

# A programme for the integrated development of Sighișoara and the Saxon Villages of Transylvania

“Transylvania’s unspoilt natural and built heritage not only merit conservation in its own right, but also represent the **best economic future for its inhabitants**. In this document the MET presents a strategy programme for the **sympathetic, integrated development of the Saxon Villages area and of Sighișoara**”

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# A Programme for the Integrated Development of Sighișoara and the Saxon Villages of Transylvania – Romania

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are two World Heritage sites in Transylvania: the “Historic Centre of Sighișoara” and “The Villages with Fortified Churches”, the latter being composed of seven villages representing the rich rural heritage of this region. These compose a very dense cultural landscape typical of Transylvania and quite unique in our present times in Europe. The very strong relationship between man and his natural surroundings gives unity of character and its uniqueness to the region.

Surrounded by urban settlements with industries, universities and limited tourism facilities, all connected to the national road network, the region has remained very poor and very rural, with limited access to modern equipment and services. The “Saxons” (originally German and French speakers who migrated from the Rhine and Moselle regions in the 12<sup>th</sup> century) were the majority population until the fall of communism in 1989, but most returned to Germany in the early 1990s. The Saxons now represent less than 20% of the total, replaced mainly by Roma.

State-owned farms, which provided most local employment, have collapsed. There is high unemployment in the area. Most villagers live on the poverty line, relying on subsistence farming. Privatisation and market economy are bringing the possibility of economic growth to the region: the area is ideal for cultural and eco-tourism and organic agriculture. However, without an integrated development programme, **there is a grave and immediate threat that destructive short-term investments will damage the unique heritage of the region, to the long term detriment of the economic and cultural wealth of the area.** Such a threat was the proposed location of a Dracula Land theme park on a 100 hectare protected oak reserve, on a hill less than 1 km from the centre of Sighișoara. It is heartening that, as a result of listening to broad condemnation of this project from Romanian and international conservation groups, the Romanian government has cancelled the project and is to seek a more suitable alternative location for Dracula theme park. A decision that was acclaimed by the international community, in particular the World Heritage Committee.<sup>1</sup>

The Mihai Eminescu Trust (MET) is campaigning not only for the reduction of threats like the Dracula Park, but also for national and international support for the development of the region as a broad conservation and eco-tourism area. The MET is concerned that other large scale economic development projects will cause severe local damage to the UNESCO World Heritage sites, and would also adversely affect the image of the whole area. This will obliterate all possibilities for a

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<sup>1</sup> World Heritage Committee, 2002, Budapest 26 COM 21 (b) 67 , *Document: WHC-02/CONF.202/17* Historic Centre of Sighisoara (Romania),

1. Notes the report of the joint UNESCO-ICOMOS mission undertaken to the site;
2. **Notes with great concern the poor state of conservation of the World Heritage site and the high potential negative impacts, cultural as well as environmental, of the proposed theme park project on the site;**
3. Recalls paragraphs 80 to 82 of the *Operational Guidelines*;
4. Urges the State Party:
  1. To enhance the state of conservation of the property as a matter of urgency before the Committee considers any steps towards its inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger; and in this regard, to seek immediately both national and international funding and to request, for the most urgent restoration works, technical co-operation assistance for the preservation and protection of the World Heritage site. The Committee recalls that funds could be made available, upon request of the State Party, from the World Heritage Fund;
  2. To establish, as a matter of urgency, a World Heritage coordination team, attached to the city administration, responsible for management, in order to prepare an overall management plan, including management of tourism, for the World Heritage site;
  3. To take into account the critical social issues of the city and region in any further developments in and around the city of Sighisoara; and to take into account the existing potential development represented notably by a series of World Heritage sites in the region, in particular for cultural itineraries and cultural tourism;
5. **Takes note with satisfaction of the intention of the Romanian authorities to relocate the proposed theme park, which was planned at a distance of 1.5 km from the World Heritage site;**
6. **Requests furthermore the State Party to avoid constructing the Park in the vicinity of World Heritage sites in Transylvania;**

harmonious and sustainable development. Transylvania's unspoilt natural and built heritage not only merit conservation in its own right but also represent the **best economic future for its inhabitants**. In this document the MET presents a strategy programme for the **sympathetic, integrated development of the Saxon Villages area and of Sighișoara**.

The area under consideration is naturally delineated by mountains, rivers and national roads. It contains most of the Saxon villages of Transylvania as well as the city of Sighișoara. Its natural and cultural heritage and its social and economic conditions, combine to make this a unique region. This strategy programme aims at promoting development built on the wealth of the region: its built and natural heritage, its history, the similarities between all its villages, its natural resources (rich agricultural land, streams, flora and fauna), the possibilities of 'ecological' agriculture and tourism, the know-how of its inhabitants, the interest of the international community.

The MET will take a leading role in the implementation of this strategy programme. The MET's object is to alert national and international bodies to the value of, and the threat to, this unique cultural asset, and to show how economic development of the area can go hand in hand with conservation. The MET will continue its extensive current work in the conservation and economic regeneration of certain villages in the area, which will act as pilots for the larger scheme.

Together with this work, the MET will also concentrate efforts on the institutional and governance mechanisms that need to be reinforced and sometimes created to enable the region reach the stage of sustainability in its development. In doing so, the MET will work on reinforcing the sense of belonging to a special place, of identity and uniqueness among the decision makers and inhabitants of the area considered.

The strategy programme focuses on three major objectives:

1. Creation of a sense of belonging to a common region through the establishment of a network of cooperating cities and villages in the region, driven by cultural and natural heritage, sharing similar issues, problems and possibilities.
2. Conception, development and implementation of a mechanism providing capacity building, training and the necessary sets of organisational tools for the betterment of the economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions of the region;
3. Sustainable development through the appropriate use of heritage – cultural and natural – of the region and the effective operation of programmes and projects and of private ventures in the region.

## 1. Geographical Location and Relation with the World Heritage Convention

The Region of the Saxon villages in Transylvania includes most of the villages with fortified churches inscribed on the World Heritage List. They are located in the Departments of Alba, Braşov, Harghita, Mures and Sibiu. These villages are:

<u>Village</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Department</u>
Câlnic	Câlnic	Alba
Prejmer	Prejmer	Braşov
Viscri	Bunesti	Braşov
Dârjiu	Dârjiu	Harghita
Saschiz	Saschiz	Mures
Biertan	Biertan	Sibiu
Valea Viilor	Valea Viilor	Sibiu

To which must be added the city of Sighişoara, which is recorded as a separate site.

This region represents a triangle of roughly 170 km East-West and 70 km North-South. Its south-eastern limit is Prejmer, and its south-western limit Câlnic, connected by the road from Braşov-Fagaras-Sibiu (see maps I & II). Its northern limit is Sighişoara. Along the periphery and within this triangle are about 178 Saxon villages, with populations of between 200 and 500 Romanians, Roma, German, and Hungarians. Few visitor services (hotels, hostels, restaurants, toilets, signs) exist within the triangle although ample modern services are accessible along the main periphery roads linking the main towns. The main periphery roads are been upgraded with EU money. The area within the triangle remains largely unblemished by modern intrusions (billboards, gas-stations, etc). The area is a naturally coherent geographic area with a network of interlaced narrow valleys. It is a dense cultural landscape with a large quantity of small Saxon villages in which the World Heritage sites of Sighişoara and of the Saxon Villages with Fortified Churches lie.

This region displays a remarkable unspoilt harmony between people and landscape. Topography has defined the pattern of development of the villages. Arable land and pasture extend from the back of the villages up to woodlands. Land ownership and field patterns have followed the village structure and date back to 12th century settlements<sup>2</sup>. Whenever land is steep, terraces have been fashioned to maximise agricultural potential, as in Mediterranean areas where scarce land was to feed increasing numbers of inhabitants.

The region is blessed by a still untouched flora and fauna of remarkable quality<sup>3</sup>, that exist as a product of the ancient farming methods. Its forests are professionally managed by the public institution Romsilva, but there are possibilities that they be sold to private parties; this would put at risk large parts of the landscape of the Saxon villages. These natural areas are populated by a great number of wild species from wolves and brown bears to eagles and butterflies. Meadows are also very rich in wildflowers.

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<sup>2</sup> Kim Wilkie Associates, « The Saxon Villages of Transylvania, Romania – A Future for the Mediaeval Landscape »; prepared on behalf of HRH The Prince of Wales and The Mihai Eminescu Trust, November 2001. Throughout this document, the report of Kim Wilkie Associates will be thoroughly used.

<sup>3</sup> “The Flora and Vegetation of Viscri, Malancrav and Surrounding Countryside” by John Akeroyd and Peter Mountford, BSc, PhD, FLS, Report for the Mihai Eminescu Trust, September 2001 and “Fauna Survey of the Saxon Villages of Transylvania, Romania” by Ilf Jacobs and Pieter Blonde for the Mihai Eminescu Trust.

The distance between the capital Bucharest and the first city of the region considered, Braşov, is 170 km. From Braşov to Sighişoara, the distance is 120 km; from Braşov to Sebeş 270 km. This region is also well delineated by the geology of the place. To the south are the Fagaraş and the Cindrel ranges of mountains together with the river Olt while its East, North and West flanks are respectively delineated by other mountain ranges and the rivers Târnava Mare and Mureş. Road communication is good except for the small dirt roads linking villages to the main network.

## 2. Demographic aspects

The demography of this region has dramatically changed since the early nineties, both in numbers and in structure and composition. From a densely populated rural area, surrounded by industrial sites, it has become now under-populated, abandoned by the youth and by its original owners.

In 1990, the total population of the villages in the area was about 90,000, of whom 70% were of Saxon origin, 25% of Romanian origin and 5% Roma. Today, owing to the emigration of the Saxons, the population has radically changed in ethnic composition: 5% are of Saxon, 60% of Roma (particularly poor)<sup>4</sup>, and 35% of Romanian origin. Villages are relatively small in size, though quite numerous. Within the triangle formed by Sibiu, Sighişoara and Braşov, which is the heart of the Saxon villages country, there are about 178 ‘Saxon villages’. Most have populations between 200 and 400.

The only major cities are on the peripheries of the region: Braşov, which falls just outside the natural geographic boundary of the region, has around 315,000 inhabitants. Sibiu has a population of 95,000, Mediaş 75,000, Sighişoara 35,000.

The age-pyramid has been adversely affected by heavy migration of the working-age population to Germany or to the large cities of the country. Dependency ratios and unemployment (60%) are high, and unemployment is chronic in the region, while the lack of infrastructure and services (health, social, transportation, communication) encourages the continued emigration of the young and more able.

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<sup>4</sup> World Bank, Poverty in Romania, Profiles and Trends, Vol II, Poverty Assessment page. 24 in Report No. 26169 – RO, page 12., “By 2002, Roma were 2.7 times more likely to be found among the poor than the rest of the population, and five times more likely to be found among the severe poor. Roma account for 7 percent of the total poor, and for 12.5 percent of the severe poor. In fact, three out of five Roma live in severe poverty, and only one out of five is not poor.”

### 3. The Current Economic Situation of Romania and of the Saxon Villages Region

#### 3.1 Economic situation of Romania<sup>5</sup>

Since the political changes of the early 90's, Romania has been confronted with a difficult economic situation. It is however beginning to come out of recession. GNP per capita is now at US\$1,570 while the percentage of Population estimated to be in the poverty range stands at 29%.

#### Poverty and Inequality in Romania

(Source: Romania Country Assistance Strategy, The World Bank, Washington D.C., June 2001, the World Bank, Poverty Assessment, Report No. 26169 2003– RO and the EU Enlargement web-page, Romania, Country profile, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/romania>)

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
GNP growth (in %)	3.9	-6.1	-5.4	-3.2	2.2	5.7	4.9
Percentage of poverty (of total population)	19.8	30.8	33.8	41.2	35	31	29
Total number of poor in population ('0000)	4,48	6,94	7,60	9,25	8,00	7,00	6.47
Deficit in consumption in percentage of the poverty level	22.7	25.7	27	---	---	---	---
Percentage of the population in extreme poverty	5.1	9.5	11.7	16.6	---	---	10.9
Inequality (Gini index, consumption)	0.30	0.28	0.30	0.28	0.28	0.29	0.29

<sup>a</sup> At market prices, base 1993.

In the new millennium the increase in poverty could be stopped by economic development and aid programmes launched by the international society;

- The **World Bank Group** (IBRD and IMF) has devised a strategy to help Romania in its economic recovery: it includes a structural adjustment policy, a reduction of the deficit and of poverty and a reform to fight corruption. Within the World Bank programme, special consideration is given to the accession of Romania to the European Union.
- The **European Union** has, from 2000 onwards, provided three main instruments to the pre-accession aid of Romania and considers its contribution to an extension of 36% of investment expenditure from the national budget<sup>6</sup> through:
  1. the Phare Programme, providing funding for institution-building and investment in support of EU accession preparations;
  2. ISPA, the pre-accession instrument providing investments in transport and environmental infrastructure; and
  3. SAPARD, the financial instrument supporting agriculture and rural development.

In September 2003 the World Bank published a record that came to the following conclusion: "Economic growth should be the centrepiece of poverty reduction in Romania. Simulations for the 2003-2007 period (based on the analysis of data from 1995 to 2002) estimate a halving of poverty from 29 percent in 2002 to about 15 percent in 2007 *if* yearly GDP per capita growth attains a

<sup>5</sup> Sources: World Bank and "Economist Intelligence Unit" Reports.

<sup>6</sup> The EU Enlargement page, Romania, Country profile, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/romania>:" The total volume of pre-accession assistance available to Romania is substantial (around €700 million per year from PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD). This represents a very important financial resource for Romania, equal to around 1.4% of GDP, 4.4% of consolidated budget revenues, or 36% of investment expenditure from the national budget."

consistent 5 percent. Even if growth should be half this level, at 2.5 percent per year for GDP per capita, poverty would fall by a quarter to about 21 percent.”<sup>7</sup>.

### **3.2 The Current Economic Situation of the Saxon Villages Region, Local economy and infrastructure**

The region is surrounded by average to small size towns, the economy of which remains active despite the present economic situation of the country. In the surrounding cities, there still exist glass bottling, natural gas, zinc smelting and a variety of small-scale industries. Braşov is a winter resort while Sibiu has a good university and software production firms. The subsoil of Sibiu County contains 25% of Romania’s natural gas reserves. Major roads and railways are well organised (with the exception of the now disused Sibiu-Sighisoara train line) and connect all the cities with the national road network, which is well maintained, enabling the whole to be easily accessible.

In the villages basic infrastructure is missing, basic facilities are urgently needed and the economy is dying. There is a lack of income generation activities, and the physical and institutional tools do not exist to enable it to develop. Access to markets, to credit or to investments, to electricity and even to know-how is poor, while the roads linking the villages to the national network are in poor condition. This creates a situation where the towns are able to continue their economic activities and eventual growth while the villages of Transylvania are being neglected and forgotten. **The Saxon Villages are a poverty stricken area surrounded by cities connected to the country’s economy.**

The Saxon Villages area lies within the three counties (Judet) of Braşov, Sibiu and Târgu Mures. Sibiu County can be considered as a good example of the prevailing economic structure. Here, because of the economic crisis in Romania, the employed population has decreased in real terms between 1993 and 1997, from 79,500 to 74,200. Industry remains the major provider of employment, with more than 50% of the labour force. The service sector, though still small, is the only sector to have increased, from 10,200 to 15,200 people. Agriculture in Sibiu County nominally employs only 2% of the salaried population, but in practice 45-50% of the population is self-employed in agriculture.

Agriculture used to represent the main source of income and of employment thanks to the State Farms. These are now mostly closed and their land and equipment lie abandoned. Restitution of land to former owners since the revolution has enabled some Saxons to return to their villages to make a meagre existence by subsistence agriculture. But these small private owners are currently blocked from more profitable agriculture by lack of financial support, a route to market and of marketing mechanisms or of support from the State. However, the quality of the land and the renowned good husbandry of the population make Transylvania a potential production centre of quality, labour-intensive agricultural products. **Technical assistance in properly controlled and certified organic agriculture, and in the marketing of organic products, is required to make this a reality.**

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<sup>7</sup> Report No. 26169 – RO ROMANIA: Poverty Assessment, (In Two Volumes) Volume One: Main Report September 30, 2003 Human Development Sector Unit Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Unit Europe and Central Asia Region Document of the World Bank, p. 11



A trend common to all sectors of the economy is the rapid growth of small scale, even micro scale, companies. Large, generally state-owned companies have decreased in size in favour of small companies. The end of the communist regime has brought a mushrooming of private initiatives in all fields. This however has not compensated for the loss of employment, especially in the villages where state agriculture was the only employer. Furthermore this mushrooming has been despite the growth of a burgeoning bureaucracy of over-regulation of procedures and standards that reduce the incentives and rewards of enterprise.

## 4. The Role of development actors and private investors in the Saxon Villages area

### 4.1 The Mihai Eminescu Trust (MET)

The Mihai Eminescu Trust has been one of the main development actors in the Saxon Villages area of Transylvania in the last years. With the assistance of the patronage of HRH The Prince of Wales and the support of Packard Humanities and the Horizon Foundation, the MET has developed in the “Saxon rectangle” the *Whole Village Project* and several urban area projects. A high priority was given to the interoperability and coherence between the projects so that the primary objective, a **functional melting within a unique project**, presented through this Development Strategy, can be fulfilled.

The Trust’s pioneering ‘**Whole Village Project**’ aims to preserve the villages’ fabric, remedy their loss of income and revive their sense of community. In selected neighbourhoods the Trust helps the inhabitants to develop new sources of revenue and to restore their houses with sympathetic use of traditional materials.

Confidence is growing that the villages can be brought back to life. **Already over 1,000 Saxons have returned**, and the incoming Romanian, many of them being Roma, population is being integrated into the communities.

These successes of the Trust’s work are **influencing regional conservation policies** and **serve as a model for threatened communities elsewhere**. The village of Viscri, under the leadership of Councillor Caroline Fernolend, has attracted international attention as an example of historic preservation combined with economic regeneration.

The MET started work in 1998/9 in five villages 50 miles north of Brasov. In 2000 it selected a second cluster 50 miles further north. The initial priority is the rescue of the ancient facades and roofs, which give harmony to medieval streets and alleys and are a source of pride to the residents. Employing local labour, the Trust teaches forgotten building methods, including the use of lime mortar that gives the houses their distinctive character.

To date, the MET has enabled some **120 houses** and several churches **to be renovated**. The Trust buys at least one house (usually in a ruined state) in each commune in which to carry out a model guesthouse conversion along the lines of the MET’s partner, the prestigious Landmark Trust. The MET also give advice, grants and loans to enable farmers, craftsmen and others to start or expand small ventures – for example, helping owners to make their own conversions (to guesthouses or workshops) or to produce and market local products. The full support of the community is a prerequisite before the Trust ‘adopts’ a village.

#### **The working procedure is:**

- To meet with village representatives and discuss their ideas for development.
- To appoint a Romanian conservation architect to create an inventory of historic buildings, assess structures at risk and identify houses suitable for restoration.
- To locate accessible sources of building materials and prepare lime pits.
- To arrange for overseas experts to train local craftsmen.
- As we become familiar with the area, to look for ways to help promising enterprises (including agriculture)
- To establish a nucleus village as a marketing and skills centre for the commune.

**The aim is self-sufficiency.** It has been estimated that more than half the population in Viscri and a similar proportion in other villages are currently benefiting from the fruits of the Trust's work. The MET has kick-started sustainable economic activity and this is consistent with the long-term methodology of the MET – to make itself redundant in the villages that it works at the same time as making the villages self-sufficient from aid or state dependency.

To support the activities the Trust has established a Romanian Limited Company (Pro MET SRL) to show, by example, the possibilities of profitable organic agriculture. Any profits will help to finance the charity work.

In the *urban areas*, like in their rural counterparts, the Trust has involved itself in *restoration projects* that under the premises of a good local collaboration create a momentum, not only to conserve the cultural and natural heritage, but also develop (at the same time) a sustainable economic infrastructure. Such projects have been undertaken in Sibiu (four representative buildings restored), Cisnădie (five buildings restored) and Sighisoara (one complex project of building rehabilitation). The latter will become the administrative base for further activities of the MET and the local implementation of international financed projects.

The heterogeneous activities implemented by the Trust with the objective to, (and with the support of the international community) develop **one unique project**<sup>8</sup> was accounted in a pilot project aiming to implement a “*Special zone of architectural protection*” that was agreed upon in a meeting with **HE Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania** and **HRH The Prince of Wales**. The chosen implementation area in Laslea (Sibiu County) and Bunesti (Brasov County) is to a great extent overlaps with the project zone of the Mihai Eminescu Trust for the *Whole Village Project* (‘Saxon rectangle’) and the World Heritage site of the *Villages with fortified Churches in Transylvania*.

#### **4.2 International Organisations and NGOs active in the Region**

Several UN agencies, foreign countries, regions and NGOs are actively promoting development and conservation in the area. Nationals returning from abroad and foreign interests are beginning to invest and act in the region. In many cases the MET acts as an implementing agency for these projects if they are within the MET's remit of area and expertise.

The **German government aid agency GTZ** is active, especially in Sibiu, in restoration work, in helping the development of institutions and in financing the preparation of the World Heritage nomination of Sibiu.<sup>9</sup> In 2002 the GTZ awarded the MET with the first three prizes for the MET's restoration work in Sibiu.

Foreign NGOs such as the **German Messerschmitt** and **Siebenburgisch-Sächsische Stiftung Foundations** are also active in the field of architectural restoration. Twinning between western European villages and specific Saxon Villages was well advanced in the late 1980s, in order to protect the villages from destruction under Ceausescu's systematisation programme, but most of these twinning arrangements – with a few honourable exceptions – are now inactive.

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<sup>8</sup> MET Document, Report on the activities and perspectives in Romania, Bucharest Oct. 29<sup>th</sup> 2003, p.2

<sup>9</sup> In 2003 Projects from GTZ totalling 9,8 Mio Euro in Romania were financed and 5 staff members were sent on Mission to Romania

The **Foundation for Culture and Ecology (FCE)**, a German-Romanian foundation, is funding training and technical assistance in production and marketing in various aspects of organic and bio-dynamic agriculture. FCE is already working in cooperation with the MET, the GTZ, the Centre of international Migration and Development (CIM) and about 20 organic rose growers, who sell their product through FCE into the German market (through the Wala company).

In early 2002 the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage (Riksantikvaren), the FCE, the MET, The Environmental Foundation (Germany), and the Town Halls of Laslea and Mediaş, made a joint application for funding to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under its “Plan of Action for Candidate Countries to the EU”. This application was approved in June 2002, and funds a programme in Laslea commune and Mediaş. Laslea comprises 5 villages with a total population of 3,300. This programme began in September 2002, and continues for 3 years. It is jointly funded by the Norwegian Government, MET and FCE. This is a valuable pilot project for the area, since it is aimed at solving a broad range of problems through the cooperation of several foreign and local organisations. Under this programme, the partners in the project will work together to:

- Train villagers in historic building restoration, giving them a skill and raising awareness of the value of the architectural heritage of the area
- Work with Town Halls and villages in cultural landscape preservation, raising awareness of the value of the area’s unique natural heritage
- Set up a small-scale model organic farming training school
- Assist farmers to obtain organic certification, and to find markets for their produce
- Work with the Town Halls in developing sustainable development plans, including eco-tourism which will generate income while preserving the area
- Increase the local sense of ownership and pride in the area – partly by demonstrating the improved standard of living and income derived from the above.

**INTBAU** (International Network for traditional Building, Architecture and Urbanism) has started several projects in Transylvania and organised together with the Norwegian Foundation for Urban Renewal a workshop on “Transylvanian Village Development” in Laslea, in the autumn of 2003. The purpose was to assist long term sustainable development in the medieval villages with an emphasis on ecological tourism and organic farming. As a result of common projects, the MET and INTBAU have recently presented a report to the Mayor of Laslea.

The “**Region d’Ille-et-Vilaine**” in France has opened a House of the region in Sibiu and the town of Rennes has signed a cooperation and twinning agreement with Sibiu. The purpose is to develop and reinforce economic and commercial, social and educational, cultural and tourism relations. Some small-scale adapted projects were implemented in 2002-03, namely in the tourism field.

### 4.3 The private sector

Foreign companies are showing interest in ecological tourism and in natural agriculture. A British venture, **Transylvanian Natural Products (TNP)**, is building a company to produce and process organic agricultural products for upper-end Romanian and west European markets. Sighișoara is being examined by the company as a possible centre for food processing<sup>10</sup> and they have started actively acquiring land in the area. The MET was integral to its establishment in Romania and to its application to the GEF for Project Development Funds.

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<sup>10</sup> See 5.1

Emigrés from the region are returning and have started restoring their houses, buying others and creating small hotels with a “sense of place” where visitors come more and more frequently. Some have also bought land and are preparing for the creation of a network of small quality inns with facilities for organizing tours “at demand” in the region. These investments, adapted in scale to the conditions of the region, have begun to impact positively on the villages with the creation of employment and the reliance on local products.

Tourist agencies from Europe and the Americas are beginning to show interest in Transylvania and in the fascinating heritage of the Saxon Villages. The potential of this region for tourist development is beginning to attract investors. It is hoped that these investments will be in sympathy with the unique environmental values of the region, through the development of quality hotels and up-market tourism (hiking, mountain, ecological) giving the visitor a taste of the past and of the beauty of the landscape. The MET assists private sector travel agencies in visiting the area and preparing itineraries. Most successfully it has recently promoted guesthouse tourism in conjunction with the UK’s Landmark Trust as well as Abercrombie and Kent. It was recently promoting guesthouse tourism at The Travel Show trade Fair in London February 2004.

## 5. International assistance to Romania, available to the Saxon Villages area.

The international community – countries and international and regional development agencies and banks – are concentrating their efforts in Romania on the institutional, economic and social aspects of the country's recovery.

Several projects and loans given to Romania are relevant to the situation in Transylvania, and to the specific area within Transylvania considered by this development programme. The programme therefore will build on these projects and will try to establish links with them in order to guide some activities to the region. In doing so, it will look particularly at the synergy and accumulative results which could be gained by a proper coordination.

Projects and loans of interest to this programme are listed below. They are funded by the **World Bank** or **International Finance Corporation**, by the **European Union** through its Phare<sup>11</sup> and SAPARD<sup>12</sup> programmes, by UNDP and the GEF. The World Bank has a large project-portfolio in Romania that will help to implement the *Development Strategy*. Several of these are listed below, others will only become apparent in the course of the implementation of the project itself:

### 5.1 In Agriculture and Natural Resources

- An initial *Project Development Fund Block B* (PDF-B) of an amount of US\$ 310,000 grant has been given to the **World Bank/IFC from the GEF (Global Environment Facility)**. It supports the development of a final project estimated at US\$ 3 million, called ADEPT (Agricultural Development and Environmental Protection in Transylvania), on an agricultural initiative respectful of the environment and developing the agro-economy. Once approved, the project will be co-financed by the GEF with an amount of US\$ 3 million and implemented by the IFC.<sup>13</sup>

The MET has been instrumental in gaining GEF support for this ADEPT project for the promotion of sustainable agriculture in the Saxon Villages area. GEF gave PDF-B grant aid towards the study and promotion of forms of agricultural production which are economically viable yet protect the biodiversity and natural environment of the area. The PDF-B proposal foresaw that the work is implemented together with commercial enterprises which will offer technical assistance to small farmers, process and market the product. Partners in this project were meant to have been Transylvania National Products srl (TNP), The Avalon Foundation of the Netherlands, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and The Mihai Eminescu Trust (MET). The latter had hoped to implement the feasibility analysis for sustainable enterprises development.

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<sup>11</sup> Phare is the first non-reimbursable financial instrument designed by the European Union to assist Central and Eastern Europe, in their strive towards democratic society and market economy. The Copenhagen Council endorsed a phased increase in preaccession assistance for Romania during the period 2004-2006, to reach 40 % more than current levels by 2006.

<sup>12</sup> *The Special pre-Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development* is the third non-reimbursable financial instrument which aims at helping candidate countries deal with the structural reform in their agricultural sectors and rural areas, as well as in the implementation of the “acquis communautaire” concerning the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) and related legislation.

<sup>13</sup> See PDF-B Grant from GEF, ID 1627, granted in July 2002. The Project over an amount of US\$ 15 million and the co-financing of the US\$ 3 million is still under evaluation by GEF (GEF project data-base).

- An “**Integrated Protected Areas & Conservation Management Project**” to the amount of US\$ 5.5 million grant has been given by the World Bank/IFC from the GEF (Global Environment Facility) in support of agricultural initiatives respectful of the environment. **The objectives of the project** are to: establish effective, inter-sectoral, participatory planning and sustainable management of natural ecosystems and associated landscapes at three demonstration sites in the Carpathian mountains, and mechanisms to support replication of these activities at other priority conservation sites.<sup>14</sup>
- A “**Rural Development Project**” loan by the World Bank for an amount of US\$ 40 million. The projects will concentrate on two sectors:
  - Capacity building for the local administration, community and user groups and private service providers to plan, implement, operate and maintain viable small infrastructure investments in a participatory and accountable manner,
  - Infrastructure, to increase rural inhabitants access to improved roads and water and sanitation services and achieve effective and sustainable use of these services.<sup>15</sup>
- A “**Rural Finance Project**” loan from the World Bank for an amount of US\$ 80 million. The purpose of this project is to assist in accelerating the economic transformation of the rural economy by:
  - Increasing the flow of investment capital to the sector,
  - Augmenting the private sector’s role in the rural economy,
  - Facilitating accession to the European Union,
  - Alleviating rural poverty by financing farm and off-farm investments for poor segments of the rural population which have no access to credit.<sup>16</sup>
- An “**Agricultural Support Services Project**” loan from the World Bank for an amount of US\$11 million. This project promotes public and private services to support development of research and extension services for private farmers. Together with this component, the project aims also at institutional building especially for extension services.<sup>17</sup>
- An “**Irrigation Rehabilitation and Reform Project**” loan for an amount of US\$ 80 million. This project promotes the change in the agricultural sector with a rate of 70% to go to economic use of irrigation through changes in the Land Reclamation Agency's (LRA's) behaviour, to increase agricultural productivity in the project area and 30% to the administration, legal institutions etc. Main objectives are to:
  - Rehabilitate main distribution systems
  - Support institutional reform in land reclamation
  - Support technologies for reducing energy consumption for irrigation, through a technical study that confirm its economic and financial viability.
  - Provide project management support in procurement issues, monitoring and evaluation, and issues of financial management, institutional restructuring, and engineering.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> World Bank data base, P044176, Global Environment Project, Romania, Active, 27-MAY-1999

<sup>15</sup> World Bank data base, P057960, IBRD/IDA, Romania, Active, 19-MAR-2002

<sup>16</sup> World Bank data base, P056891, IBRD/IDA, Romania, Active, 29-MAR-2001

<sup>17</sup> World Bank data base, P043882, IBRD/IDA, Romania, Active, 27-JAN-2000

<sup>18</sup> World Bank data base, P043881, IBRD/IDA, Romania, Active, 31-JUL-2003

- The European Union implements a “**Special Program of Pre-Accession for Agriculture and Rural Development**” (**SAPARD**) for the period of pre-accession to the European Union. This programme, with a total budget of more than 1 billion Euros covers Romania, with a yearly budget of 153.214.194 Euro. Its priorities are:
  - Improving the access to markets and of the competitiveness of agricultural processed products;
  - Improving infrastructures for rural development and agriculture;
  - Developing rural economy;
  - Developing the human resources of this sector.

The European Union will finance under the **SAPARD measure 3.4**, with an amount of 60,673,224.00 €, the development and diversification of economic activities, multiple activities and alternative income.

- sustain the agricultural activities in the rural area through the accomplishment of specific services
- Sustain the activity of youth and women;
- Sustain the activities which are specific to **rural tourism (agro and silvotourism)**
- Preserve and to develop **traditional handicraft activities**;
- Develop aquaculture, bee-keeping, sericulture and mushroom cultivation.

It has to be mentioned that Romania has already an experience in rural tourism, through the existence of marketing networks and the classification of the agro-tourist units according to their level of comfort. It is proposed to give a priority to the modernisation of existing units, but also to create new units if the applicant bases the investment on a study of the potential market in the area where the project is carried out.<sup>19</sup>

## **5.2 In Cultural Heritage**

- A World Bank “**Learning and Innovation**” loan for “Cultural Heritage” for an amount of 4.5 million US\$. This project includes four components and is in its last year of implementation:
  - Support for the renovation and restoration of the Brancusi sculptural ensemble in Târgu Jiu,
  - Assistance to help complete the restoration of Brancovan Palace in Mogoşoaia and prepare a site development and management plan,
  - Support a programme for test pilot projects in selected historic Saxon Villages in the central Transylvanian region for restoration works and tourism, historic exhibits and crafts development,
  - Institutional strengthening of central services.

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<sup>19</sup> European Union, SAPARD AGENCY, SAPARD01 - SAPARD Programme, Measure 3.4



- The European Union’s **Culture 2000** is a Community programme established for a period of 5 years (2000-2004), with a total budget of 167 million EUR. This financial instrument will grant support for cultural co-operation projects in all artistic and cultural sectors. The objectives of the programme are the promotion of a common cultural area characterised by both cultural diversity and a common cultural heritage. Tender for the 2004 brings two new concepts:
  - Defining three general topics, addressing the citizen, new technology/media addressing creativity, tradition and innovation; **linking the past and the future**- each application should address to at least one of these;
  - In every year, special attention will be granted to a different cultural sector.

### 5.3 In the Social Sector

- A “**Rural education project**” with a budget of US\$ 60 million. The objective of the Rural Education Project for Romania is to have rural school students benefit from improved access to quality education, as evidenced by higher achievement scores and completion and transition rates. Special attention will be given to primary education (45% of the total budget volume).
  - Improve teaching and learning by financing school-based professional development
  - Improve school-community partnerships by setting up a school-community grants program.
  - Strengthen the analytic capacity of the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) at national and local levels
  - Strengthen project management capacity
  - The project will support a broader community involvement in education management, working not only with education authorities, but also with the local councils, parents, and representatives of communities.<sup>20</sup>
- The “**Social Sector Development Project**” of the World Bank with a loan of US\$50 million. It aims to contribute towards increased economic growth and poverty alleviation in Romania. Among its objectives, this project aims at facilitating labour market adjustment and micro-business development.<sup>21</sup>
- The second phase of the above project, with a total cost of US\$28 million, aims more particularly at “Improving the livelihood of poor rural communities and disadvantaged groups”.
- The **Social Development Fund** established by the donors has begun its second phase of operations with US\$20 million to help poor villages secure better communication means, access to piped water and to develop income generating activities.<sup>22</sup>

### 5.4 In the Finance and Credit Sector

- The **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**, approved in 2001 the funding of a micro-credit project for an amount of 9 million US; The IFC supports in particular in Romania’s second tier

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<sup>20</sup> World Bank data base, P073967, IBRD/IDA, Romania, Active, 06-MAY-2003

<sup>21</sup> World Bank data base, P008783, IBRD/IDA, Romania, Active, 19-JUN-2001

<sup>22</sup> World Bank data base, P068808, IBRD/IDA, Romania, Active, 20-DEC-2001

cities projects that operate on a micro enterprise level (less than 10 employees) with a budget of 3 million US\$.<sup>23</sup>

- Among the loans provided by the **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)** in 2000, two were given for water connection and sewage systems in favour of municipalities in Romania.<sup>24</sup> Like the IFC, the EBRD has SME credits programmes that are in the case of the EBRD operated through partners like the Banca Transilvania (BT) with a budget of 5 million €. <sup>25</sup>

## **5.5 In the Public and Institutional Sector**

- The “**General Cadastre and Land Registration Project**”, with a loan from the World Bank of 25.5 million US\$ is helping to solve the several issues of land ownership which are preventing many investments in agriculture and in the rural areas.<sup>26</sup>
- A pipeline project of the World Bank will provide support to the reinforcement of local institutional building and to governance. The Bank is lending for this project amount of US\$ 18.6 million.
- “**Building Local Capacities to Implement the Local Agenda 21 in Romania**” The US\$ 1 Million (610 000 UNDP, 400 000 parallel financed) project promotes local participatory development planning and Local Agenda 21 processes, as derived from the Earth Summit for Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, 1992. Partner and donors are the CIDA/IISD (Canada), DFID (UK), Capacity 21, **The Mihai Eminescu Trust**, The Government of The Netherlands and Romanian municipalities. Over 40 communities have joined the programme, Sibiu and Sighisoara notably, paid for by the MET. Priority projects identified by the local communities will be implemented within a broad public-private partnership developed under the Local Agenda 21 process. Objectives are:
  - Incorporating sustainable development principles into national and local strategies and action plans
  - Creating bottom-up links between national development priorities and local needs in the framework of a triple partnership between local government/business community/citizens.<sup>27</sup>

## **5.6 In Civil Society and Governance**

- The “**Civil Society Development**” Phare Programme has a budget of 5 million Euros to support the development of sustainable partnerships between NGOs and local administrations in areas such as citizens advice, local community projects based on the identification of local needs and using local resources. It also contributes to the citizens advice bureaux, to the

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<sup>23</sup> IFC Project 21223, Romanian American Enterprise Fund, pending, October 2003

<sup>24</sup> EBRD, APA NOVA water plant project and Water and waste-water utilities and solid waste management companies project. Benefiting from EU-ISPA (Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession Facility) grant financing available from 2000 to 2006

<sup>25</sup> EBRD, Project 32209, Banca Transilvania, active, May 2003; and Microfinance Bank MIRO S.A., Romania

<sup>26</sup> World Bank data base, P034213, IBRD/IDA, Romania, Active, 09-DEC-1997

<sup>27</sup> UNDP, Local Agenda 21 , Romania, 2000-2007, Executing Agency: Ministry of Public Administration

capacity building of local administrations, to the reinforcement of the NGO sector and to the integration of the Roma. It is intended to:

- Create citizens advice bureaux and a national network all over the country
  - Develop the capacity of the local administration to cooperate with civil society representatives
  - Offer further support to reinforce the sustainability of the NGO Sector. NGOs, local communities and citizens are the direct beneficiaries of this programme.
- The “**Improving the Roma Situation**” PHARE Programme has a budget of nearly 1 million Euros. It aims at improving the participation of the Roma population in all the aspects of civic life in the country through the development of sustainable partnerships between NGOs and public administration, and the promotion of Roma communities integration.
  - The European Union has, within the accession financing programme, a **Grant Fund for Local Administration** with a budget of € 4 million that helps to restructure local governance and develop democracy infrastructure.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The European Union has set out the administrative capacity building as priority for the accession programme of Romania for the period of 2003-2007: actions to build the capacity of the public administration for the overall functioning of the state and to develop the general framework needed for the correct implementation of the *acquis communautaire*. RO-2002/000-586.03.02 Decentralisation and development of the Romanian local public administration.

## **6. The Issues for Socio-Economic Development**

The issues to be addressed for the socio-economic development of the region considered are:

### **6.1 At the global level**

- From a structural point of view, there is an evident global imbalance between the rural areas (the Saxon Villages) and the surrounding towns which border the region.
- This imbalance itself is made more difficult to address because of the poor economic performance of the country.
- The identity of the region is uncertain and not well presented. Presentation of the region, of its values, of its heritage, of its wealth is a major issue for any future development and cooperation with the outside economies.

### **6.2 At the institutional level**

- There is a lack of local government capacity at county, municipal, commune and local levels which does not facilitate the implementation of integrated development programmes – both vertical and horizontal
- At the central government level, there is a tendency to concentrate on global economic and social issues and on international economic cooperation.

### **6.3 At the regional and local levels**

1. An ever-increasing number of foreign and local initiatives, often of a limited scope and dimension, are taking place or being prepared. If they remain uncoordinated, the situation will deteriorate, the programmes will lose impetus and will face credibility and reputational risks, and the cumulative effect will be lost.
2. At the same time, implementation of a complex strategy with projects at all levels and in all sectors can only be done within the strictest possible rules of coordination, transparency and strict financial project rules: traditional centrally located mechanisms as those used in large scale national infrastructure or other heavy projects will only slow the process and heavily reduce its impact.
3. Lack of experience in local governance, and of opportunities to compare their situation with other similar areas in Europe, make it difficult for the authorities to judge the quality of investments. Furthermore, because rural conditions are deteriorating even further, these authorities are inclined to accept any income generating investment as a solution to the problems they are confronted with.
4. Demography is another issue which needs to be addressed. The decrease of the active population over the last ten years and the ageing of the resident population is another barrier to economic development.

## 7. A Development Programme for Sighisoara and the Saxon Villages area.

### 7.1 Rationale

#### 7.1.1. Heritage at the centre of the process

The strategy for the sustainable development of the region under consideration is based on the presence of a **rich and important built heritage surrounded by almost pristine nature**. It is this specific character of the region which is the strength of the strategy, and its corner stone. Instead of being at risk by unthoughtful investments or simple negligence, heritage – cultural and natural – will serve as the primary tool for the development of the region.

The programme shall therefore begin by giving priority to the two World Heritage sites of the region concerned: “Sighisoara” and the “Villages with the Fortified Churches of Transylvania”. It will then extend its coverage to the whole of the region. The rationale for such an approach is evident and is stressed in the Report on the State of Conservation of World Heritage Sites submitted to the World Heritage Committee at its 26<sup>th</sup> session of June 2002 in Budapest and the decisions adopted in the Committee session itself in 2002 (Budapest) and 2003 (Paris, WHC 27<sup>th</sup> Session).

Both sessions of the World Heritage Committee in 2002 and 2003 have taken up the recommendation of the State of Conservation Report, the UNESCO mission in March 2002, the activities undertaken by the Mihai Eminescu Trust and the international community. The following recommendations were adopted:

**2002 Historic Centre of Sighisoara (Romania)**, The World Heritage Committee,  
**Congratulating** the State Party on the decision to relocate the proposed theme park;  
**Takes note** of the progress made with regard to restoration projects and protection measures and the intention to request technical assistance under the World Heritage Fund in order to enhance the state of conservation of the property;  
**Requests** the State Party to comply as soon as possible with the additional recommendations made by the international mission and the decision by the 26th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2002 (26 COM 21 (b) 67), i.e. to prepare an overall management plan, including management of tourism, for the World Heritage property;  
**Urges** the authorities to take into account the comments made by ICOMOS on the restoration and conservation of the property;  
**Further** requests the State Party to provide to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2004 a progress report on these issues in order that the World Heritage Committee can examine the state of conservation of the property at its 28th session in 2004.<sup>29</sup>

**And in 2003, Historic Centre of Sighisoara (Romania)** The World Heritage Committee,  
**Notes** the report of the joint UNESCO-ICOMOS mission undertaken to the site;  
**Notes** with great concern the poor state of conservation of the World Heritage site and the high potential negative impacts, cultural as well as environmental, of the proposed theme park project on the site;  
**Recalls** paragraphs 80 to 82 of the *Operational Guidelines*;  
**Urges** the State Party:  
To enhance the state of conservation of the property as a matter of urgency before the Committee considers any steps towards its inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger; and in this regard, to seek immediately both national and international funding and to request, for the most urgent restoration works, technical co-operation assistance for the preservation and protection of the World Heritage site. *The Committee recalls that funds could be made available, upon request of the State Party, from the World Heritage Fund;*

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<sup>29</sup> Document: WHC-03/27.COM/7B,

To establish, as a matter of urgency, a World Heritage coordination team, attached to the city administration, responsible for management, in order to prepare an overall management plan, including management of tourism, for the World Heritage site;

To take into account the critical social issues of the city and region in any further developments in and around the city of Sighisoara; and to take into account the existing potential development represented notably by a series of World Heritage sites in the region, in particular for cultural itineraries and cultural tourism;

**Takes note** with satisfaction of the intention of the Romanian authorities to relocate the proposed theme park, which was planned at a distance of 1.5 km from the World Heritage site;

**Requests** furthermore the State Party to avoid constructing the Park in the vicinity of World Heritage sites in Transylvania;

**Requests** the State Party to define, as soon as possible, a management plan for the site;

**Requests** the State Party to provide by 1 February 2003, a report on this matter and on the status of the project for examination at its 27th session in June/July 2003;<sup>30</sup>

From these recommendations it is clear that an integrated development strategy will help to solve the conservation and economic issues in the World Heritage site of Sighisoara. From the reports and recommendation it becomes apparent, that the approach taken should apply as well to other World Heritage sites in Transylvania.

### **7.1.2 Coordination of inputs and cooperation among agencies active in the region**

The programme is not meant to duplicate actions already undertaken by other parties, rather it will attempt to coordinate and bring about a multiplier effect. In view of the large numbers of international cooperation projects, the potential for development of this cooperation, and the numbers of actors, it will look particularly into the promotion of beneficial cooperation, reducing wastage of resources, and hopefully creating sustainability in the region.

The programme will also provide a framework for joint activities between the villages, with Sighisoara and with the other towns in the area. It will help to adjust the balance of cooperation and improve the roles of each partner.

The contents of this strategy programme is being presented to the chief planners of the region considered (Mures, Sibiu and Brasov Counties) and discussed with them. It represents the synthesis of the views of those involved in the protection of heritage and the development of the region. It has also been discussed informally with international development agencies staff. It has been approved by the MET's patrons (see front page) and major donors.

### **7.1.3 The working principles of the Mihai Eminescu Trust**

The Mihai Eminescu Trust (MET) works according to several general operating principles built on the underlying cornerstones of its development strategy: they dictate the way in which the MET interacts with individuals, organisations, civil society and the state.

1. There are common beliefs and latent union through the relationship of natural, cultural and built heritage in the area. Although dormant or suppressed (due to societal, political or economic factors such as emigration, communism, corruption or short-term commercialism) it is these things that all sustainable development should be aiming to re-ignite, rather than overlaying or undermining. Thus such concepts as the pilot protected area scheme must come from below rather than above. If they cannot be lit from the bottom, schemes stand no

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<sup>30</sup> Document: WHC-02/CONF.202/17

chance of catching fire and achieving effective success. Therefore at the heart of such prescriptive principles as legal conservation is the need for civil society to "opt-in" to principles, within a "*pays*", rather than have something constructed around them.

2. Where possible the MET aims at the re-institution and revivification of existing conservation laws through the strategy and the network built through the existing projects from the MET and partners. Reinforcement of existing laws and penalties of breaching them can be sought at a national level when it is proved necessary, but only after the ideas underpinning them have taken root at local level.
3. The MET is collaborative. It supports – and is supported by – other organisations, individuals and civic bodies. It encourages interest in the Saxon Villages, and assists charities that parallel and complement its work (eg Corona, HOG). But it will not encourage projects which merely duplicate its work and/or compete over its resources and area.
4. Without pretending it has all the answers, the MET hopes to steer other parties interested in the area into paths that are at least compatible with its own. It believes the most persuasive method for achieving this is by successful example, constructive dialogue, training and education and dissemination of research.
5. As a matter of principle, the MET does not ally itself permanently and directly to commercial or political interests. Proper charitable governance requires that the independence of its decision-making and the choice of projects to be supported are unimpeachable. The MET does not therefore lend its name or commit resources to activities where the purpose, method or funding are not clearly defined and where it has no executive authority.
6. Operationally, the MET attaches great importance to cost-effectiveness. We seek to achieve rather than expand; to help enterprises towards self-sufficiency rather than foster aid dependency; to pilot schemes rather than mass-produce them. In this light the MET can be seen to be constantly trying to make itself redundant, so that it can move on to the next project.
7. There are 230 Saxon Villages. The MET is active in 14 of them. Its Whole Village Project concentrates on the communes of Laslea and Bunesti, with its administrative centre in Sighisoara. It promotes suitable tourism, small businesses and farming throughout these villages, in addition to its pioneering work in rescuing the ancient fabric of buildings in the area (including the towns of Sighisoara, Cismadie and Sibiu).
8. The MET believes that new incoming funds, whether charitable, official or commercial, would be best deployed helping other villages and communities that at the moment receive nothing. To that end, within the guidelines described above, the MET is entirely happy to cooperate and make all its experience freely available.

The following development strategy was developed around these principles. It aims at optimizing the conservation issues while at the same time contributing to socio-economic development. Natural and cultural values are at the heart of the programme and economic development is one of the means to reach a sustainable society that protects its environment. A snowball effect is expected through the 'Best Practices' that will show neighbouring communities the importance and positive effects (less unemployment, higher living standards etc.) of the applied methods and the importance of respecting national and regional legislation and World Heritage stipulations. All this should form a high incentive for other communities to 'join in'. Importantly, the snowball effect must not take hold on the active and participating organisations themselves – redundancy must be sought by engendering local self-sufficiency.

The success of methods therefore must rely not on implementation by a higher authority, but by successful example, constructive dialogue, open training and education and the dissemination of research.

The governance and decision-making will stay with the local authorities and responsible governing bodies.

#### **7.1.4 Major objectives**

The strategy programme shall focus on three major objectives:

1. Creation of a sense of belonging to a common region through the establishment of a network of cooperating cities and villages in the region, driven by cultural and natural heritage, sharing similar issues, problems and possibilities.
2. Conception, development and implementation of a mechanism providing capacity building, training and the necessary sets of organisational tools for the betterment of the economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions of the region;
3. Sustainable development through the appropriate use of heritage – cultural and natural – of the region and the effective operation of programmes and projects and of private ventures in the region.

#### **7.2 Creation and operation of a network of co-operating cities and villages**

The present conditions of the region which includes Sighișoara and the Saxon Villages (Villages with Fortified Churches) provide elements to constitute an identity: common socio-economic issues, common cultural and natural heritage, common resources... This however, in itself is not sufficient to generate a network of co-operating settlements. A community of interests and of potentials can only achieve this goal if supported by a mechanism that addresses the issues in a consensual and coordinated manner.

As in many countries, the present administrative divisions of the region (Judet, Municipalities, Communes, Villages) cut across culturally coherent areas, and do not encourage cooperation between villages and towns which share similar assets and problems. This administrative system is not a tool which can easily address the issues of conservation and of sustainable development. This is contrary to the new notion of “pays” or of “cultural district”<sup>31</sup> being introduced in some European countries, and which could be regarded as a useful concept for the Saxon Villages area.

We propose that the programme begins by organising a series of **meetings between the decision-makers and elected members of the administrative divisions of the region which encompass World Heritage sites**: Sighișoara and the Districts (Communes) listed in Section 1 of this document. A first effort organise such meetings and finance the implementation of the development strategy has been clearly formulated in the *International Assistance Request* that will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre by the Romanian government in collaboration with the Mihai Eminescu Trust.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Both these two notions fit very well to the region considered. A “pays” is a geographic area which has common history, common features, a common culture or geographic conditions which make its population feel a sense of belonging to the place. A “cultural district” is a geographically defined area in which the culture activities or heritage sites, monuments, industries, play a leading role in the economy of the district.

<sup>32</sup> The International Assistance is the mechanism of the World Heritage Convention to finance conservation and restoration initiatives, management plans, etc.. in World Heritage sites.



In these meetings, participants would start by identifying the common issues and approaches related to heritage and to sustainable development: needs assessment, solutions, benefits of cooperation for local economic development, sharing of information, leveraging national and foreign sources for development, co-ordinating social services and improvements of public services (roads, accessibility, communication, schooling, health).

These meetings would ultimately lead to the creation of a **Framework for Inter-Communal Development built around the World Heritage Sites** as a basis. In a **next stage**, which should take place quite rapidly, the Framework should be extended to cover all the regions considered.

A Memorandum of understanding on regional cooperation and development would be the binding document and would highlight the fields of cooperation and establish structural mechanisms.

A **steering committee** will be put in place by the participating members on a rotation basis and will meet regularly to keep the network active. The process for the committee designation will be agreed upon during the discussions.

The population of the villages and communes and of Sighișoara will be regularly informed and made aware of the benefits of such a mechanism and consulted about future actions. A consultative and involvement process will be devised as requested by the management guidelines from the World Heritage Convention.

### **7.3 A mechanism to support capacity building**

Once an agreement has been reached on the need **for inter-communal cooperation**, a mechanism to sustain this cooperation and to put it into practice should be created. It would institutionalise the process and provide it with a tool for action or at least for cooperation.

Managed by the network (see 7.2), this tool will cover sustainable development programmes and projects, public and private, to ensure circulation of information and reinforcement of benefits from cooperation. Because of the informal approach taken throughout the first phases of the network, it will have only a consultative and guidance role. **It will work on guidelines, principles, advice, best practices, dissemination of information and training.**

It will also devise joint files for submission to the Government and will be responsible to guide the proper implementation of the **heritage management plans** and other texts prepared by the network. It will regularly report to the members of the steering committee who, as decision-makers, will have the ability to deal with the issues within their official prerogatives. The heritage management plan will build the cornerstone of good governance, economic development and site management. It will be developed in close cooperation with the World Heritage Centres' advisory bodies.<sup>33</sup>

The type of **issues and actions the mechanism will be involved** with are:

- Cultural and natural heritage conservation, and relevant tools and practices,

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<sup>33</sup> ICOMOS, ICCROM and IUCN.

- Contribution to the creation of conservation areas that include settlements and nature<sup>34</sup>,
- Setting and compiling guidelines and training for employment creation,
- Working on a regional scheme based on the availability of facilities for Micro-credit and Funding Facilities in the country,
- Identifying central support resource structures or persons to be shared jointly.
- Promoting the economic interest in sustainable development and conservation

The lack of specialists in economic development and marketing will be difficult to overcome, owing to very low salaries in the local public administration. Also, the analysis of the sectors with growth potential in the area, marketing and training strategies, support programmes for the local businesses, will need competencies rarely found at local level. This represents a real challenge that needs to be addressed from the early stages of the programme. It also to a degree reinforces the working MET principle of using existing structures and civic bodies where they already exist. To ignite the programme it is therefore recommended that a special cooperation programme be devised to accompany only the early stages of the functioning of the coordination mechanisms with specialists and training of its members.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> A good example of such conservation areas are those operated through the Man and Biosphere programme (MAB) of UNESCO. Romania has already three such areas located in the Danube Delta, in Pietrosul Mare and in Retezat in the North of the country and in the Transylvania Alps.

<sup>35</sup> USAID and the University of Harvard – Graduate School of Design are conducting a similar programme in the region of Oradea, in Romania.

#### **7.4 Sustainable development, development programmes and projects of private ventures in the region.**

One of the major purposes of the programme will be to encourage appropriate investments in the region, both from local entrepreneurs and foreign sources.

Through informal contacts with donors and decision-makers, advice to interested parties and to investors, and by working with the local population, the co-ordinating structure and the MET will encourage investments in the following fields that are directly or indirectly related to the protection and appropriate use of heritage:

- Conservation, restoration and adapted use of natural and built heritage,
- Creation and management of natural reserves,
- Exclusive tourism, ecotourism,
- Festivals, arts and folk arts,
- Natural agriculture and agricultural products processing,
- Pharmaceutical plants,
- Crafts and Adapted Small Industries,
- Light and non-polluting industries, relation with universities (R&D).

The development of projects in many of the above fields requires financial help, particularly for those at village level. A micro-credit system can be developed from the MET's existing work in this area. It can be operated by the donors or agency in charge of such a system, and could report directly to the steering committee.

Skills and particularly management training will be given due attention. The success of the first small-scale enterprises - agricultural, tourist or other - is necessary to ensure the **sustainability of the development process**. A training component will be made available for the new local entrepreneurs who seek funding to launch their operation.

#### **7.5 A special case: Sighișoara after "Dracula Park".**

As mentioned in the UNESCO-ICOMOS March mission from 2002, Sighișoara suffers from a variety of problems: heritage conservation and management, social and economic difficulties. With the removal of the Dracula Theme Park from its neighbourhood, the risks to its heritage and landscape have been reduced. However, employment opportunities are scarce and resentment against the protection of heritage can increase which will be detrimental to the overall development of the city.

The villages around Sighișoara which belong administratively to four counties are seen as peripheral and are in a difficult social and economic situation. Though these counties claim that they have economic development strategies, these consist mainly of "wish lists" of works that need to be done: water and gas supplies, roads, etc.

Located centrally at the northern edge of the region with good access to the national road network and to rail, Sighișoara is itself a World Heritage site which deserves great care and attention. It is

also the only city of the region with World Heritage status. **Sighișoara fulfils the conditions for hosting the offices of the network and the institutional tools which will be developed.**<sup>36</sup>

As for the development of Sighișoara itself, a management plan for the heritage of the city and for its integration and use in the city's overall management must be developed rapidly, taking into consideration the relations between

- a. the city and its landscape and,
- b. the city and the other World Heritage sites of the region.

A public-private partnership similar to the Town Centre management structures in Western Europe could be created to implement the management plan.<sup>37</sup>

Private entrepreneurs will be encouraged to invest in Sighișoara and in its neighbouring villages both in tourism and cultural activities, in agro-industries and non-polluting and ecologically friendly operations. Measures to facilitate their project and ensure compliance with the protection of heritage will be devised.

In support of this strategy, the MET has established its offices and organic agricultural company Pro Mihai Eminescu Trust SRL in Sighisoara. Efforts will also be made to turn Sighișoara into one of the **centres for eco-tourism in the rest of the region.**

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<sup>36</sup> As stated earlier in the text, the MET has the capacity to host the network of regional managers at the outset.

## 8 Future steps and priority actions

### 8.1 Enrolling Partners

The MET is in contact with major donors and NGOs operating in Romania. It will use its network of co-operating institutions to present this strategy, together with the regions representatives, and to seek funding and resources.

Among the NGOs, donors and international agencies and bodies already informed of the process are:

- Local NGOs,
- Private foreign and national individuals and companies already investing in the region,
- The World Bank and the IFC, both having endorsed the strategy and agreed to give it support,
- The European Parliament and the Council of Europe,
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre and World Heritage Committee members,
- USAID and The Harvard Graduate School of Design,
- The European Cultural Foundation.

The strategy programme in the Version of 2002 was formally presented to the UNDP, World Bank, IFC and European Union representatives in Romania.

### 8.2 Creating the mechanism and detailing the programme

Also during 2004, the overall programme and priority projects will be devised and some presented to donors who have shown interest in previous consultation and information meetings. Once **the first financing for the preparation** of the detailed programme and of projects have been ensured,<sup>38</sup> **the first meetings** of what will become the coordination tool **will be organised**.

### 8.3 Improving the villages' living conditions

A precondition for the success of the strategy is the cooperation of the population of the region. This will be addressed by showing to this population that priority is given to the needs of the people and not to the protection of heritage alone. Urgent actions need to be launched in order to improve certain aspects of day-to-day life in the villages:

- Accessibility: road repairs and better communications facilities – buses, telephones.
- Solid waste and water management improvements.
- Education and health services.
- Local economy for produce and facilities for accommodation

All three are important issues to the inhabitants of the villages and also for the survival and regeneration of the regional settlements and are strongly supported by international assistance campaigns from the World Bank and the enlargement funds from the European Union.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> An International Assistance Request has been submitted to the World Heritage Centre in order to be able to finance the “take-off” phase of the Development Strategy.

<sup>39</sup> See Point 5

#### 8.4 Meeting the World Heritage Committee recommendations

In creating the **coordination tool for the programme**, priority will be given to the following:

- Establishing a World Heritage coordination team, attached to the Municipality of Sighișoara,
- Preparing an overall management plan, including management of tourism, for the city, which includes heritage protection and use.
- Implement the conservation and restoration issues stressed by ICOMOS.<sup>40</sup>

In doing so, and to reach a multiplier effect for the region, we must “take into account the critical social issues of the city and region in any further developments in and around the city of Sighișoara; and take into account the existing potential for development represented notably by a series of World Heritage sites in the region, in particular for **cultural itineraries and cultural tourism**.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See Point 7.1

<sup>41</sup> ICOMOS Mission report 2002