



---

# The Economical Development by Local Forces

Gheorghe Marcaș  
*Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Maramureș County, Baia Mare  
Romania*

---



In EU's "aquis comunitar" concept, the local development stands at the basis of the economical and social growth.

At the basis of this concept stands the local democracy and autonomy which is specific to those countries with an advanced democracy. The economical growth is in a fact the strategic component of the local development.

The growth level of the local attractiveness and of the civilized standard of life depend on the way in which the local public administration organs conceive the strategy for the development of the town.

The problem under discussion in this leading article is the following: if the authentically traditional folk art is an economical component of the environment in which it manifests itself. The answer is a positive one. Folk art and trades have a special economical value on a local level but also on a regional or national one. Everything depends on changing the artist/craftsman concept "art for art sake" in that of "art for economical development", from producer for himself in producer and tradesman of the handicraft ware.

We can say in the full conviction that the Romanian traditional art, and especially the art from Maramureș represents a component of the localities economical development in our country/our county.

But first we must detect of what level are these trades from Maramureș known and appreciated.

The folk art from Maramureș is insufficiently known in our country and abroad. That's why we consider that it is necessary so discuss this problem for supporting the artists/craftsmen and their products.

We must analyze the strong points and the weak points of this activity. First we can look for those elements that motivate this interest in the craftsmen from Maramureș as a main part of the local economy development.

The first strong element is the development level, in territorial profile, almost non/existent in other counties. Every place in Maramureș has its own special craftsmen or trades. As it is known, Maramureș is formed of more "countries", the ancient territories organized around the first defending fortresses. Even today the names of "Lăpuș Country", "Maramureș Country", "The Wood Country", "Chioar Country" are maintained. Each "country" has its local charm, but anchored in the regional and Romanian one. Another elements are originality and tradition of the crafts in Maramureș. The continuance of this art is the strong part, that made it last along the centuries. Many of the crafts are inherited from generation to generation, from the times of our free ancestors, inhabitants of these places. The foreign influences exist only in a small degree within our traditional art. The great diversity of the craftsmen activities is another important constituent. In Maramureș we have over 300 identified and well-known craftsmen, who practice various arts: the art of processing the wood and glass, ritual masks, carpets, houses and churches builders. The diversity is showed in the personalization of the style and of the artist as well as in the technology and the materials used.

Diversity can also be seen through the useful destination of the products, household goods, clothes, ornaments, knick-knacks, ritual items.

## MARCAȘ

The authenticity of these items from Maramureș makes them unique. The elements of the authentic folk art are specific and reorganized wither by specialists wither by the traditional art consumers from our country of foreign countries.

The extent degree of these art items promoted on the internal and external market is quite high, but insufficiently turned to a good account. Another specific element of this zone is the respect that the local artists have for the art of the national cohabiting minorities in these regions. Thus, besides the Romanian folk art we shall meet the Hungarian and the Ukrainian folk art, which preserve their authenticity without having profound interference with the Romanian one. However, this spiritual and material richness that Good and nature endowed us with, has also some weak points concerning its capitalization as an economical components of the local development.

These we can mention as weak points:

The insufficient Knowledge and promotion of the traditional art of Maramureș as an economical and commercial component. There is a lack of a promotion and trade network for the craftsmen's good at local, regional and national level.

There is a lack of logistical support from the part of the local and regional public administration pertaining to the artists and craftsmen from Maramureș. Many of the folk artists are not know at the regional level.

We do not have an up-to-date monograph.

There are nor organized exhibitions and museums for the folk art in the localities where the craftsmen were born or work.

The lack of a traditional naive folk art. This fact will cause the breaking of the trades continuity. The natural losses, the artists aging - there are over 50 - cannot be completed because of the lack of the younger generation.

The timid attempt, from the last period, to organize schools of folk and without a support from the town halls and local councils are insignificant.

Today the craftsmen between 20-50 years are absent. They could assure the continuity of the trades. Now we have two groups of children at a school in Târgu Lăpuș, who are educated in this purpose. The Art Academy, sustained by an external program organizes the classes.

Another component that diminishes the craftsmen's contribution is the difficult access to the local material resources.

These craftsmen are not big consumers of materials - wood, clay, wood, cotton, etc. However, they are not helped by the local public administration. They are treated by the state's decentralized institutions, like the big producers or consumers of materials. In this way is treated the carver, for when an oak tree it's enough for a years of work like the wood logs export who consumes a lot of wood from the forest.

We haven't got yet monographic images of the localities. What a pity! Maramureș part of Romania, with its lively and authentic art and Romanian history hasn't got a sufficient media coverage, with preponderance it hasn't got a monographic information of the folk trades and artists. It is a big mistake and negligence of the intellectuals, of the Education and Culture institutions, of the churches of all cults, of the town halls and the local and regional public administration, who aren't able to offer to the next generations the pages of authentically, lively history that we still have, preserved by the old men from the villages. We don't need to spent a fortune for creating a monographic image, a CD-ROM, a web page, etc.

We must hurry not to lose the last craftsmen of the past and present, bearers of history and folk art. We must use the information given by these men for reconstituting the history of our county.

Today there super civilized and industrialized countries, like U.S.A., Germany, France, which pay millions of dollars for reviving the traditional arts, the local trades. We should protect ourselves from being involved in such a situation. Today, with reduced expenses we can sustain, consolidate our traditional art.

We must strive not to lose the value of "the golden bracelet", the craftsmen's emblem under which The Art Academy and Traditional Trades from Maramureș carries on a vast activity of development and consolidation of the craftsmen.

But we must be optimistic because the true defenders of the traditional art are still alive: Iuga Georgeta, Berbecaru Doina, Ganta Mihaela, Ghiur Florica, Ghitiu Reghina, Man Nicolae, Corean Dumitru, Pop Gheorghe, Sitar Cornel, Perta-Cuza, Pop the shepherd.

## **The Economical Development by Local Forces**

That's why The Academy of Arts and Traditional Trades from Maramureş is important to function.

This Academy will defend, develop and preserve the art and the folk artists, will promote these diamonds of the Romanian folk creation in the country and abroad.

What must we do in order to achieve the local economical development?

Firstly, we must identify these activities in each locality. Then we must support them, develop them, starting from the strong points and eliminating or correcting the weak points of these activities.

The town halls and the local council represent the engine that will put in motion the entire mechanism of the local craftsmen and artists.

Then must be preoccupied with the identification of the trades and craftsmen and keep their evidence. Then they will discuss upon the things that are necessary for activating or reactivating the activities from the point of view of materials - workshops, materials, labor, and the apprentice's education, promoting the image of the folk artists.

The town halls, the school, the church and the intellectuals together with the pupils and their parents must take part in and write monographs of the villages or towns, where a special chapter should contain information about trades, customs, costume, the folk art schools, the local artists.

This means exemption from bills and local taxes, material support (wood, stone, clay). Also, the concession of some domains from the public property for building personal workshops-museums without contribution - a minimum contribution.

As a reward the local counselors should offer the old craftsmen the title of "honorific citizen" of the village or of the county.

The trades and the craftsmen should become a component of the economical development together with the after local richness-agro tourism. These two complementary components should become the strong point of the locality development.

It would be very sad to lose or destroy this inherited treasure consciously or unconsciously.

Foundations and associations will be organized at local and regional level, with the logistical support of the Town halls, Local and Regional Councils, Local and Micro regional museums will be organized besides those sustained by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Research. These museums can function in the artist's house. Here can be organized visits for documentation, shops, and exchange of experience. The secondary education level, the schools' administration must be mixed up in the territorial organization, in towns and villages by groups of pupils, on different types of trades, especially of those children coming from the craftsmen families or children who have a special gift for these trades and who after finishing eight grades, will receive a diploma, a certificate equivalent with that of a professional school.

This will attract as many children as possible towards these activities.

The High School of Art and the other high school should study the introduction in practice classes, technology, art and trades classes. The vocational schools from the county must have in their structure groups of pupils who learn the folk art, the local trader, and practicing with the authorized craftsmen.

We would like the traditional trades to be introduced on the Education Ministry's list, as trade with local specific.

The art schools, set up by some willing persons who dedicate themselves to the development and preserving the traditional art in Maramureş, must get support from the local institutions. I do not understand why these formulations, folk art schools aren't given the names of some predecessors or folk artists living in this zone.

Shops must be organized in the Romanian cities for selling object, goods, created by the craftsmen from Maramureş. It would be nice that is an exhibition from Sofitel Hotel in Bucharest it was displayed authentical goods, which would replace the kitsches sold as authentical.

The visitors and the Romanian and foreign tourists want to buy specific souvenirs from one region. And what does the tourist buy from the shops of Baia Mare? Kitsch's and handicraft ware from other zones of Romania convinced that they had bought authentic handicraft ware from Maramureş.

I don't think it is normal! That's why it's important to organize the marketing of the authentic items in the network of the general stores, specialized shops, at the producer's workshop, at the hotels reception, and why not at the Baia Mare Airport. We mustn't forget to introduce also the

## MARCAȘ

gastronomic delights of this region. But this is another issue that is worth to be mentioned during the seminars organized within the agro tourism in Maramureș.

The Chamber of Commerce will be involved in:

- supporting and promoting the image of the craftsmen from Maramureș in the country and abroad. The organization of the salon called "Three generation" is a stark. Within the salon, the 41 artists and their apprentices will expose and create art objects. Besides this salon a seminar will take place. The local craftsmen, the creators of industrial art ceramics, glass, etc.), the mayors and the Local Administration will take part in;

- giving free juridical and marketing assistance for the Family Associations;

- according space for exhibitions.

For three years many artists/craftsmen have been present at the markets organized on the occasion of religions and lay exhibitions at Târgu Lăpuș, Baia Sprie, Sighet, Vișeu de Sus, Baia Mare.

These exhibitions/fairs with selling have two components: one for promoting the commerce with handicap ware, and other for promoting the image of the local craftsmen.

- we created a site on the Internet where we'll promote the craftsmen and their trades, the folk zones of interest through a web page;

- organizing seminars on the occasion of fairs and exhibitions in our country, especially in the regional centers (Șomcuta for Chioar, Târgu Lăpuș for Țara Lăpușului, Sighetu Marmăției for the historic Maramureș).

During these seminars we'll find out the craftsmen's opportunities, we'll promote them, together with the Formations and other nor-governmental organizations for the folk art in Maramureș.