



CONSILIUL JUDEȚEAN BRĂILA



MUZEUL BRĂILEI

PIAȚA TRAIAN NR. 3 TEL/FAX: 0339401002; 0339401003; e-mail: sediu@muzeulbrailei.ro
CONT IBAN: RO54TREZ1515010XXX000291 TREZORERIA MUNICIPIULUI BRĂILA

MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF ROMANIAN MUSEUMS 

The Museum of Brăila, in partnership with Brăila County Council, The Greek Community of Brăila, The Federation of the Jewish Community of Romania – Brăila Community, The “Obscina” Foundation of the Lippovan Russians of Romania, Brăila and The Turkish Democrat Union of Romania – Brăila, are developing the cultural Project “...**Greeks, Jews, Lippovan Russians, Turks...Brăila., Reactivation of the cultural memory of the city**” financed by The Administration of the National Cultural Fund.

Our cultural program won the contest organized by The Administration of the National Cultural Fund – session II/2012, the topic area: “Museum activities” with a non-refundable financing of 60,397 RON. The activities will be organized until the end of November 2012.



Cultural program financed by
The Administration of the National Cultural Fund

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The cultural program “**Greeks, Jews, Lippovan Russians and Turks...Brăila. Reactivation of the city cultural memory**” continues the cultural program “One Greek, two Greeks, three Greeks...Brăila. Reactivation of the cultural memory of Brăila City. The case of the Greek Community of Brăila” – carried on in 2009 by the Museum of Brăila, in partnership with the County Council of Brăila and the Greek community Brăila – with the support of The Administration of the National Cultural Fund and two sponsors: Mr. Konstantinos Tsoukalidis, president of the Greek-Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry – main sponsor from Athens (Greece) and Mr. Karafyllidis Athanassios – sponsor from Berlin (Germany). The main

outcome of the program was the foundation of the Cultural Diversity Center at the Museum of Brăila (<http://www.muzeulbrailei.ro/index.php?pn=2&idn=15625815582969>).

This year, the cultural program gathers persons of different nationalities, religious beliefs and, moreover, different ages, in a research concerning the cultural diversity of the city, as well as the valorization and interpretation of the image, the city branding and multimedia techniques of promotion. The goal is, on one hand, to save the memory and the multicultural heritage of the city and on the other, to use the result in cultural, touristic, educational and promotional purposes.

The main goal of the project is to reactivate the memory and the cultural-historic environment of Brăila city, from the ethnic diversity perspective. The project puts forward two groups of activities: 1. Research for realizing databases with texts, images and audio video files; complete the virtual map of the project "One Greek, two Greeks, three Greeks... Brăila" with other architectural elements proving the cultural and historical contribution of the four ethnic communities (Greeks, Jews, Lippovan Russians, Turks) at the development of the city of Brăila; we are going to add at all these the churches of other important ethnic communities of the town, that are not included in this project, namely Armenians, Bulgarians and Italians; a publication and documentary films presenting the cultural heritage of the multiethnic Brăila – historical dates, lay and religious architecture, urban legends and realities, personalities, traditions, trades, elements of atmosphere, mentalities, private life (marriages, relationships, school, life styles, family etc.), contemporary aspects; an exhibition about multiethnic Brăila (objects from the collections of our Museum and collections of the ethnic communities and their families); an exhibitions of photos on the banner-up system, which can be afterwards itinerated, even in non-conventional locations; extension of the cultural diversity website; 2. A group of activities with an important educational component, to stimulate the creativity and appeal the young generation to the multicultural heritage: a contest "Discover the multiethnic Brăila" with two sections: "Research" and "Promotion" for the young people, no more than 25 years old (money prizes, financed by The Administration of the National Cultural Fund) whose goal is the promotion of the cultural heritage of the ethnic minorities of Brăila and to select young volunteers (for the Cultural Diversity Center of the Museum of Brăila, a network of friends, gifted, creative young people, passionate of history, oral history, sociology, journalism, cultural tourism, promotion, photographic and video art); the young people will be stimulated to present their own vision about multiculturalism through a) research of certain aspects of the history and life of the ethnic communities (historical events, family stories, family objects, traditions, values, religious aspects, personalities, specific trades, stereotypes, mentalities, private life etc) presented in video images, photos, posters, articles etc. as well as b) their own vision linked to the city branding through the multiethnic perspective, in order to make Brăila a cultural touristic destination.

The project is included in the field of: a) museum activities, b) cultural activities (the spirit and main goal of the project), c) the initiatives emphasizing the mobile, immaterial, real estate and national cultural heritage (upgrading the image and audio-video repertoire, technical record cards of the monuments to stimulate and justify complex works of reconstruction, touristic maps marking the historical and cultural presence of these minorities: lay and religious architecture elements, description of people and houses, public buildings, private life, trade,

music etc.), d) museum activities of digitizing the heritage (databases made through this project).

The archive researches of the heritage experts, members of the project team (including the Museum of Brăila archives and those of the ethnic communities partners) will be completed by researches in the family collections, oral history studies, testimonies of the ethnic communities members who are born, are living or have lived for a longer or shorter period in Brăila (by written or oral interviews), and with the most original contributions of the young participants at the contest "Discover the multiethnic Brăila".

Let's try to imagine something about the atmosphere in the city of Brăila, when it was a Turkish *khaza*. Almost nothing has been left from this time: a few caves, neglected, unfortunately, almost unknown to the tourists and the local inhabitants as well, some architectural vestiges, Saints Michael and Gabriel Church, in Trajan Square, from the time when it was a Turkish mosque as well as a house dating from the early 19th century, with *sageac* (long wooden eaves, and a particular system of joining) in Orientului Street. Our grand parents tell us a story about a passenger line between Brăila and Constantinople, by early 20th century, today an unlikely memory, if we would not find in the books this fact demonstrating it was not just a story. In remote corners of our souls there still are, from our childhood, a few memories about the Turkish of Brăila: a colored *fez*, some twisted words, smell of warm pretzels, the sweet "halvita" and "sarailie" cake, the wanted taste of millet beer or cold lemonade. Nevertheless, Turkish people are still living in Brăila... but we do not know too much about them... have they preserved their traditions and customs, are they still speaking the language of their ancestors, are they still preparing the "sarailie" as in old times...? Only they could tell us about it...

More than two decades ago, on the streets, right in the heart of the city, one could see, every Sunday, near the Orthodox Cathedral of Ancient Rite, Zidari Street, a real show in the street: the Lippovan Russian women, dressed in outfits made of colored fabric, pleated skirts, the hair hold in kerchief, speaking with a certain accent, accompanied by their husbands, with long beards, a tasseled girdle around the waist... "The show" is still on in the Pisc district of today's Brăila, on Sundays and holydays... It is the proof of a belief well preserved and a spirit to preserve the traditions, which most of us could not understand. The responsible are maybe the religious books and old icons that their ancestors brought from the Russian steppes or maybe the songs played at the "harmosca" and the dances during their feasts, or even moral rules learnt in the family, rules we are not aware about, but they could share them with us... They still celebrate Christmas and New Year after the Julian calendar, with traditions, customs and meals, known by them only... We wonder if the real fishermen are still living in Brăila...? When one says Lippovan, one's thought goes to the Danube, the old boats, the fishing nets and fish... At Brăila, the river has still fish... Oh, how good would be now a Lippovan "borsh" (sour soup)...

As for the Greeks, we have already written about them...it is hard not mentioning them, while they erected the most beautiful buildings in Brăila... Greek Church, "Maria Filotti" Theatre, former "Rallys", Embiricos Mansion, today "Nicăpetre" Cultural Center... The ship

owners, the traders, the mills owners Violatos and Lykiardopol, the Mayor Radu Portocală, as well as smaller businessmen, such as Papacanaris the confectioner, who are still in our memory through their businesses, their houses erected in the Historical Center or their philanthropic gestures. The Greeks gave to Brăila famous personalities like the writer Panait Istrati (his mother was Romanian and his father, a Greek from Cephalonia), the poet Andreas Embiricos or the composer Iannis Xenakis and the list may go on... In 2009, the Greeks shared with us their life stories, described in the volume "One Greek, two Greeks, three Greeks... Brăila" (one can read it also on line at: http://www.muzeulbrailei.ro/images/docs/Volum_Greci.pdf), but a lot of them are still unknown. Nowadays, the Greek speak their native language, they preserved a number of traditions and customs from their grand-parents... they still prepare "Vasilopita" on New Year's Eve and "Magiritsa" at Easter, they cook "scordalea" and "baclavale", like in the old times and... we know for sure, they still break plates at the parties. By the way, there are many Romanian or not ladies, longing after the old times: "Oh, how many dance balls used to be at the Greek School...!"

In September, the Jews celebrated the New Year. I found it by chance. We do not know their customs on the New Year's Eve, now at the beginning of September, no Santa Claus, no Christmas cakes, no Christmas tree and no snow... a different New Year's Eve, according to the traditions they inherited, traditions we are not aware about. Last year, I visited them at the Coral Temple, on *Purim* and *Hanukah*, other Jewish holydays. There was for us, having another religion, just another beautiful show, we listened to *Hava Nagila* and other merry songs, we saw customs we don't understand, we ate different food, we heard stories about old times, when Brăila was full of Jews, bearded and wearing *kippa* on the head, a lot of Jewish schools and newspapers, ten synagogues in function, according to the documents of that period. On Regala Street, the commercial zone of the city, between Petru Maior and A.I. Cuza Streets, as well as in other zones of the city, one could see everywhere Jewish watchmakers', jeweler's stores and artisan's workshops. Well educated and good traders, the Jews made good fortunes at Brăila and they gave to the city a long list of highly cultivated men, whom we are today proud of: Mihail Sebastian, Max Herman Maxy. Once upon a time, Brăila was glorious; what has been left? Certainly, a number of memories, which we hope to find out...

This was and still is, Brăila, a mixture of cultures. We mentioned the Turks, the Lippovan Russians, Greeks, Jews, but in this city are also living others, like Armenians, Italians, Hungarians, Germans, Ukrainians, and so on. Were they rich or were they earning their living modestly, in small workshops or shops, these people left a mark in the development, the spirit and the charm of this cosmopolite city.

I tried to introduce you in the atmosphere of our project, hoping to "touch" a little your soul and remember your childhood, our youth and, moreover, hoping to persuade you in participating at our research, in discovering together the multiethnic Brăila.

We intend to find in Brăila and other towns as well (from Romania or abroad), "...Greeks, Jews, Lippovan Russians, Turks, Hungarians, Germans, Italians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Armenians", who have lived for a period in Brăila or are still living here, eager to talk about the old cosmopolite Brăila, about the buildings, businesses, forgotten trades, personalities of the city, or family stories, information about religion, customs, traditions, values, stereotypes, mentalities, superstitions, private life, gastronomy, which either are lost or

still preserved in these families (we can receive all these either hand written or at the computer, in audio or video files). We are interested in finding documents, old photographs, objects to illustrate the stories (scanned or photographed): buildings of old Brăila, photos taken at the community events, churches, old family photos, family papers – old certificates of birth, of marriage photos of the harbor, the institutions, old shops, restaurants, confectioner's, icons, cloths, jewels, hats, personal belongings, furniture, decorations, music or any other old object, newspapers of Brăila in the languages of the ethnic minorities, old manuals in these languages, old books, records, postcards with Brăila at the beginning of the century. We will publish fragments of these testimonies.

You can download the interviews from here:

The Interview for the GREEKS:

<http://diversitate-culturala-muzeulbrailei.ro/06-fisa-interviu/>

The Interview for the JEWS:

http://www.muzeulbrailei.ro/images/evenimente/2012/Proiect/FISA_INTERVIU_EVREI_i.pdf

The Interview for the LIPPOVAN RUSSIANS:

http://www.muzeulbrailei.ro/images/evenimente/2012/Proiect/FISA_INTERVIU_RUSI_LIPOVE_NI_i.pdf

The Interview for the TURKS:

http://www.muzeulbrailei.ro/images/evenimente/2012/Proiect/FISA_INTERVIU_TURCI_i.pdf

The contest regulation for youth can be downloaded at the following address:

http://www.muzeulbrailei.ro/images/evenimente/2012/Proiect/Regulament_Concurs_Descopera_BrailaMultietnica_MuzeulBrailei_i.pdf

You can contact us at: muzeul_brailei2012@yahoo.com

For further information:

Prof. Dr. Ionel Cîndea, Museum of Brăila, project manager, 0339.40.10.02, 0339.40.10.03

Camelia Hristian, project assistant, 0339.40.10.02, 0339.40.10.03, muzeul_brailei2012@yahoo.com

Camelia Hristian

Chief of Public Relations

Museum of Brăila

www.MuzeulBrailei.ro

<http://diversitate-culturala-muzeulbrailei.ro/>

Facebook: Muzeul Brailei