan

Project leader's position	manager
Organisation of the project leader	ASTRA Museum
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Other relevant participants

> Karen Espelund - CEO Museene I Sor Trondelag, Tronheim Norway
> Brynja Bjork Birgisdottir - director Sverresborg Trondelag Folken Museum
> Andreea Ciortea - education expert, Future Capital, Sibiu, Romania

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Concise summary

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> ASTRA Center for Activities and Regional Resources offered new life to a six century old guild hall, restoring and reusing it, making it fit for the needs of the contemporary communities. The value of a modern and innovative museum does not consist exclusively of the value of its collection, exhibitions or activities organized, but mainly by its relevance to the communities it serves. Approaching a new cultural business model, ASTRA Museum transformed the House of Arts, a quasi-inert and non-functional space, into a creative hub, a focal point where crafts (past, present, future) became the corollary of all valorization activities of this historical monument. Through the training and certification program ASTRA Museum became a trailblazer in the preservation of traditional crafts by rendering the dignity of knowledge bearers from the rural area. Over 40 craft persons are now qualified to enter the labor market in the buildings' rehabilitation and restoration, with honest pay for valuable work, assisting heritage communities to maintain traditional buildings, using the right materials and craft skills, ensuring social sustainability. In all cultural policies, tangible and intangible cultural heritage are valuable resources for the sustainable development of the community (knowledge and heritage resources, if they remain in the community, can generate income at local and regional level). Our approach and specific measures were meant to increase the competitiveness of the members of the main target group, the traditional craftsmen, on the labor market, the degree of resilience, the transferability of traditional knowledge and skills thus contributing to the preservation of the spirit of the place, the uniqueness of the region and the preservation of the cultural landscape (rural and urban).These activities were carried out together with our long lasting Norwegian partner, Museene I Sør Trondelag, through exchanges of experience with craftsmen and specialists from both countries, but also with the contribution of a local partner, Future Capital, on education and lifelong learning. Bilateral cooperation also included extensive exchange in the design of educational activities. The entire project was financed by EEA granta, under the 1st Call Restoration and revitalization of monuments by PA14 Programme „Cultural entrepreneurship, cultural heritage and cultural exchange". The total budget of the project was 2.699.223 euro, of which amount of the non-refundable EEA Grant was 1.835.472 euro, the national government grant 323.906 euro and the contribution of the applicant, ASTRA Museum and its governing body, Sibiu County Council was 539.845 euro.

Objectives and work undertaken

Aims and objectives of the project/initiative

> The entire project developed twofold activities: the restoration of the former Butchers' Hall known today House of Arts, one of the emblematic buildings of the medieval Sibiu, a landmark for the history of guilds and crafts from the 14th century onwards. The main aim was a complete repurposing of every room in the building, rendering 80 % of the

surface accessible to the public and making it fit for the 21st century, safely equipped with electricity and lighting system, plumbing and restrooms, climate control in exhibition areas, maker spaces for the creative community. The other objective was meant to revitalize this quasi inert building, valorizing its full potential and enhancing the cultural heritage management, strengthening cultural entrepreneurship. This aim comprised the development of a new exhibition, a new museum education program and a professional training program with innovative measures meant to support craftspeople adapt to the market's requirements and needs, together with the project partners, Museene I Sør Trondelag and Future Capital. The most ambitious of all was the certification of craft persons that transformed ASTRA Museum into a legal body authorized by the National Ministry of Labor to assess and issue professional certification for the crafts sector. The educational program had a strong outreach component, bringing restoration activities out in the main square of the city or taking museum education programs to remote schools in rural areas.

Any historical and technical research undertaken for the project/initiative

During the entire project, extensive interdisciplinary research was undertaken by an interdisciplinary team of curators, conservators, educators and human resources specialists. The historical research focused on the 600 year long existence of the building and tried different optics than traditional factuality, focusing on understanding the versatility of functions that the former Butchers' Hall had through time to meet the needs of ever-changing communities it served. It inspired us to stay relevant. Sociological research started just before submitting the application, as our team conducted extensive inquiries in order to identify the current needs of our main audiences and stakeholders. A very thorough interdisciplinary research was conducted in order to develop the assessment tools that were used in the process of certification of craftsmen, research conducted in different ethnographic areas of the country, in different ethnic groups. Public authorities in charge of funding in the heritage sector and local heritage companies were also consulted on the interest and importance of measures dedicated to the work force to be addressed in the project.

Activities carried out and stages of implementation of the project/initiative

The entire project was structured in 5 work packages: one following up the restoration process, the other focusing on the soft measures meant to ensure a coherent cultural program, education, training and certification and at the same time, relevance according to the needs of the target groups and communities. They were implemented by an internal team of 27 people in close cooperation with the partners Museene I Sor Trondelag from Norway and Future Capital from Romania. The work packages were codependent and results from different activities fueled others: research generated the cultural content for the exhibition, training and certification assessment tools, the exhibition concept generated the educational activity, and the sociological research generated the endowment of the maker spaces and outreach program. The process that allowed us to certify the competences previously acquired in informal ways was long and tedious, but developing the tools and methods for assessment brought our team in contact with the practitioners, refining our research with meaningful information regarding materials, tools, techniques and bringing new valuable information on our collections. The training and certification process are essential to cultural heritage preservation, especially to open air museum and medieval cities, preservation to ensure the continuity of traditional construction systems and crafts skills.

Challenges or problems encountered and solutions found to overcome them

The project started in Covid era and faced even after a multitude of challenges related to the energy crisis, the war in Ukraine. The biggest challenge was related to the explosion of prices directly linked to all of the above mentioned. It was of crucial importance the support of our governing body, Sibiu County Council, that understood fully the importance of the project for local development and walked the extra mile to help in overcoming the financial difficulties. Notable was also the support of the Ministry of Culture that made a special call for all project struggling with price increase. Nevertheless, the delays put a strain on both teams, Romanian and Norwegian, but good cooperation and extra efforts made it possible to finish it on time.

Results and impact

Summary of the main results achieved and knowledge that has been gained. List the ways that the project/initiative contributes to the preservation and/or enhancement of the historical, cultural, environmental, educational and/or social values of the heritage in question. Mention the project's impact on conservation policy and practice, if any.

> ASTRA Center for Heritage managed to have in the old guild hall several open spaces for the use of the creative communities: an innovative exhibition, a new education hall together with a program, a new museum shop, one conference room and a multifunctional workshop area, 4 makers' spaces, fully equipped for creation and small scale production.
> The Traveling Dowry Chest had a huge impact not only upon the community, but on decision making at national level, the Ministry of Culture initiated and signed an agreement of cooperation with the Ministry of Education stating thus the educational values of the cultural heritage for future generations.
> The certification process already changed the conservation policy at national level, grants of more than 30 million euro offered by The National Institute of Heritage for the restoration of vernacular architecture in open air museum, memorial houses, religious buildings must include in the team at least one certified craft person.
> 3 of the certified craftsmen have their own companies that employ other, now, certified craftsmen. The competitive advantage offered them the possibility to enter public procurement procedures and they are now employed on restoration work in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan – on the route of traditional villages.

Aspects of the project that can be considered innovative within its area or field.

> Through the training and certification program ASTRA Museum became a trailblazer in the preservation of traditional crafts by rendering the dignity of knowledge bearers from the rural area. Over 40 craft persons are now qualified to enter the labor market in the buildings' rehabilitation and restoration, with honest pay for valuable work, assisting heritage communities to maintain traditional buildings, using the right materials and craft skills, ensuring social sustainability. Furthermore, the quality of the training resides in the thorough research that stemmed the curricula and in the curricula new competencies added to it: entrepreneurship, tackling financial, legal and marketing skills, equipping the trainees with the tools to survive and thrive, to become competitive and resilient on the labor market. Museum's assessors acquired also HR tools; to be accurate in the assessment process they used multiple methods to understand the wide range of skills and competencies defining traditional crafts.

Measures to ensure the sustainability/future viability of the project (in terms of future plans and funding).

> Daily operations and programs in the restored building are now part of the annual planning of ASTRA Museum, providing staff and funds for running it. Most of the activities are generating revenue (selling tickets to exhibitions, renting the conference rooms, makers' spaces, coffee shop, and museum shop) and we have already established partnership with local NGOs in the creative sectors to share the use House of Arts and the costs associated. The certification process continues, there is a strong interest, mainly from companies active in the building preservation area or other museums, to have, on their expense, their staff certified. There have been also requests from various beneficiaries to extend our area of assessment and certification to other crafts.

Environmental sustainability of the project and contribution to climate action (in terms of results, techniques, materials employed, methodologies etc.), if relevant.

> The certification process is one of the best examples of social sustainability, contributing to stronger communities, with growing self-esteem and confidence in their ability to tackle change and gain resilience in challenged times. The official professional recognition of these traditional knowledge bearers brings back dignity and appreciation, and also provides them with fair pay and fair place on the labor market, an economic incentive that would reduce immigration to western countries. Leading by the power of example, encouraging people to find new use of old buildings instead of tearing them down, to have craft skills, to use the right, natural materials and low tech tools to repair or conserve their homes or assets is the best way in which a museum can contribute to climate action during fast times, when everything is being replaced by new. Also, the restoration of the building aimed at rendering it more energetically efficient.

Dissemination of the project's results and knowledge gained and any outreach or educational activities.

> Traditional methods of dissemination for wider audiences have been used to ensure the visibility of the project in the communities, using as spokespersons and communication vectors the members of the target groups themselves. We put a lot of efforts into disseminating the activities and results of the project in our professional communities, museums and cultural heritage organizations, advocating, at national and international level (CHARTER, NEMO, AEOM), for the importance of the certification of craft persons. To sensitize, inspire and empower local communities, living in the medieval city center, to take care and act upon the conservation of the historical buildings, we organized several times participatory activities with crafts on the public square. The education kit already reached 11 remote schools in rural areas of Sibiu County, offering children equal opportunities to the cultural life.

Participation in the initiative (number of participants/audience/users per year and/or, in the case of websites and digital platforms, information regarding visitor numbers and online interaction).

> Even though the project is still young, more than 7000 people attended the overall activities of the project: visitors of the exhibition, participating in the training program or museum education activities. Over 40 craft persons were certified in the following professions: Manufacturer of wooden craft objects - code COR 731703, Beam, adobe and stone construction worker - COR code 711101 and Manual / artisan carpenter - code COR 752203, 30 more became trainers or also enhanced their entrepreneur competencies. 12 more craftsmen participated in matchmaking events B2B with several local entrepreneurs to present their products and services and find new connections in a local economy. 27 specialists, including 3 of the certified craftsmen participated in exchange visits with the Norwegian partner.

Involvement of youth, community, non-traditional audiences and/or people with disabilities.

> During the project we tried to involve especially kids in primary school. The Traveling Dowry Chest educational kit was developed during participatory sessions with both pupils and teachers becoming our partners, to make sure that the new tool will not only be attractive, but it can serve as a real educational resource for the general subjects in the curricula. Teenagers volunteered for the implementation of the program. Specialization sessions were organized in the public square and inside the makers' spaces to be able to involve actively the local communities, to inspire and empower them to acknowledge the value, to care and take care of the built heritage. They were considered a call for action, not just a restoration road show, very attentively curated by museum staff and certified craft persons and attracted numerous passersby.

Contribution to intercultural dialogue and to the protection of cultural diversity.

> Even though the two museums, ASTRA and MiST, cooperated previously for many years, this project in particular contributed to a mutual understanding of the diversity in crafts and the particular aspects of materials, skills, techniques and tools used in two different areas of Europe in cultural heritage. There has been a mutual exchange in conservation area, in building preservation and crafts related to cultural heritage, also a huge progress in designing educational activities that actively include the local identity and the common European values reflected in natural materials, craft skills and intangible cultural heritage. The research conducted for developing the created a deep bond between museum staff and heritage practitioners culture is not ideological but rather shaped in peoples' daily activities, including work. The certification process itself is our manifest for fighting inequality and discrimination on the labor market, acknowledging the true practitioners' technical, symbolical and economic value.

Transferability of the initiative to other contexts and its scalability potential.

> The certification process is the initiative that other open air museums showed interest in taking up themselves. We can provide the methodology, the entire road map of accreditation and we can assist any organization located in other areas in Romania. For the craft persons also it takes time and resources to travel to Sibiu and go through the entire process, so it would be really helpful to have this center multiplied. We intend, as demand is high, to extend the professions that we can assess and certify to 3 more next year, training more member of our staff to be assessors of competences.
> The Traveling Dowry Chest had a huge impact and needed to be extended; we already started a new project to design

a kit dedicated to teenagers in upper secondary education, exploring wood as raw material for art or production in a creative manner

European and international dimension

European significance of the project/initiative/nominee.

ASTRA Museum is the one of the largest open air museums in Europe, showcasing on almost 100 ha in more than 350 buildings the variety of vernacular architecture and the ethnic diversity that is specific to this continent. The exhibition pinpoints how common people from multicultural communities like Sibiu, with their ordinary tools and craft skills are the ones that actually shaped the personality of Transylvania as a European region, connecting the tangible and intangible heritage to the cultural landscape that created it. The certification program is meant to raise awareness on the contribution of crafts in preserving the diversity of vernacular architecture, contribution that can be extended to the historical cities struggling throughout Europe to preserve heritage, to repurpose old building and avoid wiping out memorable witnesses of history.

Costs of the project/initiative

Costs of the project (in euro), financial and management arrangements, funding partners and/or the type of funding.

The total budget of the project was 2.699.223 euro, of which amount of the non-refundable EEA Grant was 1.835.472 euro, the national government grant 323.906 euro and the contribution of the applicant, ASTRA Museum and its governing body, Sibiu County Council was 539.845 euro.
The structure of the budget covered both the restoration and endowment of the building (1.678.443 euro of which 297.443 euro ASTRA Museum's own contribution) and the development and endowments necessary for the cultural, educational and training program (860.357 euro). The Norwegian partner benefited, under this call, of their own budget (343.588 euro), dedicated to the cooperation activities, to educational activities and also to the restoration of an old farm building in the open air museum Sverresborg Trondelag Folk.

Funding provided by the European Union or the EEA/Norway Grants (including programme, year and amount of the Grant), if any.

The project Restoration and revitalization of the historical monument House of Arts – Center for Activities and Regional Resources (C.A.R.R.) was financed on a state aid scheme under the 1st Call Restoration and revitalization of monuments by PA14 Programme „Cultural entrepreneurship, cultural heritage and cultural exchange"(referred to as RO-CULTURE Programme) RO-CULTURE Programme is financed through the EEA Grants 2014-2021 and aims at strengthening social and economic development through cultural cooperation, cultural entrepreneurship and cultural heritage management. This call, having as managing authority the Ministry of Culture and as programme operator the Project Management Unit, financed the projects that aimed to address the need of restoring cultural heritage in an innovative way, by promoting new participatory governance models for the field of cultural heritage and an integrated approach of this heritage. It is considered one of the best practice examples in the EEA Grants 2014 – 2021, both by the Romanian part and Norwegian Directorate for Culture and Arts Council, the Norwegian governing bodies for the grants in the cultural sector.

Additional information

How would winning the European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award benefit you, your project and/or your organisation?

> ASTRA Museum is a trailblazer in so many ways, but sometimes you are not a prophet in your own country. The award will offer the confirmation of a strong longlasting partnership, the validation of a forward thinking museum, innovative but still deeply rooted in the common values of knowledge bearers that shaped our cultural heritage, left a legacy to contemporary communities and teach a lesson for the future ones.

In case this submission is the winner of the Grand Prix, what will the monetary award be used for?

> The monetary award would be used for the extention certification program, to train three more assesors from the museums and develop the assessment tools for 2 more crafts.

In case this submission is the winner of the Grand Prix, who will be the recipient of the monetary award?

> ASTRA Museum will be the recipient of the monetary award

How did you find out about the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards?	Europa Nostra newsletter
Is this the first time that this entry has been submitted to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards?	Yes
On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with this online submission form?	✓ 9
By submitting your data, photographs and other material to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards you agree to the processing and sharing of your data in accordance with Europa Nostra's Privacy Policy. Please check the box to indicate you agree with the Privacy Policy.	✓

Log in to european-heritage.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.



CARR certificati... 271 KiB



CARR certificati... 364 KiB



CARR certified c... 3.4 MiB



CARR cooperati... 2.2 MiB



CARR crafts in p... 4.3 MiB



CARR official op... 576 KiB



CARR opening o... 207 KiB



CARR ordinary t... 3.5 MiB



CARR outreach ... 5.0 MiB



CARR outreach.j... 236 KiB



CARR tools.jpg 4.6 MiB



CARR youth inv... 1.6 MiB



CARR .jpg 115 KiB



CARR 1.jpg 401 KiB



CARR certified c... 1.9 MiB



CARR communi... 121 KiB



CARR cooperati... 1.9 MiB



CARR crafting tr... 2.5 MiB



CARR crafting T... 4.3 MiB



CARR edu.jpg 1.5 MiB



CARR expo Craf... 4.1 MiB



CARR makerspa... 398 KiB



CARR travelin e... 104 KiB



CARR traveling... 199 KiB



CARR traveling.... 75 KiB



CARR volunteer... 1.2 MiB



CARR youth.jpg 1.7 MiB

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