



## Culture is for living - Inspire -Animate ASTRA Museum, Sibiu County

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### Terms of reuse

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### Type of best practice

Communication between Museums and Heritage Sites

### Keywords

#IntangibleHeritage #ExperienceHeritage #CommunicateHeritage #astramuseum #Sibiu #crafts

*"Animă ASTRA/Animate ASTRA" is a cultural program of the Astra Museum. Its mission is to provide a context where visitors can explore Romanian intangible cultural heritage directly linked to the architectural heritage of the ethnographic museum. It actively involves visitors through open workshops and conveys intangible heritage in an experiential manner. Observing craftsmen at work, listening to traditional folk music played on various instruments, witnessing traditional dances, and actively participating in the process, visitors gain a heightened awareness and interest in their own roots and heritage. For foreign visitors, it provides a unique opportunity to experience a different culture. The engagement of craftspeople and music artists fosters a sense of encouragement, motivating them to persist in their work and share their knowledge and skills with the younger generation.*

### Organisation in charge of best practice

ASTRA Museum

### Location

Sibiu County, Romania

### Dates

May – October 2023

### Description

The ASTRA Museum is a public cultural institution with its primary objectives encompassing research, the collection of cultural assets, recording, preservation, restoration, and the promotion of cultural heritage. It achieves these goals through exhibitions, cultural programs, publications, and various communication forms, all aimed at fostering knowledge, education, recreation, and the overall development of the institution. The organization is structured to harmonize the functions of a museum institution with an ethnological profile, representing diverse ethnocultural aspects (Romanian, Saxon, Roma,





and universal ethnography). It encompasses collections related to traditional civilization and art, and functions as a scientific research hub in the field. The program was organized into various activities.

- 6 interactive music and dance workshops, with a monthly frequency, centered around groups from both rural and urban areas of Sibiu. The goal was to create a conducive environment for interaction between different communities, as well as between their representatives and museum visitors. Additionally, the workshops aimed to educate participants by involving them in authentic forms of traditional artistic expressions.
- A total of 60 craft workshops were conducted as follows:
  - Sewing, crocheting, and making felt objects workshops encouraged the public to create various traditional household items. The sewing workshops highlighted how urban tailoring influenced the rural fashion of different national communities (ethnic minorities) in Romania. The objects created during these interactive workshops were provided as samples to the participants.
  - Interactive dance workshops, costume parades, choreography, and traditional interpretation specific to Romanians living outside the borders of Romania were conducted. These workshops showcased values of international intangible cultural heritage and emphasized the Romanian cultural heritage that shapes the identity of Romanians from historical Romanian territories outside Romania, such as the Republic of Moldova.
  - Carpentry and joinery workshops illustrated the connection between urban and rural in terms of tools used and practices employed, within the context of a multi-ethnic Transylvania. Participants in these workshops had the opportunity to learn from craftsmen the methods of refurbishing their traditional furniture.
  - Workshops for making utilitarian ceramics will illustrate the traditions and practices used by multi-ethnic communities in Romania.
  - Ceramic firing workshops illustrated firing methods in a traditional kiln.
  - Workshops for making food and household storage furniture reproduced objects from the museum located in various foreign regions. These replicas of objects were adapted to contemporary daily life.
  - Workshops for creating household and agricultural tools used in urban and rural gardens. The typology of the tools illustrated interethnic influences in the practices of making agricultural tools and the influences that Saxons and Hungarians had on Romanians.
  - Painted furniture workshops illustrated the aesthetic practices of decorating traditional Saxon, Hungarian, and Romanian furniture.
  - Experimental archaeology workshops (making tools used in carpentry, blacksmithing, and specific guilds and crafts).
- 14 Cultural animations were designed to portray significant figures from the rural world in the 19th-20th centuries. These animations were dedicated to characters from rural areas, aiming to shed light on the realities and life sequences, as well as institutional and social practices that characterized daily existence in the multi-ethnic Romanian rural context. Serving as a sustainable means of conveying the cultural heritage of the ASTRA Museum, these cultural animations underscored the concept of an animated museum.

The project played a crucial role in altering the perception of urban residents concerning the practical value of elements inherent to intangible heritage, such as crafts, know-how, and artistic expressions. Additionally, through its diverse activities, the project helped





establish the museum as a premier leisure destination for locals and tourists, addressing elements of interest and relevance to urban communities.

The project contributed to changing the perception of urban residents regarding the practical utility of elements specific to intangible heritage (crafts, know-how, artistic expressions). Also, through its activities, the project contributed to positioning the museum as one of the top choices for leisure among residents, addressing elements of interest and relevance for urban residents.

The project also had the objective of educating the public on the responsible use of natural resources, advocating for the utilization of local resources to minimize individual ecological footprints, and fostering the development of sustainable programs for communities. Specifically, the craft workshops in carpentry and joinery, where participants learned to undertake minor repair or refurbishment interventions, were designed to counteract a throwaway culture.

In light of 2023 being designated as the Year of Traditional Heritage Skills, ASTRA Museum is committed to further developing the platform for valorizing traditional crafts within an emerging market, contributing to the growth of a national crafts market.

The project serves as a model of good practice by implementing the objectives of international sustainable development programs at the local level. It achieves this by promoting experiential learning through craft workshops, where participants acquire techniques employed in traditional crafts that they can later apply in their own homes.





## Links

<https://muzeulastra.ro/en/> <https://muzeulastra.ro/en/eveniment/anima-astra-ateliere-de-olarit-de-ardere-a-ceramicii-croitorie-dulgherie/>

<https://muzeulastra.ro/en/eveniment/pictam-croim-faurim-anima-astra/>

<https://muzeulastra.ro/en/eveniment/anima-astra-de-la-fier-la-lemn-pana-la-lut-si-fir-de-lana/>

## Resources needed

The program is developed annually by a ten-person team with a budget of approximately 60,000 euros.

## Challenges encountered

Ethnographic museums may encounter challenges in sustaining interest among the younger audience and must innovate to make heritage appealing to new generations. For an open-air museum, weather stability is a constant factor to consider during the planning phase. The financial capacity to execute a six-month program is a recurring challenge each year, and the staff actively applies for various grants.

## Evidence of success

"Arguably, the most significant accomplishment of Animate ASTRA is the transformation of the museum experience. Visitors do not encounter a static village-like setting where traditional heritage is merely displayed as a relic of the past. Instead, they engage with a vibrant community where traditions are a dynamic and living reality. Those who advocate for it are inspired to nurture, respect, and transmit their heritage to future generations. The program involved 450 artists, 12 communities, and attracted 30,000 visitors. The implementation of this program has contributed to the promotion, awareness, and valorization of intangible heritage that illustrates active occupations in Sibiu County. It resulted in the promotion of tangible and intangible heritage belonging to ethnic communities through the organization of music, dance, and crafts workshops. Additionally, it raised awareness of the social and cultural significance of the connections between urban and rural environments.

## Potential for transfer

This type of program holds significant potential for transferability to cultural destinations or institutions. It requires a robust network of communities and artisans willing to showcase their heritage to a broad audience in tourist hotspots. The involvement of heritage communicators adds value, addressing various audiences and motivations.

## Further Information

"The ASTRA Museum is located in the city of Sibiu, one of Romania's most dynamic cultural cities and a former European Capital of Culture in 2007. The Open-Air Museum is a huge playground, unraveling the mysteries of rural civilizations for its visitors. It houses the most comprehensive collection of architectural monuments from all historical regions of Romania, including Transylvania, Danube Delta, Moldavia, or Wallachia. Encompassing 96 hectares within the natural reserve "Dumbrava Sibiului", the museum combines cultural heritage with a picturesque natural landscape, boasting lakes and ancient forests with high biodiversity, situated at the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. A network of ten





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kilometers of pathways ensures public accessibility to both cultural and natural heritage. Interactive elements such as panels with QR codes, quizzes, virtual reality experiences, an app, and thematic exhibitions are employed to interpret the rich cultural and natural heritage for diverse audiences.



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