

BRITISH COUNCIL PROJECT IN ROMANIA THE SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN NETWORK OF CREATIVE CITIES

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***Abstract:** A Guidebook to Creative Industries in Iasi, Romania, 2006 is a project initiated by the British Council Centre Iași concerning “creative industries”.*

After the conferences and workshops – in Plovdiv with the regional partners, in Iași and Bucharest with the British and the local consultants, the team has managed to put into practice one of the key projects it set out to achieve: publishing a unified inventory of the main actors of the industrial-creative sector in Iași.

The purpose of this project is to bring to the attention of the potential partners and supporters the city’s potential for economic and image “re-invention”, which “unify” Iași through its creative energies and resources and to facilitate the creation of new creative/ profitable partnership projects – in Romania, in the UK and in South-East Europe.

This guidebook is the tangible sign of the beginning of the journey.

1. Project introduction

This guidebook is the result of several months of research, and it represents the most important product of a project launched in spring 2005, at the regional UK-SEE Forum in Plovdiv (Bulgaria), by an interdisciplinary team, whose membership/composition was suggested and set up by Ecaterina Petreanu, the manager of the British Council Centre in Iași.

The project, funded by the British Council in partnership with institutions and businesses from Iași, is called “Building on Success: Towards a Creative Hub”, and it has been launched in June 2005, in Iași, during an international workshop, with a plan to be implemented between 2005 and 2006.

The project's main purpose is to make Iași a relay of expertise and a model of presenting creative industries, both for the North-East Development Region and for other cities in Romania and in South-East Europe. They felt they could achieve it by studying and presenting a few “success stories” from various domains of creativity, which are well-known to the people of Iași, but not yet perceived as belonging to this new concept on the Romanian idea market – “creative industries”.

The success stories have been highlighted on the background of field studies that have provided information about the number and the diversity of creative industries present in Iași, based on which we compiled a guidebook of the companies and actors in the city, illustrating the economic potential of this sector and the need for it to be promoted.

In order to be able to evaluate the project results, it is important to underline the targets set from the outset. During the international project bid in Plovdiv, the Iași team set out to have the following results ten months into the project:

- To create a local and regional partnership in order to develop creative industries in Iași
- To achieve a mapping study following a common methodology with other SEE Forum partners based on UK experience
- Showcase success stories in creative industries in order to advocate Iași as a creative hub
- To raise awareness about the concept of creative industries and their role in regional development
- To create a local network of creative industry professionals, politicians, business community, public institutions and NGOs.

From this perspective, the evaluation of the economic potential of creative industries and their role in the city’s identity and development could not be achieved without a mapping survey that would provide us with the background material, based on which we would later establish, through quantity and quality analysis, whether Iași is truly representative for the creative industries and whether its affiliation to the South-East European network of “creative cities” is justified.

2. Iași – Romania’s representative in the South-East European creative cities network

The network built by the British Council in South-East Europe (www.uksee.net) includes one city that is considered as representative for the cultural industries and for the creative potential from the following countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia-Montenegro. The network is the result of the new perspective on cultural and

political entrepreneurship promoted by the British Council for the development of this part of Europe, which was the basis for the “UK-South East European Forum” programme.

The forum is an initiative that aims to create alliances and common programmes of regional cooperation, between the new generation leaders in South-East Europe, based on British expertise and by encouraging partnerships with the UK.

A better grasp of this region and of the continent in the UK and a common action of these countries, together with the UK within an enlarged Europe are both targets of this programme. The forum has three strands: People and Politics, Youth Action and Creative Industries.

The three strands each develop their own projects, but they encourage cooperation and the synergic effects of these projects within the Forum, intending to create contacts and to mediate communication between the young leaders in the area from various domains and with different academic or political backgrounds. Intra-regional alliances and cooperation with the UK are keywords of the Forum.

The network of creative cities in South-East Europe is a project within the creative industries strand, which needs a number of cities in the region to launch and support the concept of creative industries through events, workshops, seminars, publications of specific projects to the local politicians and the local business community, so that we can talk about a new economic activity as a component of local and regional identity, as well as an instrument for the economic development of the city and of this part of Europe.

Iași was chosen as the “creative city” to represent Romania and to be a partner in the South-East Europe network after a very interesting meeting organised by British Council Romania, on October 28, 2004.

All teams coming from Bucharest, Cluj, Iași and Timișoara had strong cases to present and the day was a great sharing event and networking opportunity at national level.

The South-East Europe network of “creative cities”, established after the Conference in Plovdiv, 13-18 March 2005, includes, next to Iași, the following partners: Plovdiv (Bulgaria), Split (Croatia), Novi Sad and Belgrade (Serbia/Montenegro), Tuzla (Bosnia), Pristina (Kosovo), Skopje (Macedonia), Tirana (Albania).

In all these cities, between 2005 and 2008, various larger or smaller projects will be launched, in order to turn the spotlight on the creative potential of the area and to try to establish common objectives and interests, so that the importance of developing and supporting the creative industries will become obvious both for the national and for the regional public.

A crucial component of this programme is the focus on regional development. Apart from Tirana and Belgrade, the other cities are, usually, ex-capitals or cities occupying a secondary place in the country economy, marginalised by the centralist policies of the capital city, developing cultural prestige projects in an effort to increase their visibility and thus open up a new channel for financing the local community and government by the use of culture. Linking these cities in a regional network is a way of creating partnerships in South-East Europe, as well as a strategy for counter-balancing the power of the “centre” through means adapted to the new, post-modern perspective, which generates more dynamic, more flexible public policies that are at the same time more effective for the “periphery centres”.

The orientation towards encouraging the creative industries seems to be an effective way of creating public-private partnerships or for launching cooperation programmes and projects in the area, which will be able to support the development of these cities, most often disadvantaged by the discriminatory allocation of public resources and funds at country level, in favour, usually, of the administrative capitals.

4. The map of creative industries in Iași. Basic data

The classification of creative industries and the determination of the activities which can be integrated in this new economic sector are different from country to country, but, as a rule, as all the mapping research has shown so far all over the world, it includes the following domains whose activity involves artistic or scientific creativity:

- architecture and urban regeneration
- art and design
- performing arts
- film and video

- photography
- industrial inventics and artificial intelligence
- mass media (written on paper, audio or video)
- fashion and apparel design
- traditional crafts
- monuments and cultural tourism
- music
- advertising
- software and interactive video games
- printing and binding
- web design

The methodology we used in the survey in Iași follows the common principles we established in the meeting in Split (Croatia), in June 2005, in the workshop organised within the framework of the UK-SEE Forum, called “Mapping Creative Cities”, and it starts from the principles applied in this type of research by Calvin Taylor, a professor at the University of Leeds.

In order to have a comprehensive view of this sector, we have analysed both the private businesses and the culture or media institutions financed from public funds, and we also tried to obtain some data from the individual operators who had the potential of being integrated in this sector.