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Leading Strategies of the “DAC People” Program in Budjak

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Abstract: The article deals with the prospects of the international activities of Izmail State University for Humanities as a Danube academic consortium partner. The project of DAC pilot implementation of the programs “Innovation is Hope” and “Sky is the Limit” within the framework of “DAC People” in Budjak is presented in the article. Its key components include the following information: data about the prominent creative community in Budjak; the project of Budjak Art Center of Craft Excellence of Euro-regional importance (BACCE) as its integral unit; the challenges of the project and its geography; the people, involved in the implementation.

Keywords: project; project of Budjak Art Center of Craft Excellence of Euro-regional importance (BACCE); international activities

This year Izmail State University for Humanities has become the member of the Danube academic consortium (DAC), the activities of which are aligned with the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). This important partnership of Universities and Corporate partners with different expertise profiles form the unique Euro-regional integrated ecosystem in the area of the Danube Delta for integral innovation in the business and academic world. Two main DAC activity directions are focused on Applied Arts and technologies in dynamically interacting network of academic institutions, which take into account both single markers and cultural diversity of “Lower Danube” Euro-region.

Izmail State University got a proposal to develop and implement the program of “DAC People”, based on the interaction between the creative communities of our region with the academic environment. The project “DAC People” has two basic components: the program “Innovation as Hope” and “The Sky is the Limit”. The format of the first one assumes the involvement of the target students in achievements of the regional creative community to gain the attainments of artistic thinking and craft skills at the regional level. The second program is aimed at cooperation with children's institutions of different levels to involve the gifted children to university projects.

The prominent creative community in Budjak is Izmail Municipal Organization of National Union of Artists of Ukraine (*Guide of the Izmail Municipal Organization*, 2013). Having been created in 2008, it unites the highly qualified specialists in fine arts and craft of the Southern Bessarabia (*Kara, Mitaki*, 2015, p. 211-213). It is an integral part of all-Ukrainian Creative Organization (*Guide of the National Union*, 2013) which consists of professional artists accepted in accordance with the strict expert criteria. Its Legal form is: Creative Community (840); Legal activities: 91.12.0 – activities of

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professional organizations; Institutional Sector: S.15 – Non-profit organization. There are 25 members in Izmail Municipal Organization of National Union of Artists of Ukraine. Two of them are Honored Artists of Ukraine; four members were awarded the medals of Pochayiv Icon; one member was awarded the Order of St. Prince Yaroslav the Wise (2014). All representatives have international experience in exhibition activities; most of them have teaching experience as the instructors of different creative workshops in the region.

The Head of this Community is Alexander Kara, the Honored Artist of Ukraine and Associated Professor of Izmail State University for Humanities. In 1998 he has been the initiator and constant curator of the children's art biennale of children's art "Children of Bessarabia" and Republican plein airs "Budjak palette". In 2005 he became the laureate and winner of the contest "Person of the Year", where he was nominated by the Association of Ukrainian Bulgarians in the nomination "Painting". Alexander Kara takes an active part in international exhibitions and creative meetings of Lower Danube artists and has participated in more than 160 collective exhibitions in Ukraine and abroad¹. He has nine awards for painting and is the author of 34 publications, among which are 7 researches, 24 creative works, three guides for students.

"Innovation as Hope". According to the goals of the program "Innovation is Hope" the Izmail Municipal Organization of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine (IMO NUAU) is developing the project of its integral unit – Budjak Art Center of Craft Excellence of Euro-regional importance (BACCE). The Center's Charter considers the newly established division of the Creative Community "IMO NUAU" as a trade union of experts in handicraft production, which also serves as the creative workshop. The Center provides: collection and description of artistic traditions of the region; revival and updating of creative skills of Budjak craftsmen; nonprofit educational activities among regional communities of the Southern Odessa region.

The project BACCE plans to implement DAC innovations that give the following prerogatives: appearance of the regional Center, aiming at the revival of folk art craft skills; creation of works of art and crafts using environmentally friendly materials (wood, vines, cane, gourde, ceramics, engobe, textile, wool etc.); showdown of achievements at regional art exhibitions with BACCE awards and recommendations of the Center; employment of craftsmen as teachers of the Center; export promotion; international networks and cultural exchange within the "Lower Danube" Euro-region; DAC pilot implementation of the project "Innovation is Hope" and "Sky is the Limit".

Challenges of the project. Today, the craft skills are in decline in the region due to the processes of industrialization and urbanization. Hand-made products are noncompetitive as compared to cheap manufactured goods. Meanwhile, the creativity of Budjak artists has a unique specificity, as its top feature is the synthesis of the inventive traditions of various ethnic groups living in the region (Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Albanian and others). The main urban challenge is to make four historic towns of Budjak (Izmail, Reni, Bolgrad and Artsyz) more productive; to improve the social climate during the period of deep economic crisis in Ukraine. Development of old and new crafts and small creative business gives the opportunity to master a certain craft for unemployed citizens and allow them to set up their own small businesses. It is of a common interest for the concerned towns (Izmail-Bolgrad-Reni-Artsyz) to carry out similar activities, creating important synergies between them.

Geography of the project. Five centers are regarded as BACCE departments in Budjak:

¹ Participant of the international Plein Air Festivals "Golden Orpheus" (Bulgaria, 1992), "St. Luka" (Bulgaria, 1996), "Osojnica" (Macedonia 1997), "Takmakli" (Bulgaria, 2005), so as in Cimişlia (Moldova, 2013) and others.

- Art Studio in Izmail State University for Humanities (Izmail);
- Bulgarian Cultural Center (Bolhrad);
- Museum of Local History (Ogorodnoje village);
- Children's District Library (Reni);
- Children's Art School (Artsyz).

We can find them on the map of Budjak:



People of the project. Delivery-partners from the regional centers of BACCE will cooperate, considering their competence, experience and the recognition of their craft skills in Ukraine and abroad. At the heart of their constructive cooperation is the creative approach to the process of types and design of products approval, based on the experience and skills of colleagues, as well as on the potential investors' interest in them. In Izmail Art Studio two delivery-partners are considered to be constant teachers during the project duration. They are:

Nina Ilyina – specialist in the manufacture sculptures made of ceramics (terracotta, engobe). She is the author of collections of everyday objects and dolls-amulets made of colored clay, which do not require additional staining. She was inspired by Tripolie culture artefacts, found in the area between the Danube and the Dniester, which have a genetic link with all the Balkan-Danube Region before our era. She also produces ceramics, covered with acrylic.

Helen Palii, attended the Art Training Course in Peace Corp (2013). Her creative nickname is *Sahara Skazka* (*Sahara Skazka's site*). Helen Palii is a specialist in the hand-made textile dolls, as well as author's toys, textile decorations, pillows, home decor made of papers and sisal, and other goods made of environmentally friendly materials. She has an internet market place on Etsy (*Sahara Skazka's site*).

In the regional centers of Bolgrad and Reni the responsible partners have the opportunity to invite different local craftsmen for the short-time courses in order to manufacture a variety of products.

Galina Ivanova, being a director of the Bulgarian Cultural Center in Bolgrad, has a significant experience in organizing local craftsmen workshops and in popularization of their results, and has the ability to provide the rental facilities and oversee the workshop of crafts in textiles, wood, vines, cane and straw.

Anna Konstantinova is the director of the Museum of Local History in Ogorodnoje village of Bolgrad district. She is a member of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine and outstanding specialist in the field of arts and crafts. Her target students are the village creative personalities, whom she is ready to teach at her classes.

Galina Zgurskaya, director of the Centralized Library System in Reni district is a bright person known for her public activities and huge creative potential. She is a Chairman of the regional public organization "Our Heritage", the author of the ethnographic collection "Let the world know Ukraine!" of the souvenir dolls dressed in national costumes of Budjak. As a leading teacher in Budjak Art Center of Craft Excellence in Reni, she can mobilize the local craftsmen in Reni district.

Vladimir Afanasyev, is a founder and Director of Artsyz Fine Arts School in Odessa region. As a teacher of the highest degree and the one who is enthused about the work he does, Vladimir Afanasyev has an individual approach to learning, which contributes towards personal fulfillment of his pupils. As a result, they are constantly winning prizes in regional and international competitions and exhibitions. Artsyz is a small district center, and the pupils of this Fine Arts School are modest rural children who were brought up in the spirit of traditional values. We believe that this school is the appropriate institution to implement the program "Sky is the Limit". All delivery-partners of BACCE take an active part in international exhibitions. Their craft goods are in private collections of many European and other countries of the world. They are motivated to implement the project tasks because of two main reasons: 1) the project creates jobs, which is very important during the period of deep economic crisis that has broken out in Ukraine; 2) the work of a creative person is always in need of recognition, which gives the impulse to new creative ideas.

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Sahara Skazka site on Etsy: <https://www.etsy.com/shop/SaharaSkazka?ref=hdr> and Portfolio at Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/129006489@N05/albums>.

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