

Conservation and revitalization of Benedek Manor House from Municipality of Gheorgheni

-Life in the House –

Built in the year of 1840 as a family house with one single room by Lajos Benedek, the 175-years-old Benedek Manor House is one of the most representative wooden buildings of Gheorgheni. The building has both the urban and rural motives of the region, simultaneously. In 1942, the house became property of the state due to socialization, then it was shortly introduced in the national dwelling-support system, through which the state has provided home to families in need. This period has been strongly marked by deficient maintenance and neglected repairs, moreover, some elements were destroyed by flames.

At the beginning of the '90s, the first partial recovery took place, initiated by the municipality. From 1998, the manor house was given into concession to the *Ethnographia Gyergyoiensis Foundation*, led by Irina Kis. Since then, the manor house hosts the so called House of Popular Creation.

Thus, the Benedek House became the dynamic centre of reviving popular traditions. Next to several periodic expositions, three permanent collections are well worth visiting: the valuable **collection of more than 600 popular weavings, among them 360 popular costumes** - traditional textiles presented together with techniques of production and illustrations; the collection **made of wooden fretwork patterns** used in the local folk architecture as an important element in Secler traditions. These 1,200 fretworks contain fence, planking, porchway and façade motives with descriptions and

anthropological explanations; and a unique collection called **the Message of Eastern Eggs**, which presents more than 2500 egg-painting motives used in the Carpathian Basin, Moldova and Bucovina. At the same time the House of Popular Creation hosts various ethno-cultural programs, such as traditional egg painting courses, presentations of traditional weaving, courses of traditional sewing methods both on local and regional level. More than that, several cultural events take place in the organization of the foundation at the manor house, such as the annual "Funeral of the Carnival" or "Soldiers Food Tasting" at which hundreds of students are present every year.



A huge amount of ethno-cultural material has gotten together throughout the past decades, which still wait for being analyzed in the near future; for example, a collection of 10,000

buttons used formerly according to the traditional dressing habits.

The present project for the restoration of the Benedek Manor House is designed to bring this important cultural and touristic site back to an acceptable standard of presentation, whereby the house will once again regain its attractiveness, dignity, architectural legibility and visual power – important aspects that have suffered considerable loss over the past decades.

The investment is justified also by the activity of the foundation, which plays an important part in the socio-cultural life not only in the municipality but at micro-regional level as well. According to the statistics of the last three years, the number of visitors or participants increased as follows:

- 2011: a total number of 2722 visitors
- 2012: a total number of 2930 visitors
- 2013: a total number of 3245 visitors.

The Foundation also collaborates with numerous NGOs from the micro-region, cultural institutions (Cultural Center Gheorgheni, Tarisznyás Márton Museum), being relevant its

relationship with the Pro Gheorgheni Tourism Association as well.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

• General objectives:

- Contribution to regional development through the preservation of built cultural heritage and the promotion of knowledge and appreciation of the heritage among local community.

• Specific objectives:

- Preserving the local cultural heritage and reusing it as an instrument for local economic, social and tourism development;
- Development of communities by improving their tourist and investment attractiveness through the conservation, restoration and valorization of cultural heritage;
- Building technical capacities and raising awareness in the field of cultural heritage preservation for locals, cultural institutions, NGO's, architects, contractors;
- Promoting cultural diversity.



PROJECT TARGET GROUPS

- **Direct target groups:**
 - inhabitants of the city, 18000 people
 - tourists
 - local administration
 - specialists in the cultural fields - 20 persons
 - historical interest groups, historical craftsmen: 10 organizations

- **Indirect target groups:**
 - local and regional entrepreneurs
 - inhabitants of the micro region - 40000 people

The planning phase has come to an end during this month; henceforth the project arrived at the procedure of public procurement. All of the instruments and tools used by the foundation have been moved from the manor house, so the building is ready for the actual recovery.

The permanent collections which could have been visited in the house will be open to the public only after the end of the restoration works, the events and programs of the foundation will take place in other locations until the end of the project.

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