

ARISE - Authentic Reborn and Investment in Social Empowerment

By joining the European Union, Romania started a comprehensive process of alignment with the European standards in all areas of activity, including the ones regarding energy and environment.

Hidden among city blocks of flats, the former neighbourhood power plants that were heating the communist flats, remained one by one without their main utility, since the centralized heating system has become technically outdated, thus, most users gave up on this service, and closed individual heating systems. As a consequence of this phenomenon, at local level, from a total of 27 heating power plants, only 6 are still working. The other 21 nonfunctional buildings, besides their unaesthetic aspect, were presenting a high risk of danger for health and safety of the citizens.

In other words, the complexity of social problems that manifest in Vaslui at municipality level (increasing the number of elders, people with disabilities, children whose parents are working abroad, etc.) led to the development of some investments dedicated to this domain.

Vaslui Municipality sought for solutions to address the identified problems, and in this regard, in collaboration with Vaslui Local Council, started a comprehensive process of rehabilitation and destination change for these locations, and so, the following objectives were realised:

- Day centre for elderly „Buna Vestire” (Annunciation)
- Day centre for elderly „Sfântul Nicolae” (Saint Nicholas)
- Day centre for schoolchildren „Bucuria” (happiness) (social domain)
- Cultural centre „Alexandra Nechita” (education/culture domain)
- The Club for retired persons (social domain)
- „Friendship” club (social domain)

All these investment projects, are the result of a comprehensive participatory process, carried out during the development of critical documents regarding sustainable urban development, like „Local development strategy for Vaslui Municipality” (2009), and „Development strategy of Vaslui Metropolitan pole 2014-2020” (2014).

To achieve a relevant and effective strategic document, the development process involved local public administration structures, the Local Council and also stakeholders that were relevant for our community (NGOs and associations, business men, public institutions, experts from various fields, common citizens). All of them have contributed by joining the consultative working groups (example: Urban development/public transportation and infrastructure; Economic competitiveness, Education/Health and social inclusion). Both in 2009 as well as in 2014, the local development strategies have gone through a phase of public consultation (media, internet) to enable a larger number of citizens to contribute to the development of the local community.

Two of the newly created centers, the Day center for elderly „Buna Vestire” (Annunciation), and the Day center for elderly „Sfântul Nicolae” (Saint Nicholas), were setup within the Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013, Priority 1 – „Supporting sustainable development of cities – urban growth poles”, Area of intervention 1.1 – „Integrated urban development plans”, sub-field – „Urban Centers”, with an estimated cost of 530.000 €, and they offer a wide range of services like: **socialization and spending free time, individual and group - psychological advise** (discussions about ethics and deontological discipline, about old age, specific topics for elders), **social advise** (encourage the participation of the elderly in social and cultural life, promoting the link between people at the day center / social and family life, facilitate access to the community internal and external resources, capitalization / empowerment and rewarding activity results of elderly people),

individual and group medical support (providing medical information on the illness/disease the elder is diagnosed with, measurements and periodical check of vital indicators, physiotherapy, mechanical and manual massage, fitness with the help of voluntary trainers), **moral and emotional support**, and also **catering** for more than 90 persons. All of these activities are carried out with the help of social assistants, sociologists, psychologists, medical assistants, physiotherapy specialists, and masseurs, paid by the municipality.

To help the elders in spending free time and socializing, Vaslui Municipality, through its Social Assistance Department, ensures the function of two senior clubs, The „Friendship” Club and The Club for retired persons, in this case, the budget being obtained only from local sources. Almost 200 elders benefit from these two clubs, with activities like chess competitions, rummy, table tennis, socializing activities, cultural and artistic activities like dance classes, chorus, and also going on trips to churches and monasteries.

The day centre for schoolchildren „Bucuria” (Happiness), with an estimated investment cost of 169.000 €, carries out activities of education, recreation and socialization, counseling, development of independent living skills, school (professional) guidance for 15 children, and also activities of support, counseling and education for 15 families/legal representatives of the children and other persons that have children in care.

The Cultural Centre „Alexandra Nechita”, with an estimated investment cost of 110.000 €, was designed to address cultural-life actors of Vaslui, like public institutions, schools, and cultural associations that are developing educational projects, requiring a suitable location for this purpose, properly equipped.

To satisfy their needs, the centre has a capacity of 150 seats, and it also has specific equipments for cultural-artistic activities. Right from its opening, this investment objective attracted diversified cultural projects, and for the periods when no show is programmed, the centre is open, in an organized manner, for persons at risk of social exclusion coming from an assigned area.

Most importantly, Vaslui Municipality is taking further actions to rehabilitate the other old power plants from the city, and as objectives, we have: an archive for documents, a mini gym, commercial spaces and so on.