



bid
book

european capital of culture

candidate city

messolonghi

2021

common people

everyday heroes





introduction 6

1. Contribution to long-term strategy 22
2. European aspect 32
3. Cultural and artistic content 44
4. Capacity to deliver 54
5. Outreach 60
6. Management 66
- Supporters 76

Mayor's Message

Messolonghi, the city of water, with the morphological characteristic of being constructed in the water embrace of the leeward and rich “beautiful lagoon”, as called by Homer, with its unrivalled ecosystem and its lagoon huts over the water, is currently the capital of the District of Aetoloakarnania and of the homonymous Municipality.

Messolonghi, as the only Sacred City in the world, officially declared as such by the State since 1936, which is based on the grandeur of the heroic Exodus and of the sacrifice of Greeks and Philhellenes for freedom, has been internationally characterised as the “City of Freedom” and has been identified more than any other Greek city with the Revolution of 1821.

The land of Solomos’ “Free Besieged”, the city that became the beloved subject of numerous artists, such as Delacroix and Hugo, the bastion of the heartfelt speeches of Lord Byron and Kostis Palamas, could not be absent from the claim for the title of the Culture Capital of Europe for 2021, which coincides with the anniversary for the passing of 200 years after the declaration of the Greek Revolution.

In the course to a symbolic milestone, such as 2021, the Sacred City of Messolonghi, through its candidacy in this Celebration of Culture, can reflect the values of Freedom, Culture, Collaboration, and Heroic Spirit.

Our ambition and vision through this candidacy is for the city and the region to plan and create their future using as foundations their history and culture, showcase and promote the cultural diversity of the land, and mix the rich cultural and historic inheritance with European innovation and original actions.

The residents, the citizens, and the organisations of the land, with a deep thirst and noble ambitions join forces with collective conscience, since the claiming of the title of Culture Capital of Europe for 2021 will have an all-encompassing presence that requires restless energy and work.

Nikolaos Karapanos
Mayor of sacred city Messolonghi



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introduction



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— Why does your city wish to participate in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture?

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The institution of the European Capital of Culture aims to promote the common cultural elements of European nations, along with the values, the principles, and the standards on which European culture is founded.

Messolonghi, having the privilege of being a historical and cultural landmark for Greece, claims the title of the European Capital of Culture for 2021 and hopes that by being awarded the title, it will have a unique opportunity to serve as the centre for the cultural life of Europe.

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Through its candidacy for the title of the European Capital of Culture for 2021, Messolonghi aims to become a beacon of culture both in Europe and internationally.

This noble cause favours collective action and serves as an excellent opportunity for the productive collaboration between all cultural, social, and financial organisations of the region and citizens, aiming to promote the city of Messolonghi so it can become a cultural ambassador of our country.

- Specifically, Messolonghi pursues development, evolution, change through cultural diversity, and the creation of a new European cultural identity, by claiming a distinctive place in the international stage.

- Facing the current economic reality, the increase of employment, the bolstering of cultural tourism, and the promotion of cultural entrepreneurship through the institution of the Culture Capital of Europe shall maximize human prosperity and quality of life.

- The long-term development strategy focused on culture shall assist to the evaluation of the practical needs of the city and of the region (enrichment of infrastructures, innovative sources of financing, European aspect of commercial activities, while through focused planning it shall become an important asset for the rejuvenation of the region.

- The promotion of all types of artistic expression holds a fundamental position in the procedure for the European integration of the city. The purpose is to showcase the established cultural institutions of the city (ancient theatre festival, photography festival, Exodus anniversary, historical – religious fairs) and promote new artistic activities within the context of European Culture.

- The tourism reformation and the regeneration of the city and of the wider region is a significant direction and a prime objective of Messolonghi’s candidacy, through practices that showcase the uniqueness of the natural landscape, its historical legacy and rare gourmet offerings.

Through this attempt, we are trying to stay in tune with the cultural advances of Europe, laying the historical data and the morphological specificity of Messolonghi on new plans, and combine the new with something already familiar.



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— Does the plan of your city include also its neighbouring region?

The plan and the vision behind the Candidacy of Messolonghi as the European Capital of Europe for 2021 is not only limited to the outlines of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, but has included the wider region of Aetoloakarnania, along with the Municipalities of the neighbouring Districts of West Greece (Achaia, Ilia), which have decided to support wholeheartedly the candidacy of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, by acknowledging that it has all the assets to serve as the centre for the cultural life of Europe.



MEMORANDUM

-  Ancient Theatres
-  Main cities

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The plan and the vision behind the Candidacy of Messolonghi as the European Capital of Europe for 2021 is not only limited to the outlines of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, but has included the wider region of Aetoloakarnania, along with the Municipalities of the neighbouring Districts of West Greece (Achaia, Ilia), which have decided to support wholeheartedly the candidacy of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, by acknowledging that it has all the assets to serve as the centre for the cultural life of Europe.

It would be impossible to exclude from this Cultural Celebration the entire region of Aetoloakarnania, due to the uniqueness of the area in terms of its geographical position, its history, its culture, and its morphological properties; all these are elements that cannot be examined separately. This is the main reason behind the decision for a joint effort.

Aetoloakarnania is the largest district of Greece, with a surface of 5,461km². It is a region that seems to never end. It was established as a district following a decree of April 15, 1833, and was given the official name of "District of Aetolia and Akarnania". Currently, the district consists of seven municipalities. The entire population of the district is 224,429 persons. The most populated city of the district, with a significant financial activity, is Agrinio, while the municipalities of Messolonghi and Nafpaktos are similar in population. Amphilochia, Vonitsa, Thermo, Astakos, and Aetoliko are important historical townships and local centres.

Aetoloakarnania belongs to the Periphery of West Greece, whose capital city is Patras. The remaining districts of the Periphery are Achaia and Ilia, which have joined forces with Messolonghi in order to claim the title "Messolonghi – Candidate European Capital of Culture for 2021."

It is one district, with two identities. Aetolia and Akarnania unite at the banks of Acheloos river and have been writing their common history for centuries. Rarely one visits an area that includes so many different landscapes, so many sudden changes of views. Impressive lagoons and mountainous routes on lush mountains, a tourism beach front and ancient cities, natural and artificial lakes, stone bridges, and picturesque villages. Its three great rivers, Acheloos, Evinos, and Mornos, its five great lakes, its fields, impressive mountains, forests, and beaches make up for an amazing mosaic of landscape, which represents the entire country.

Since September 1833, the capital of the district is the Sacred City of Messolonghi, "the home of every free man", the city that through its sacrifice touched global opinion and sealed, as only a few so have managed, the fate of the Revolution. The rich lagoon of Messolonghi – Aetoliko, with its pelades and gaites, the local fishing boats, creates images of unparalleled emotions, apart

from its significant importance for the economy of the region.

Messolonghi, a surprisingly charming city, built on the entrance of the Gulf of Patras, bordered by the rivers of Evinos and Acheloos, next to the wetland of the serene lagoon, and surrounded by mythical ancient cities and transcending monuments of heroes and sacrifices, is not only a symbol of historical reference and an arc of national memory, but a modern city with intense spirituality, a city of heroes, giving birth to unique habits.

At the outskirts of the sacred city, on the canvas of a natural and rich wetland, one of the biggest in the Mediterranean, one may feel the interweaving of grand eras. The struggles of the Revolution overshadow the richness of ancient Aetolia, while the beauty of the natural monuments and of the amazing ecosystem compete with modern reality, which boasts the mud baths, the cycling courses, and the amazing straw huts of Tourlidia.

At the middle of the lagoon, there is Aetoliko, a densely populated islet, which is connected to the land by two stone arched bridges, which have been listed as monuments. At its west side, in the area of Katochi, you will find a unique monument in Greece, perhaps in Europe too, the ancient dockyard of Oiniades, an impressive stone shipyard.

Nafpaktos is probably the most developed area of Aetoloakarnania, in terms of tourism, thanks to its picturesque harbour and its castle; a city that is both picturesque and historic, having connected its name with the famous naval battle that changed the course of History.

From this city, the road leads to the mountainous areas, towards the mountains of Kravara, where Aetolia meets Evritania, and to the heart of mountainous Nafpaktia. Near Nafpaktos, one may find Varasova, the "Mt. Athos" of Aetolia, a historic rock accommodating dozens of monasteries and some accessible askitaria.

This is followed by Thermo, the homeland of Cosmas of Aetolia, the restless education missionary. In Mega Dentro there is a monastery with part of his remains and the foundations of his home. In Thermo there is also the ancient city, a cultural and religious centre of ancient Aetolia, which will draw much more attention after the archaeological museum opens its doors shortly. Thermo is also the starting point of the round of Trichonida, the largest lake in Greece.

This pleasant route running along its beaches, passes from villages and townships, each with its own unique characteristics: Paravola with the ancient acropolis of Voukatio, Gavalou with the "hidden" monastery in Keli, Kainourgio, with the historic hill of Vlochos and the acropolis of ancient Thestia. And obviously, almost exactly between Trichonida and smaller lake Lysimachia, there is Agrinio, the large residential and financial centre of Aetoloakarnania.

Its trademark was its well-known tobacco, which was highly coveted in past times. Modern Agrinio, in contrast to usual stereotypes is a pleasant city. It is a large city, with all relevant consequences, but manages to remain pleasant and vibrant.

Above Agrinion, there is Panaitoliko Mountain, a natural border between Aetolia and Evritania, and a heaven for trekking. Moving on with the route, one will pass all three artificial lakes of Acheloos: the lakes of Kremaston, Kastrakiou and Stratou.

Very close to the latter, there is another ancient city, Stratos, with the temple of Zeus and an ancient theatre. The next stop is Amfilochia, the historic “Karvasaras”, according to its old folk name.

Its noteworthy features include the ancient Limnaia, the historic monasteries of the Virgin Mother in Re-tha and of Aghia Paraskevi in Varetada, the villages of mountainous Valtos, such as Thiamos and Empesos, up to Perdikaki, Vrouviana and Avlaki, which lay at the boundaries with the neighbouring district of Evritania. It is a difficult mountainous route, but the beauty of the landscape and specifically the meanders of Acheloos river, as it passes through the mountains, compose images that are difficult to express.

The west side of Aetoloakarnania, from Vonitsa and Palairo to Mytikas and Astakos, is significantly different from the remaining district. Akarnanika Mountains draw the attention, rising at the heart of the historic region of Xeromeros, and affecting the everyday lives of the villages, thanks to the rich waters of their springs.

The picturesque and calm township of Vonitsa, with its Byzantine castle, promises relaxation and peace, while the castles of Grivas and Aghios Georgios offer an elevated view of the passing from Continental Greece to Lefkada; at the same time, in the more tourism-friendly Palairos, one may sense a more cosmopolitan sense with Lefkada island filling the horizon.

Continuing the coastal route, the street leads to the picturesque and sheltered harbors of Xiromeri, connecting links with the islands across the Ionian Sea: Mytikas, with its amazing ancient city of Alyzia and Astakos, with the remnants of Dragamesto Castle. The route finishes at the starting point, at the lagoon of Messolonghi, in one of the most atmospheric landscapes of Aetoloakarnania.

Natural Environment

The relief of Aetoloakarnania is tremendously diverse. There are extensive mountainous masses that give their way to plains and rivers, lakes, sedimentary valleys, terminating on rocky shores, beaches, and wetlands. The main mountainous masses of the

district consist of Akarnanika mountains, Makrinoros and Valtou Mountains, Panaitoliko mountain, and Rigani. A specific feature of interest in the area is the mountain of Oxia, where its smooth ridges are lush with oak and fir trees. Moving higher, one may observe a unique mountainous landscape for South Greece, where subalpine meadows interchange with clusters of the southern beech forest of Europe. Two calcareous masses rise steeply above the sea in coastal Nafpaktia, giving a vivid character to the landscape. These are conical Klokova and steep Varasova, which are rich in caves and Byzantine askitaria. Between Messolonghi and Trichonida, Arakynthos spreads its forest peaks over a great extent. Part of it terminates to impressive rock clusters, which have been deeply torn by four ravines. The biggest and most impressive is the ravine of Kleisoura, a natural monument that brings awe and serves as the habitat for numerous and rare forms of wildlife.

Dark-coloured fir trees cover great expanses over the mountains of Nafpaktia, of Panaitoliko and of Valtos Mountains. Lush forests of broad-leaved oaks cover thousands of acres in Arakynthos, Makrynoros, and Nafpaktia. The amazing primordial forest of cultivated oak at south Xeromero and the alluvial “gallery” type forest in Fraxos of Lesinio are unique in our country.

Aetoloakarnania, due to its geographical position, is the recipient of a large watershed. Two large rivers cross its land. God-river Acheloos and mythical Evinos (Fidaris). Their life-bringing waters gather in their banks following a complicated route, originating from hundreds of springs, headwaters, streams and side-rivers. To this end, they formulate a unique hydrographic network, spanning over regions of pristine natural beauty. Water-laden Aetoloakarnania has experienced during geological eras a strong geotectonic change. A large rift was created from Amvrakikos to Mountain Arakynthos. The water filled this rift, which gradually started gathering materials, getting shallow, until there were left only four large lakes. Amvrakia, Ozeros, Lysimachia, and the largest lake of the country, Trichonida, with an area of 9700 ha.

Three large reservoirs have been created at the bed of Acheloos, through the construction of respective hydroelectric dams. The dam of Kremasta, which is the largest of the country, of Kastraki and of Stratos, which render Aetoloakarnania the leading district in terms of production of hydroelectric energy.

The district accommodates large fertile plains at the basin of the lakes in the area of Agrinio. In addition, the alluvial muds of Acheloos and Evinos in the area of Messolonghi – Aetoliko – Oiniades have created a truly “promised land”, which is extensively irrigated today.

These plains end at the cluster of Messolonghi – Acheloos river mouth wetlands. Here, there is the largest unified lagoon of the Mediterranean, expanding over 14,500 ha, filed with salt meadows, sand stretches, salt marshes, mudflats, reed beds, wet meadows, halophyte islets and the biggest barrier island of Greece, Louros, stretching over 14 kilometers.

History

In Aetoloakarnania, the existence of human civilization is lost in the depths of prehistoric eras, as shown by the flint tools found mainly in the areas next to the lakes and rivers. Finds of settlements from the Neolithic era (stone tools and caves with Neolithic pottery) are found in the caves of Varasova, in the caves of Astakos, and in the hill of Ithoria. Settlements of the early Copper Age have been found in Astakos. Based on the legends, it seems that the first residents of the area were Kouretes, who have a strong presence in numerous myths and events. These are considered as the inventors of the drum and of Pyrrhichios dance.

During the ancient era, two significant civilizations were developed side by side in the region: Aetolians and Akarnaneans. Their natural geographical boundary, for which they argued, was Acheloos river. The Aetolian settlements were mainly developed at the edges of the fields, at the southern mountain feet of Arakynthos and at the region around Trichonida and Thermo. The settlers would enjoy the richness of nature, game and fish. They systematically grew olive trees, vines, and cereals. Homer has made a reference in the Iliad to five Aetolian cities, which sent ships in the campaign against Troy, led by Thoas. These were Pleuron, Kalydon, Pylene, Chalkida and Olenos. The nation of Aetolians is organised in city-states under a common Aetolian - Greek and religious conscience. From the beginning of the 4th century B.C., the Aetolian Common starts formulating, which supports the development of state institutions and of the democracy. The Common, which was based on the racial city-state was developed during the early Hellenistic era to a federation of cities, the Aetolian League. It is the first time in human history where Democracy is applied outside the confines of a city-state. An important moment in the Aetolian history is the victory and checking of the Gaul war hordes in 279 B.C. Akarnaneans created their own Common before 400 B.C., where city-states would collaborate on issues of foreign policy and defence. The coastal Akarnanean cities receive colonization influences and develop trading

In 30 B.C., there is a compulsory immigration of a significant rate of the Aetolian and Akarnanean pop-

ulation of newly founded Nikopolis. The region during this period started declining. However, during the period of the first Christian era, there is development and growth of the population. Several large Paleochristian basilicas are built. During the Ottoman Rule, the stressed Greek population of the urban centres and of the plains escape to the mountains. There, they follow an impressive social and financial structure. The monuments from this period are the stone “amphitheatres” of thousand terraces at the mountain sides. The most distinctive ones are those in Nafpaktia and in the mountain villages of Thermo.

Messolonghi during the 17th century, until 1770 is flourishing, developing an ocean-going fleet and promoting literature. Following the failed Orlov Revolt in 1770, the city is destroyed, along with numerous other settlements in the region and the population is facing hardship from the Ottoman rule.

The rich and strong past of Aetolia and Akarnania is marked and confirmed by the numerous monuments left by all historical periods. The almost sixty castles – fortresses, the six ancient theatres, the ancient temples, the numerous Byzantine and Post-Byzantine monuments temples, monasteries, askitaria, and works of art, constitute a remarkable cultural legacy, a source of knowledge, and a cradle of modern civilization. During the periods of the Venetian and Ottoman rule over Aetolia and Akarnania, several intellectuals shone. During that time, intellectual work is also produced in the various monasteries of the region, while in Messolonghi, in 1760, Panagiotis Palamas establishes Palamas School, which served as the intellectual nucleus of the entire West Rumelia.

Ancient theatres

Aetoloakarnania is well-known for its ancient theatres. There are six ancient theatres in Aetoloakarnania, some of which are already known and accessible, while others are still waiting to be developed. The largest of them is the theatre of ancient Stratos, from the 4th century B.C., with a capacity of up to 7,000 seats. It is accessible, just 12 kilometres outside of Agrinio. The best preserved theatre is the one in Oiniades, also of the 4th century B.C., which is currently used for plays. It is very close to Katochi, 32 kilometres from Messolonghi.

Eleven kilometres from Messolonghi there is the peculiar theatre of ancient Kalydona, which a rectangular orchestra -instead of a circular one – a detail that is rarely found. The theatre in the acropolis of ancient Makyneia, very near to Rio – Antirrio Bridge has the best view of them all, with the Gulf of Patras spanning before it.

The ancient theatre of Plevrona is also very interesting, just outside of Messolonghi, with a view to the lagoon; sixteen rows of seats have been preserved. Last, and most difficult to visit, is the theatre in Amfilochiko Argos, approx. 12 kilometres from Amfilochia. This theatre was discovered by accident in 1916 and it has not been sufficiently excavated in order to allow visits.

Modern History

The innovative and exemplary social organisation of the Greek population, which was based on the institution of communities, organised Armatolikia, played a major role for the formulation of a revolutionary sentiment, that would lead to national revolution and freedom. There were numerous Aetolians and Akarnaneans who participated in Filiki Eteria.

The struggle commenced on May 3, 1821, by the attack of Zygos chieftain, Dimitrios Makris against the tax collectors of the Sublime Porte and continued until April, 1829. The national heroes of the revolution who were active in the area included Georgios Karaiskakis, Notis Botsaris, Markos Botsaris, Dimos Tselios, Giannis Varnakiotis, along with several others.

The most dramatic page in the book of the Revolution was written in the heroic Messolonghi, which was sieged twice. The first siege took place during October – December 1822, and was successfully defended. The second siege constitutes one of the highest moments of heroism and self-sacrifice in international history, as well as the most sensational and bloody page in the Greek Revolution. 10,500 Greeks, of which 3,500 were fighters along with Souliotes and Philhellenes, were under siege since April 1825 by tens of thousands of Ottoman army. They do not capitulate, nor surrender: they starve, isolated from the land and the sea, and on April 10, 1826, they decide to make a heroic Exodus, decided to gain freedom or die trying. This was followed by the extensive slaughter and destruction of the city. The heroic Exodus of Messolonghi raised the spirits of the fighting forces all over Greece. At the same time, it drew the attention of the Western forces in favour of the Greek cause.

During the 19th century, the newly established district played a major role in the political, social, and financial events of the country. Five prime-ministers from that time come from Aetoloakarnania. These are Spyridon Trikoupi, Dimitrios Valvis, Zinovios Valvis, Epameinondas Deligiorgis, and the most comprehensive political personality of the century, Charilaos Trikoupi. Another important personality of modern times, born in Aetoloakarnania, is Damaskinos Papandreou,

who served as Archbishop, regent and prime-minister during the difficult times of German occupation and of the civil war.

The mountainous communities of the district had already been formulated during the time of the Ottoman Rule. Their prime comes following the revolution and up to the middle of the 20th century. Animal rearing in its traditional form is at its peak during these years. The fertile plains of the region, the expansive fields of Evinos – Messolonghi – Acheloos, the large fields of Agrinio and of its lakes, along with the smooth plateaus of the region, accommodated numerous semi-nomadic breeders during the winter. At the same time, olive trees and vines are systematically cultivated in the semi-mountainous areas, while the cultivation of corn is intensified in the plains. Already from the ancient times, efforts were made to drain the swamp areas and settle the water streams; these finally resulted to thousands of acres of cultivated land.

The cultivation of tobacco was a defining factor for the development of the district, which made its appearance already from the 19th century; however, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that it was extensively organized and expanded. At the same time, the trading of the product began, along with the industry of standardization, using advanced technology for the time. The trading of tobacco, centred on Agrinio, amounted to a significant and noteworthy fraction of the National Economy.

The folk culture of rural Aetoloakarnania, during the entire modern historic period has several achievements to be proud for. It features a unique wealth of customs and traditions, rituals and events, while cultivating arts and coexisting in peace with nature. Today, it has left an extensive and rich cultural legacy. There are thousands of folk songs and folk instrument players. Messolonghi, Aetoliko and the villages next to Acheloos river maintain strong musical traditions, while cultivating Byzantine music tradition.

The thirty stone bridges of the district have left a legacy of significant historical, architectural and practical value. In mountainous Aetoloakarnania, there are hundreds of water mills, a network of paths which are frequently paved with stones, and hatches with slabs on their roof: all these are monuments – witnesses of a culture with deep roots.

In modern period, Aetoloakarnania gave birth to numerous personalities who distinguished themselves in the field of arts and literature. Poets such as Kostis Palamas, Miltiadis Malakasis, and Georgios Drosinis. Authors such as Kostas Hatzopoulos, Themistoklis and Georgios Athanasiadis – Novas (Athanas), Giannis Vlachogiannis, Antonis Travlantonis, engraver Vaso Katraki, painter Dimitris Kasolas, humorist Stamatis



Stamatiou, director Dimitris Rontiris, sculptor Christos Karpalos, folk dancer Dora Stratou, critic, author, poet and academic I.M. Panagiotopoulos.

Present – Future

Modern Aetoloakarnania, gifted with landscapes of unparalleled beauty, with rich natural resources and a great cultural inheritance, is living the present vividly, quickly adjusting to the changes it brings, realizing its comparative advantages and methodically and decisively going towards a new path of improvement and sustainable development.

The economy of the district is mainly based on the primary sector. However, in the past years, significant activities have been developed in terms of processing businesses and tourism. Until recently, Aetoloakarnania was one of the major tobacco growing regions of the country. Currently, it stands at the 3rd national

place with regard to the production of cheese and at the 5th place for the production of meat. The production of oil and edible olives is significant. There are thousands of cultivated and irrigated fields, where seasonal corn, clover, cotton, fruit and vegetables are grown. The district includes large expenses with citrus trees, while specialised modern cultivations, such as asparagus and strawberries have been met with great success. At the same time, numerous farmers have already turned towards organic farming and animal rearing, with a significant and steadily increasing number of farms.

Forty-five per cent of the area of Aetoloakarnania are pastures. The geological, soil and climatic conditions, along with the water and generally the natural landscape in the district, support heavy animal rearing. A major portion of the rural economy refers to traditional animal rearing, using pasture raising - an activity rooted thousands of years in the past, with a strong

tradition. The products of this animal rearing in their primary form are of excellent quality.

The district does not have a large fleet of open-sea fishing vessels. However, coastal fishing using small fish boats is highly developed. The fishing tradition formulated in the large wetlands centred on Messolonghi and Aetoliko is unique in Greece. For the past centuries, the fish populations in the lagoons are managed through the method of *divaria*. Eels, seabreams, seabasses, chubs and others are fished and precious *botargo* is produced.

During the past 20 years, significant growth has been observed in the field of fish farms. The fish farms for seabreams and seabass cover the majority of this production. The cores of their development are the coastal zones and the leeward coves of the Ionian Sea and of Amvrakikos Gulf.

Bee-keeping is also a strong sector, with a great prospect for development. The climate and the vegetation of the district create positive conditions for the further growth of this field.

Aetoloakarnania has realized that it has the fertile land, the water, and everything necessary to take the next step towards the development of its rural field, characterized by sustainability and quality.

An important industrial activity is also the production and standardization of salt. The salt pans of Messolonghi are the largest in the country and account for more than 50% of the national production of salt. Aetolians and Akarnaneans have realized that the processing and standardization of their products by themselves grants them additional value and helps towards the prosperity of the community.

In the field of intellectual creation, of arts, of collective actions and communication, there are significant activities throughout the entire district. There are persons who are dedicated to art, painting, sculpting, and engraving, thus opening new roads through their creations.

Numerous collective activities are held in the district, promoting culture and raising social awareness, such as the Historical – Archaeological Society of West Greece in Agrinio, the Gymnastics Society of Agrinio, the Climbing Clubs of Nafpaktos, Messolonghi, and Agrinio, the Aviation Clubs of Messolonghi and Agrinio, and the Sea Clubs of the three large cities. Agrinio accommodates the University School for the Management of Natural Resources and Businesses. Three Technological Educational Institutes are located in Messolonghi, with seven specialized departments of study. Moreover, Centres for Environmental Training operate in Messolonghi and Thermo.

The Municipal Regional Theatre is active in Messo-

longhi, which has earned appreciation from the entire country for its quality plays, while numerous Theatrical Groups and Artistic Workshops operate in Messolonghi and in Aetoliko. Municipal libraries are found in every large city of the district. Significant cultural treasures of the district are kept and displayed in Papastrateio Archaeological Museum of Agrinio, while paintings of major painters are on display in the Gallery of the former City Hall of Messolonghi.

Three hospitals, three private clinics, and eight health centres operate in the district. In the past years, intense activity has been observed in the entire region with regard to printing, regarding literature and poems, articles, the circulation of newspapers and other publications. In addition, several Societies of Aetoloakarnanians are active, inside and outside of the district, aiming to promote their land or even more specialized.

The existing infrastructures favour the communication of the district with the remaining Greece. “Charilaos Trikoupis” bridge, at the straits of Rio - Antirio serves as the main communication gateway for the district. The tunnel - bridge in the straits of Aktio - Preveza is also open to traffic. Ionian Odos, which is currently under construction, shall play a major role for communication with Epirus, Egnatia Odos and the islands of the Ionian Sea. The large harbour in Platygiali of Astakos, which meets international specifications, serves as a major transshipment centre, while the airport in Aktion can contribute further to communication and tourism.

The citizens of Aetoloakarnania are aware of the comparative advantages of their region. They understand their long historical past, their unique and unexploited monuments, the richness of their land’s natural resources, and their rare natural legacy. They respect and experience ancient elements of their cultural legacy and folk tradition. They open their senses to the modern world, by understanding the messages, trends, and progress of time. They wisely combine the old with the new and they create.



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— The Cultural Profile Of The City

Messolonghi is a truly human city, with an impressive quality of life thanks to the intense intellectual and artistic activities of its residents and its inspired cultural profile. The most important cultural actions performed each year are the following:

Exodus Festivities One may not understand the magnitude of the devoutness and of the awe if they don't attend the mourning festivities of the Palm Sunday during the anniversary of the Exodus. These are held every year in Messolonghi and pay tribute to those who fell heroically during the Messolonghi Exodus of 1826. Every Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday a pious cortege – memorial service is held, through the procession of the Exodus painting, along with the youth of the city dressed with the traditional costumes, delegations from numerous cities of Greece and abroad, ambassadors of foreign countries, and, usually, the head of state or the prime minister. The culmination of the Exodus festivities is marked by the re-enactment of the blasting of the powder-magazine of Christos Kapsalis. The ceremonies are closed by a national memorial race that follows the route of the Exodus.

The Fair of St. Symios During the three-day holiday of the Holy Spirit, the Fair of St. Symios is held in Messolonghi – a traditional local fair. This is probably the most authentic Greek Fair, which has survived to our days and is distinguished for its combined historical and religious character. According to documented historical testimonies, it has been held in Messolonghi already from the first years after the foundation of the Sacred City, and obviously is the only urban Fair in Greece. The celebration is closely related to the epic of the Messolonghi Exodus. The people of Messolonghi who participate these days in the Fair create organized *kapetanata* (groups of militia men), the so-called *Parea* (company). The most important aspect is the participation by the entire city in the happenings, which last for 4 days and nights. The music for these events is traditionally undertaken by passing Romani musicians, which gather for this purpose in Messolonghi and play in pairs of *davuts* and *zurnas*. Each “*Parea*” has its own pair of instruments, which accompanies it before the festivities and later, in the all-night festivity of the Fair. This warm participation by the Romani musicians is noteworthy and a necessary ingredient for the celebration.

Festival in the Ancient Theatre of Oiniades

In August 1986, the ancient theatre of Oiniades was resurfaced from the past, after 2,500 years and the re-opening of the theatre was a significant cultural event for the entire Greece. Every year, a programme with cultural events is issued, which has had excellent results. Currently, the Festival of the Ancient Theatre of Oiniades has been integrated in the Festival of Athens, following a resolution in 1994 by the Minister for Tourism.

Until this day, 80 ancient Greek drama plays have been presented.

This created an unprecedented cultural channel of human communication and art, that keeps cultural creation at a very high level.

Photography Exhibition - Festival It was established in 2012 and aims to promote the art of photography, while bringing together photographers and the public through a creative interaction. It is held under the auspices of the City, by the members of Messolonghi Photography Club and by the Regional Authorities of West Greece. It has been closely collaborating with the Benaki Museum and has hosted exhibitions of significant and internationally acclaimed Greek photographers, such as Kostas Balafas, Dim. Charisiadis, Dimitrios Messinis, Aris Messinis, G. Bechrakis. Since 2014, with the participation of renown Greek and foreign photographers, it acquired international status, obtaining a significant position in the global map of photography.

Horse Races of St. George These horse races are held every year at the area near the small Byzantine temple of St. George, on the day of his celebration. They originate from the chariot races of ancient Kalydona, but are held in honour of mounted St. George of the Christian tradition. Following the end of the race, an award ceremony follows.

Fair of St. Agatha This fair, which marks the culmination of the events of the Aetolian city, is of religious character; various significant historical and folk elements are revived during the fair, which have remained pure to this day.

Saint Agatha is celebrated twice per year, on February 5 and on August 23, when the Novena of the Virgin Mary are celebrated.

The *Armatomenoi* are the soul and core of the fair. They are complemented by “*zygia*” (pair of musical instruments), which consists of the *daouli* (*davul*) and *zurna*.

Fair of St. Paraskevi in Neochori This fair is held between July 26 and 27, with the participation of *Armatomenoi*, under the sounds of the *daouli* (*davul*) and *zurna*; in the first day, it is held in the chapel of St. Paraskevi, while on the second day, the fair is moved to the village.



1

Contribution
to long-term
strategy



Describe the cultural strategy that is in place in your city at the time of the application, as well as the city's plans to strengthen the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors, including through the development of long term links between these sectors and the economic and social sectors in your city.

— What are the plans for sustaining the cultural activities beyond the year of the title?

The preservation and upgrading of the cultural inheritance is the foundation and main objective of the strategy of the Municipality of Messolonghi with regard to culture. Within this context, the City has contributed with all its forces – personnel and resources – to promote the following cultural events, which are performed in the various municipal districts of the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi.

Exodus Festivities: These are annual events, referring to the grandeur of the Exodus of 1826, lasting approx. two weeks. These include lectures, presentations of books, artistic and theatrical happenings, prior the main two-day events. These are attended by delegations (schools, societies, organisations) from all over Greece, along with delegations of foreign states. Every year, a European country is honoured, whose ancestors showed their love for the city through Philhellenism. The objective is to showcase the special cultural aspects of this country and invite as many European countries as possible to exchange views and culture.

Festival in the Ancient Theatre of Oiniades

des: This was an inspired idea of the Head of the Community of Katochi, of the Municipal Regional Theatre of Agrinio, and of Lawrence University in Kansas, which gave birth, approx. 30 years ago, to a very successful Ancient Theatre Festival, which has now become an institution. The plays are held in the ancient theatre of Oiniades – a treasure coming from the 4th century B.C., and are produced by the Festival of Athens and Epidavros. Every two years, the theatrical group of Lawrence University in Kansas presents, after a two-month stay in our country, an ancient tragedy. Our objective is to internationalise the Festival, through the participation of renown theatrical European troupes.

The Fair of St. Symios: Every year, in the four-day period of the Pentecost and of the holiday of the Holy Spirit, the fair of St. Symios is held in Messolonghi, which is closely related to the epic of the Exodus. This is a fair with historical, religious, social, and symbolic character. It was named after the Post-Byzantine monastery of St. Symios. This celebration was usual also during the Ottoman Occupation; it had stopped during the Revolution and was brought back to the life of Messolonghi –with grandeur – following liberation. Its distinctive feature is the armed (armatomenoi) militia men of Messolonghi, who are dressed in the old, folk costume and by the accompaniment of a “zygia” (two zournas and one davul) form from the morning of Pentecost companies with a specific structure and an established ritual. In the afternoon, they start moving towards the monastery, where a celebration is held. During the night of the following day, they return to the city, where the celebrations continued, with the participation of all residents. Similar folk fairs are held in the Aetoliko of St. Agatha on August 23, in Neochori of Ag. Paraskevi on July 26, in Evinochori of St. John, on June 23. Every fair follows the structure and the ritual followed in the fair of St. Symios.

Photography Exhibition – Festival: An action organized in the city and pays tribute to the talents of European artists is the Photography Festival. It was established in 2012 and aims to promote the art of photography, while bringing together photographers and the public, through a creative interaction. It is held under the auspices of the City, by the members of Messolonghi Photography Club and by the Regional Authorities of West Greece. It has been closely collaborating with the Benaki Museum and has hosted exhibitions of significant and internationally acclaimed Greek photographers, such as Kostas Balafas, Dim. Charisiadis, Dimitrios Messinis, Aris Messinis, G. Bechrakis. Through its current presence, the Festival has managed to become established as one of the most important photographic institutions in the country, and not only there, by drawing the attention of photography enthusiasts from all over the world. Since 2014, thanks to the participation of renown Greek and foreign photographers, such as Konstantinos Manos from the USA, Laurent Fabre and Nikos Aliagas from France, and Jordi Oliver from Spain, it has become international, earning a significant position on the global map of photography.

The Battle of Dolmas islet: Dolmas is an islet very close to Aetoliko. There, on February 28, 1826, the Turkish – Egyptian army conquered the islets of Dolmas and Poros, in the lagoon of Messolonghi, and interrupt all communications between the city and the outside world. Its dead included chieftain Grigoris Liakatas, with three hundred men from Aetoliko. The anniversary of the battle of Dolmas is celebrated with all grandeur.

St. George horse races: Every year, in the chapel of St. George, in the homonymous village of the Municipality of Messolonghi, the custom regarding the horse races in honour of St. George is revived. This custom, which is observed and repeated with religious fervour comes from the years of the Ottoman Occupation but its roots are much older, since the first horse races in the area have been recorded in Ancient Calydon, during the 4th century B.C.

Fish Fair in Aetoliko: In the last Saturday of each September, since 1995, the Fish Fair is celebrated in Aetoliko. This is an opportunity for visitors from all over the region, among others, to know Aetoliko, its hospitable residents, and the gastronomy of the area. Thousands of shares of lagoon fish are prepared and served by volunteers, residents of the city. During the past years, a semi-marathon is held by Aetoliko Society of Runners, along with the innovative street painting action, by architect Apostolis Blikas and “Giofyria” newspaper.

Mediterranean Carnival: Every year, the City, in collaboration with the Messolonghi Youth Association and under the initiative of Carnival enthusiasts organize carnival events, leading to the main Carnival weekend.

Since the cultural events are directly connected to the development procedure and constitute a cornerstone of urban cultural policies in modern cities, the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi not only will preserve the existing cultural events, but shall also implement some new ones. Its objective is the enrichment of these cultural actions with European groups and internationally acclaimed artists.

Currently three Festivals are in the process of being organized. It must be noted that in the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the amount of Festivals of any type and size, at a global scale, both in the large and in the smaller city, leading to increased competition between them. This increase is connected with the importance attributed to cultural tourism and the trend of visitors seeking for authentic and original experiences.

Dancing Festival: This shall be attended by groups from all over Greece, while issuing invitations abroad. The person in charge of the dancing group of the Municipality is currently collaborating with dancing groups from Southern Italy. This shall be implemented in the summer of 2016.

Philharmonic Festival: A preliminary taste for this Festival was the “Philharmonic Avenue”, an action that was successfully implemented during the Exodus Festivities. This shall be a two-day festival, attended by

philharmonics from the Periphery of West Greece, with a plan of accommodating each year a philharmonic from a country of the European Union. This shall be implemented in the spring of 2016.

Choir festival: The choir of the City has had a noteworthy past, through appearances in similar domestic and foreign Festivals. To this end, they have the experience necessary to organize an excellent Choir Festival, while also inviting foreign choirs.

Short-Film Festival for Students: In collaboration with the Film Club of Messolonghi, a Short-Film Festival for Students shall be implemented in the summer of 2016. This shall be open to students from every district school and their movies, which must be inspired from the love for Men, Life, and Nature, while growing the creativity of youth and helping understanding between peoples with different culture. The movies shall be presented in the respective Festivals of other European countries.

Reinstitution of the “Trikoupia”: The institution of “Trikoupia” shall be reinstated in 2016. This is an event of political discussions, which shall be annually held in Messolonghi.

Greek History Theme Park: The theme of this park shall include scenes from the Greek Revolution and shall be clearly focused on the events of the Exodus.

Literature competitions: Literature competitions shall be announced within 2016 by the City’s Culture Centre. Their objective is to promote the work of Messolonghi poets and authors, through story-telling and the written speech.



— According to your opinion, if your city is declared as the European Capital of Culture, what will be the long-term cultural, social and financial impact for the city (with regard to urban development)?

The use of the title of the Capital of Culture could serve as an incentive, activating bodies from various social strata and leading to the creation of business and strategy initiatives, while it can also be used as a tool by which the city shall be able to further expand its room for improvement in terms of social, financial, and urban development, which are so closely intertwined. Through the economic development stimulated by the influx of capitals from tourists visiting the region for cultural purposes, which shall continuously increase, social development shall be achieved, resulting from the cultural education acquired by citizens interacting with tourists who have a strong sense of culture.

The Capital of Culture is a long-term development process that extends to and affects the cultural, social, and financial level, along with the level of urban development, in the long run. To this end, if Messolonghi is awarded with the title of the Capital of Culture, it is certain that this shall become a significant opportunity for using the title in all levels above.

The cultural policy already created, from the years of preparation to claim the title of the Capital of Culture, with the purpose of promoting culture, developing and reinvigorating the city and the wider region, shall continue bringing significant benefits such as:

Continuous promotion of the city at a local, national, and international level, through the increased capacity and quality of the cultural programme, the reinforcement of the cultural identity and the rich cultural character of the region, while improving and modernizing cultural infrastructures with the purpose of catering for the increased cultural needs of the city.

For Messolonghi, acquiring this title shall equal a continuous cultural investment leading to the continuation of a “positive” cultural legacy for the city, becoming a competitive tool to secure a competitive advantage in the cultural and tourism sector.

Everybody shall become more aware of the fact that since culture is a key development resource, whether related to tourism or to the method for developing the cultural identity of the region and its relations with its residents, and with the method by which they approach such identity, it is necessary to increase the participation of the local population in cultural actions and show interest in preserving, maintaining, and securing the cultural monuments, the events, and generally the improvements of the region.

Finally, through continuous cultural actions after the award of the title, European collaboration shall be promoted, along with interactions between our city and European citizens, thus realising the general vision of European integration; these steps can only have a positive impact on our city and on the wider region.

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Through the economic development stimulated by the influx of capitals from tourists visiting the region for cultural purposes, which shall continuously increase, social development shall be achieved, resulting from the cultural education acquired by citizens interacting with tourists who have a strong sense of culture.

In addition, a positive social impact from this title is the development of a sense of pride for the residents of the region, both with regard to the cultural product they have offered, and for their ancestors, for the product they have inherited from them.

The social standard and the living conditions of the residents of Messolonghi and of the wider region shall be improved, while increasing the rate of the volunteering residents involved in purely humanitarian actions. This shall result to the establishment of a new culture.

The learning programmes already held by the Lifelong Education Centre of our expanded Municipality and cover vulnerable social groups (immigrants, Romani, etc.) shall increase and reach out to more social strata.

The rebirth of the city, which has begun already by the procedure for claiming the title, and which surely will continue after obtaining it through the continuous actions by citizens, is an important asset for the growth of local economy, and a stabilizing factor for employment. Unemployment is bound to be reduced and a positive rate of growth is expected, both for the local and for the wider economy, thus rendering the businesses viable.

Various sectors of the economy shall be developed, such as services, tourism, and technology, and the quality of the citizens' life shall be significantly improved, through the rational utilization of the regional resources, using actions aimed to the promotion of sustainable, positive for the public and profitable business and creative initiatives for the benefit of society, resulting to the increase of competitiveness.

Finally, the award of the title of European Capital of Culture to Messolonghi shall mark the starting point for its grand development course.

Basic objectives from urban design shall be implemented, including the undertaking of actions for the implementation of interventions aiming to improve the functionality of the city. Urban renovations shall be performed, following a very ambitious programme, with priority to the upgrade and restoration of urban public space. Apart from renovations, various structures shall be constructed, through programmes for upgrading municipal spaces.

Among others, some of the projects that could be performed easier after the title has been awarded to our city are the following: Pavements with suitable ramps for easy access by the disabled, construction of additional bikeways, creation of modern accommodations – hostels to accommodate more visitors, complete and proper lighting of the city streets and of the wider region, improvement of the already available educational programme (OCHE) about the Lagoon, establishment of additional, similar programmes, etc.

Describe your plans for the following up and the evaluation of the impact of the title to your city and for disseminating the results of the evaluation. Specifically, the following questions could be taken into consideration:

- Who is going to perform the assessment?
- Will there be any specific objectives and milestones between the appointment of the city and the year of the title in your assessment plan?
- Which key studies or investigations – if any – do you intend to use?
- What kind of information will you follow and check?
- How do you define “success”?
- For how long and how frequently will this assessment shall be performed?

The procedure for following up and assessing is one of the key conditions for the success of "Messolonghi 2021" project; it is the means available to the coordinating team to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of its application.

This procedure shall be coordinated by the Coordinating Committee of the Candidacy Office for "Messolonghi – Culture Capital of Europe 2021", and mainly through the Executive Director, the Project Manager, and the Artistic Director. At a wider level, it is possible to evaluate it with the participation both of the personnel available by the University of Messolonghi (T.E.I.), comprised of students, graduate students, doctorate students, and professors, as well as by external factors, operating at a local level (such as NGOs, volunteers, etc.).

At the end of 2021, "Messolonghi 2021" programme, after considering the value of the objectives that must be achieved, it would be possible to assign part of the assessment to an independent cultural consulting and management company.

The plan for following up and assessing the impact of the title of the Culture Capital of Europe for 2021 has been prepared in combination with the development of the cultural strategy for the city and the development of the bid book. This approach has been reinforced, on the one hand, by the verification of the existing relations between the general, special, and operational objectives, and on the other, by the review of the technical methods and tools suggested for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data.

During the formulation of the plan for following up and assessing the impact of the title for Messolonghi, the following general principles shall be taken into consideration:

- The effective use of the guidelines set by the European Commission.
- Assurance of access to statistical data at local, regional, and national level.
- Supplementation of the indicators and data available with qualitative and quantitative measures, with an extended scope, with the purpose of accurately assessing the specialization and specificity of the impacts

of the title of the Cultural Capital of Europe 2021 to Messolonghi.

- Expansion of the following and assessment operations over the entire metropolitan region, in order to improve the understanding of the impacts brought by the title to the regional level.
- The extensive dissemination of the assessment results in different environments.

At the same time, this entire procedure takes seriously into consideration the part of "success" as defined by the City, its citizens, and the wider region. The success of this project will be visible in the increased numbers concerning all sectors of consumption and in the amount of new infrastructures, which shall be created or converted to spaces of culture. Moreover, it shall be seen in the rates of visits to the region, in the response to the traditional institutions, in the creation of advantages and in the interest for modern art events. Finally, it must become obvious in the progressive appearance of the city, in the amount of the cultural points of reference in public areas, in the amount of events, in the number of Greek and foreign tourists attending these events, and, more significantly, in the manner by which the people of Messolonghi shall undertake to grow the city of Messolonghi and incorporate it in European culture.

The assessment plan may include the following phases: At the end of 2016 – analysis of the activity performed during the preparation of the bid book and of the management, and creation of a point of reference for the assessment of the indications specified by Europe.

- At the commencement of 2019 – this is the phase when the analysis of the indicators shall underline the possibility that the objectives for 2021 are going to be met, while revealing any measures that must be taken if necessary.
- Middle of 2020: during this phase, depending on the accomplishment rate of the objectives for the 2016-2010 phase, the cultural programme established for 2021 and the marketing strategy could be customised.
- The beginning of 2022 – when the entire approach shall be evaluated.



2

european
aspect

ΕΣΟΛΟΓΓΙ

2

— Scope and quality of actions

In Messolonghi, the Sacred City of the homonymous Municipality, there is already a significant cultural inheritance, underlined firstly by its historic title, and secondly by its international reputation as an emblematic city. Lord Byron, who offered significant services to the Cause of the “Free Besieged”, left his dying breath in Messolonghi. The Gedling Borough in Great Britain, where Lord Byron was born, was twinned with Messolonghi in December 1989.

The existing cultural infrastructures of the city and the neighbouring regions, both of the Municipality and of Aetoloakarnania in general, consent through their actions to the promotion of Messolonghi in order to claiming the title for the Culture Capital of Europe for 2021.

This effort is led by the local government, the local cultural organisations (“DIEXODOS Arts and Speech Centre, Messolonghi Cinema Club, Byron’s Society, V. Artikos Photography Club, the Radio Station, the Folk Society, etc.), the schools of primary and secondary education, and also the Technical Educational Institute of Messolonghi.

Since the award of the title shall be an amazing opportunity for our city to present its cultural life and development, we have planned the following thematic sections of cultural actions (spanning between 2016 and 2021), which we believe that will contribute to the promotion of the character of the city at an international level, while bolstering its image to its own citizens, and giving new life to the city’s cultural activities.

A. Thematic section: Together with schools”

1. School collaborations in europe, contributing to intercultural understanding, friendship and mutual respect.

Since 2014, European action eTwinning has been integrated to Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020), obtaining a more pivotal role for the support of all types of European collaboration in the field of school education. From the school year of 2014-15, educators are given the opportunity of implementing national eTwinning projects (solely with educators of the country (National eTwinning)).

eTwinning is the Community for schools in Europe. For anyone who have already participated, eTwinning has proven that contact between schools and educators in Europe is tremendously beneficial, along with contact with individuals from countries neighbouring Europe; these elements are of special importance these days in order to ensure stability in our “European neighbourhood”.

There are already (until November 2015) schools in the city and in the surrounding regions that are a part of the eTwinning community (Night Lower Secondary School of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, 1st Lower Secondary School of Messolonghi, 1st Vocational School of Messolonghi, General Upper Secondary School of Evinchori, 3rd All-Day Elementary School of Messolonghi, 3rd 12/seated Elementary School of Messolonghi, General Upper Secondary School of Neochori, and more. [see the Map in eTwinning, the list of the registered schools and collaborations in the region of Aetoloakarnania.

Subjects: Interdisciplinary courses: Environmental Education, Language and Literature, Environmental Education, Politics, Technology, Psychology, Theatre, Religion, History, Arts, Philosophy. Other subjects, such as

bullying or violence in any form.

Programme for 2016 - 2021

- Gradual participation of additional schools in eTwinning, expansion of the subjects of actions, with emphasis on cultural, social, and environmental current affairs, not only for Messolonghi, but for Greece and Europe.
- Presentation of actions to the people of the city during the festivities of 2021.

ETwinning also pushes forward the concept of collaboration between schools at higher levels. ETwinning Plus supports “contacts between people”, which is one of the major objectives of the Neighbourhood Policy.

Programme for 2016 - 2021

- Our objective is the next step: eTwinning Plus schools. Specifically, the educators of Messolonghi shall declare their availability for an eTwinning Plus collaboration, with the purpose of reaching out to educators from other participating countries, to create a common project or invite them to participate in an existing project, from which they shall obtain pedagogical, social, and cultural benefits.
- Our objective is to select as associates at least 5 per year from the member states of the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

Priority for at least one of the following eTwinning Plus collaborations:

- Education of disabled persons.
- Reduction of absenteeism by Romani students.
- Artistic and literature projects on the struggle of Man to obtain freedom.
- Presentation of the above collaborations in the festive year of 2021.

2. Participation of schools in an ERASMUS+ European programme

The following are included: Opportunities for educators to participate in European vocational development activities abroad, such as structured cycles of courses or training, teaching assignments, visits at work. Collaborations between schools or other organisations for the creation of international strategic alliances on issues of joint interest.

Already, schools from the region of Messolonghi, and

of Aetoloakarnania in general have implemented several European Programmes. The music school of Aetoloakarnania, through programme “Of Folk Music and Men” contacted countries of south (Italy, Spain) and north Europe (Poland, Lithuania), and also countries of the East (Turkey). The programme helped students discover the traditional music and dancing of the other member states, along with their culture, and cultivate their communication, language and social skills. For the educators, this was an opportunity for their professional development. They were introduced to the educational systems of the collaborating countries, and they compared them with their own, finding strengths and weaknesses, and expanding their intellectual horizons. They understood the necessity of having, holding, and participating in European programmes; this necessity is imposed by modern multi-cultural reality and the formulation of a European and ecumenical identity that transcends the national one.

Programme for 2016 - 2021

- Encouragement of the school units to continue such actions and provision of opportunities, as well as development of the infrastructures of the Municipality of Messolonghi in order to accommodate educators and students from other countries in the City of Messolonghi.
- One-day conference under the auspices of the Municipality, in collaboration with the education organizations on the “Design for the implementation of European programmes with the purpose of implementing actions for student mobility and exchanges”.
- One-day conference under the auspices of the Municipality, in collaboration with the educational organisations on the following subject: “Erasmus+ European programme and its contribution to Vocational Education and Training”.
- Invitation to schools from Cyprus to participate in the celebrations of the Exodus.
- Music programme with songs written by Greek and European song writers to celebrate Freedom.

B. Thematic section: Together with higher education”

The lifelong learning / erasmus programme of the eu member states

The Lifelong Learning / Erasmus Programme (LLP) is a European Educational programme giving students the opportunity to conduct part of their studies or practical training in a Higher Educational Institution of Europe, live abroad, make new friends, find new cultures, cus-

toms and ethics, improve the foreign languages they already know or learn new ones, etc. The twenty-seven member states of the European Union and the three countries of the European Economic Area (Island, Lichtenstein, and Norway), together with Turkey, participate in the Programme.

In the former TEI of Messolonghi, Lifelong Learning Programmes of Operational Programme “Education and Initial Vocational Training (EPEAEK)” have already been conducted, while bilateral agreements with educational institutions of other countries have already been executed (Portugal, Poland, Romania, Denmark), etc.; more information is available in the website of the Technical Educational Institute of Messolonghi. Currently, departments of the Technical Educational Institutes of West Greece are seated in Messolonghi (for instance of Fisheries – Aquacultures Technology, the Business Administration Department of Messolonghi, etc.). These Departments have organized various scientific conferences, one-day conferences and Symposia, with the participation of educational and productive bodies. To this end, it is immediately possible for the City to start a cultural collaboration with Higher Education.

Programme of actions for 2016 - 2021

- One-day conferences under the auspices of the Municipality, in collaboration with the Technical Educational Institutions and with the Universities seated in the cities of Aetoloakarnania or of neighbouring Achaea, with the purpose of disseminating the added value of lifelong learning programmes, and promote European integration and current European issues.
- “Cultural student week: Europe in Messolonghi”. This is co-hosted between the Municipality and the Technical Educational Institute of Messolonghi, with European students as guests, presenting personal and collective creations of cultural content.
- Theatrical and musical groups from student groups of cultural and athletic interest, from Greek and European universities, e.g. the MyAegean from the University of the Aegean, the Music Ensembles of the University of Piraeus, and other ensembles from the European Music Day, etc.

C. Thematic section: Music and poetry

Programme of actions for 2016 - 2021

Implementation of cultural actions in Messolonghi, in collaboration with other organisations and personalities from every other facet of intellectual and social life. The

objective of this section is for Messolonghi to become a hub for cultural and scientific events, while raising the awareness of citizens on issues regarding culture at a European level.

- Musical collaboration: The choir of the City and of other local organisations, together with the choir of a European city.
- Events about Poetry and Music. The objective is to liaise artists from Messolonghi / Aetoloakarnania, such as poets, authors, and musicians, with renowned foreign and Greek artists. The facilities to accommodate most of the events are Trikoupeio in Messolonghi, and Theatraki theater in Aetoliko.
- “Modern Greek Poetry in European countries”.
- On the year of the anniversary, a Concert shall be held in Messolonghi, presenting the emblematic work of Giannis Markopoulos “The Free Besieged” with the poetry of Dionysios Solomos. G.M. stated this year that the above is remastered in England, with narration by Vanessa Redgrave.
- In the year of celebration, issuing and presentation of an anthology titled “Messolonghi in Literature”, prepared by educators of Messolonghi in collaboration with the School Counsel for Philologists and the Postgraduate Department of Creative Writing of the University of West Macedonia.

D. Thematic section: Theatre

- Theatrical plays in the Annual Theatre Festival of Oiniades from the repertoire of the Greek National Theatre.
- Theatrical plays in the Annual Theatre Festival of Oiniades from the repertoire of the State Theatre of North Greece.
- Theatrical plays in the Annual Theatre Festival of Oiniades by Municipal Regional Theatres (from Kozani, Patras, etc.).
- Theatrical plays of ancient Greek tragedies from the Theatrical Group of the University of Kansas, in the ancient theatre of Oiniades (in 2014, they presented Elektra of Sophocles).
- Theatrical plays from a theatrical group of a co-candidate city (e.g. Tripoli, Ioannina, etc.).

E. Thematic section: Visual arts

- Art exhibition: Works of European artists.
- Exhibition with traveller photographs for Messolonghi.
- Exhibition by the Photography Club of Messolonghi,

on subjects from other Greek regions and European countries.

- International Presentation of the Museum of Vaso Katraki, through the use of digital technology (virtual tours, etc.). The Museum accommodates all the art pieces of Vaso Katraki, consisting of approx. 400 works, numerous engravings, and a large part of the matrixes (wood and stones) on which she carved her works. Moreover, large and small, black and white and colour drawings and preparation plans used for the production of the engraved piece are on display. The collection is accompanied by various pieces of art, artistic posters, and paintings.
- Programme of visits and actions of creative writing in the Gallery, which is accommodated in the old City Hall and currently houses the Museum of History and Art (copies of paintings of Greek and European creators, inspired by the persons and the incidents of the Exodus, along with portraits and documents of the time).
- Exhibition of pieces of art by “DIEXODOS” (a Speech and Art Centre operating in Messolonghi as a charitable cultural organization), comprised of hundreds of works of mainly Greek and other creators.
- Continuation of the already established Photography Festival, with the participation by Greek and foreign exhibitors (founded by Vasilis Artikos in 2012, the 4th took place in Messolonghi in 2015). Scheduling of Photography Festival per year: 5o (in 2016), 6o (in 2017), 7o (in 2018), 8o (in 2019), 9o (in 2020), leading to the 10th festival that coincides with the celebration year of 2021.
- Photography exhibition, by Spanish artist Jordi Olive, with an emphasis on his works, titled “Women of Earth” and “Gypsy Soul”.
- Shooting of a film or documentary for the traditional fair of St. Symios, which is celebrated in Messolonghi twice per year (on February 2 and 3, during the holiday of Visitation and in the summer, in the holiday for the Holy Spirit) and digital projection with the purpose of including it in similar European Educational programmes through eTwinning, etc. This reinforces extroversion and brings another aspect of our culture to the surface.

F. Thematic section: Monuments

- Continuation of communication action “Green Cultural Pathways” by the scientific personnel of the department of culture, aiming to raise public awareness for the cultural inheritance of the region.
- Invitation to ambassadors and artists of European

countries on the Anniversary of the Exodus, which serves as a Global Symbol of a Deliberate Choice in the Struggle for freedom and dignity of Men and Nations.

- Inclusion of historical sites (e.g. the historical Gate of the city, the Garden of Heroes, the Windmill, Palamas Museum, Trikoupis House, Byron's Building) in the areas hosting the cultural activities of the city.

G. Thematic section: Conferences

- Hosting of International Conference with the department of Antiquities of Aetoloakarnania and Lefkada, which is seated in Messolonghi, with the purpose of showcasing the Castles and the ancient theatres of Aetoloakarnania at an international level.
- Hosting of an International Conference by K. PALAMAS Foundation on the utilization of Palamas' work in the 21th century.
- Hosting of an International Conference with Athens University (EKPA) on the European Reception of Solomos' Work.
- Hosting of a Conference with the Directorate for secondary education titled "The city in literature".

The undertaking of the institution by Messolonghi in 2021 shall contribute greatly to its elevation in the European field of culture. Significant events shall be held, along with artistic happenings that have never been realized before.

The city participates in the institution by giving priority to the following elements:

- a. Upgrading of the gateways, by improving both the entry road axes in the city and the rural road networks.
- b. Conduct of urban renovations, following a very ambitious programme, with priority to the upgrade and restoration of urban public space.
- c. Showcasing the historical character of the city.
- d. Construction or restoration of buildings for cultural infrastructures, with the purpose of covering the music, theatrical & cinema, conference, and exhibition needs of the city.

— Could you explain your strategy for attracting the interest of a wider European and international audience?

The strategy to attract a large European and international audience includes promotional campaigns through the internet, participation in as many international tourism exhibitions as possible, promotion through artistic and cultural bodies, and the international partners of “Messolonghi 2021” programme, promotion through domestic and foreign media, hosting of cultural events for the promotion of the institution’s European dimension through university centres, the use of international organization networks by which “Messolonghi 2021” is represented, and by performing promotional campaigns in international, athletic, cultural, and educational events, along with the use of all cultural guides for Europe.

— Relations with cities holding the title of Culture Capital of Europe

Messolonghi enjoys the written support by Liverpool, the Culture Capital of Europe for 2008, through Sir James Drummond Bone, chair of the Liverpool Culture Company, who organized the preparations of the city for its title in 2008. Liverpool, thanks to its experience by holding the European title for 2008, represents a firm partner in the cultural actions of Messolonghi for the period of 2016-2021. Messolonghi 2021 aims to develop relations in the cultural sector of education, along with a common cultural agenda for the exchange of artistic and cultural actions between the two cities.

Another city that has expressed its support to the candidacy of Messolonghi for 2021 is Paphos in Cyprus, the Culture Capital of Europe for 2017. Paphos supports the candidacy of Messolonghi, leading to common cultural plans, especially through artistic interactions and the creation of a chain of common cultural actions. Moreover, Paphos is a very good influence for Messolonghi, regarding projects and activities based on community participation, social integration, and the institutional decentralization of culture.

2

— What is the artistic vision and strategy for the cultural programme of the year?

Messolonghi and its wider region constitute an area of culture, art, and sciences. Its timeless contribution to history and culture, in combination with its unique natural beauty, spreading around and over the Sacred City, such as the famous Lagoon, Arakynthos, and the ancient rivers of Evinos and Acheloos, render it an ideal conference site.

In the past years, Messolonghi has been receiving more and more persons of literature, science and arts, who participate in symposia, conferences and exhibitions.

Today, Messolonghi can accommodate conferences in the two conference buildings, Trikoupis Cultural Centre and the Amphitheatre of the Decentralised Administration – Periphery, which have been suitably configured for this purpose. One of the priorities of the City Authorities is to construct a modern conference – multi-purpose site, capable of accommodating large conferences, exhibitions, and cultural events in general.

Some of the conferences held in the past years by various organisations, which contributed to the city and helped it acquire international promotion, are presented below.

The Byron Society of the Sacred City of Messolonghi has performed significant activities outside and inside of Greece, such as in Europe, in the USA, in Canada, in Japan, in Australia, in Lebanon, in Taiwan, etc. These events include the following: Annual International Philology Byron Conferences, lectures on the historical and cultural legacy of Messolonghi and Greece in general, tributes to poets along with musical plays, exhibitions, cultural excursions, exchange of correspondence with abroad, as well as the twinning of Messolonghi schools with those of Nottingham in Great Britain, which accommodates the family tower of Lord Byron, Newstead Abbey, and twinned city with Messolonghi, Gedling.

1) In September 2009, it hosted the 35th International Byron Conference of the International Association of Byron Societies (IABS), under the title “Lord Byron and History”, through the participation of 150 Professors from 60 foreign Universities.

2) May 11-18, 2002, 1st International Student Conference, “Lord Byron and Greece”

3) June 21-29, 2003, 2nd International Student Conference, “Greek Islands”

4) May 16-24, 2004, 3rd International Student Conference, “Byron and the Olympic Spirit”

5) May 17-25, 2005, 4th International Student Conference, “Byron, the Homeric Traveller”

6) June 25-30, 2007, 5th International Student Conference, “Byron: Humanism, Liberalism, Philhellenism”

7) May 18-25, 2008, 6th International Student Conference, “Byron and his other selves”.

8) June 20-24, 2011, 7th International Student Conference, “Lord Byron and his era”

9) May 27-31, 201, 8th International Student Conference, “Lord Byron’s Years of Reputation”

10) May 21-25, 2014, 9th International Student Conference, “The Life of Byron and his Oriental Novels”

11) May 22-27, 2015, 10th International Student Conference, “Byron and the Mediterranean World” Every Student Conference was attended by more than 50 students and professors from Greek and foreign universities.

International events held in 2014 in view of the 190th anniversary from the passing of Lord Byron in Messolonghi, on April 19, 1824.

1) On Monday, March 17, 2014, in collaboration with the Greek Opera House, Virginia University (USA), with speaker Professor Andrew Stauffer, and the National Library of Scotland, with David McClay (Senior Curator of John Murray’s Archives), Verdi’s opera, *Il Corsaro* (which is based on the historical novel of Lord Byron, “The Corsair”) was hosted and presented in a packed Trikoupis Cultural Centre with amazing success.

2) On Sunday, April 6, 2014, within the context of the Exodus festivities, an international event was held, having as the speaker distinguished Professor and holder of “Korais Chair” Roderick Beaton. The Professor teaches Modern Greek Philology, Language, and Byzantine History, while serving also as the Director of the Centre for Greek Studies in the King’s College of London. The following also took place during the event: An award ceremony for students with the best compositions about the following subject: “Lord Byron: Poet and Hero”, which was announced by the Byron Society of the Sacred City of Messolonghi for the students of the General and Vocational Upper Secondary Schools of the District of Aetoloakarnania, and with a Concert with classical repertoire, presented by the Philharmonic orchestra of “D. SOLOMOS Friends of Music” Society, under the directions of Mr. Makis Koutsangelis.

Collaboration with the Centre for Hellenic Studies of Harvard University. On Monday 14, and Tuesday 15 of July 2015, an international meeting and workshop was held in the library of the Byron Society, between the following award-winning poets: English Laura Scott, “Michael Marks for Poetry Pamphlets Award, 2015”, Scottish Jim Carruth, “Michael Marks for Poetry Pamphlets Award, 2015” and English Andrew Forster, who is the director of the Wordsworth Trust for the poetry awards (Literature Development Officer, Poet & Administrator of the Michael Marks Awards for Poetry Pamphlets, Wordsworth Trust). The programme of the “Poets In Residence” mentioned belongs to the Centre for Hellenic Studies of Harvard Universities.

For the year of 2016, a Call for Papers has been internationally sent to Universities about the 11th International Student Conference, scheduled between May 23 and 28, 2016, on the following subject: “Byron and the Summer of 1816”.

The Photography Festival of Messolonghi, has managed to become one of the most significant photographic institutions of the country, and outside of it, thus

drawing the interest of photography enthusiasts from all over the world. The Festival is based on the continuous efforts of the members of the photography club of Messolonghi (FOTOLEME). The festival has close ties with the Benaki Museums, and has accommodated exhibitions of internationally acclaimed photographers, such as Kostas Balafas, Dimitris Charisiadis, Konstantinos Manos, Giannis Bechrakis, and numerous others.

Since 2014, thanks to the participation of renown foreign photographers, such as Konstantinos Manos from the USA, Laurent Fabre and Nikos Aliagas from France, and Jordi Oliver from Spain, it has become international, earning a significant position on the global map of photography.

The 7th International Conference on Linguistics was held in Messolonghi, between September 18 and 20, 2008, with the participation of distinguished Linguistics Professors from foreign Universities. Subject: "Teaching Modern Greek to the World". Hosting body: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Organisation for the Dissemination of Greek Language (ODEG).

The Aeolic Cultural Society aims to contribute to the intellectual, cultural, and financial development and promotion of the wider region of West Continental Greece, and of the former districts of Aetoloakarnania and Evritania.

Its purpose is to study and promote the history, the literature, the arts, and the folk culture of Aetolia and Akarnania. The above include the promotion and protection of the natural and cultural environment of Aetolia and Akarnania. International conferences and events held by the above society in Messolonghi:

On April 15, 2008, an International Conference, on the following subject: "Cyprus and Messolonghi", in collaboration with the Embassy, the House of Cyprus, and the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, with the participation of Professors from the Universities of Athens and Cyprus.

On June 19, 2009, an International Conference, on the following subject: "Kostis Palamas today, 150 years from his birth", in collaboration with the University of Athens, the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, and the University of Cyprus.

On March 14, 2010, an International One-Day Conference for the major Cypriot writer and politician, Loukis Akritas, in collaboration with the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, and the House of Cyprus.

Repeated intercultural plays in Messolonghi by the "Music and Dance Group" of the University of Cyprus, in collaboration with the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi Athens University, working in collaboration with the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi for the past twenty years, within the context of THYESPA international programme about summer scholarships for the teaching of Greek to students of foreign Universities in the field of Greek Studies, has brought to Messolonghi more than 5000 students from 80 Universities and has shown them, while teaching them, the historic and archaeological areas of the Municipality.

In 2012, an International One-Day Conference was held by the 26th Department of Prehistorical and Classical Antiquities, and the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, regarding the excavations by Danish archaeologists in Ancient Calydon. Since 2001, under the initiative of the University of Denmark, every year the group of Danish archaeologists, under the supervision of Dr. Søren Dietz, come to Greece and thoroughly engage with the excavation of the areas of ancient Calydon, while bringing significant findings into the surface. From 2001 until 2005, the wall and part of the city grid was systematically studied within the context of the Greek-Danish collaboration; the results of these investigations were published on 2011. A new programme of collaboration between Greek and Danish archaeologists, which began in 2010 and shall be completed in 2019, was focused, among others, to the systematic excavation of the theatre of Calydon, under the guidance of the Supervisor of the Antiquities Department, Ms Olympia Vikatou. Mr. R. Frederiksen was in charge of the investigation on behalf of the Danish Institute.

Ministry of Culture and Sports, Division General for Antiquities and Cultural Inheritance, 26th Department of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities. 2nd International Archaeological and Historical Conference, December 6-8, 2013, on "The Archaeological Work in Aetoloakarnania and in Lefkada, from the prehistoric to the Roman era".

-The 2nd International Archaeological and Historical Conference, December 6-8, 2013, on "The Archaeological Work in Aetoloakarnania and in Lefkada, from the prehistoric to the Roman era" was held in Messolonghi, between Friday, December 6 and Sunday, December 8, 2013. It was held in the Functions Hall of the Government House of Messolonghi (former house of the Prefecture of Aetoloakarnania) Scientific Board: Ol. Vikatou, Head of the 26th Department of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, K. Zachos, Curator Emeritus of Antiquities, N. Kaltsas, Director Emeritus of the National Archaeological Museum, L. Kolonas, Honorary

General Director for Antiquities, A. Moustaka, Professor of Classical Archaeology, Thessaloniki University, V. Lamprinouidakis, Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology of the University of Athens I. Papapostolou, Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology, University of Ioannina, M. Stavropoulou – Gatsi, Curator Emeritus of Antiquities E. Sermpeti, Professor Emeritus of Classical Archeology in Athens University, I. Trianti, Professor Emeritus of Classical Archeology in Ioannina University, S. Dietz, Honorary Director of Danish Institute, F. Lang, Prof. Dr. phil. Technische Universität Darmstadt, E-L. Schwandner, Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology Winkelmann Institute, Humboldt University Berlin

April 2013, International Scientific Conference in order to prepare the inclusion of the Sacred City of Messolonghi to the Monuments of International Cultural Inheritance of UNESCO. Hosted by the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi and about the Club for UNESCO, of Piraeus and Islands. Subject: "The Sacred City of Messolonghi – A Monument of International Cultural Inheritance". The Conference was preceded by a Painting Exhibition by new Artists – students of Lower and Upper Secondary Schools of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, by members and friends of the Club for UNESCO, of Piraeus and Islands, as well as from painters of Messolonghi, who placed on their canvases the colours of our cultural inheritance. The opening ceremony of the Conference was conducted by the deputy Ambassador of Great Britain in Greece, Ms Nerys Jones. The event was attended by the Ambassador of Sweden, Mr. Hakan Malmqvist. In addition, it was attended by the members of the local government of Romania, and specifically by the Prefect of FOCSANI, Mr. POPESCU CATALIN KANTY, and the Mayor of FOCSANI, Mr. BACINSCHI DECEBAL. The keynote speakers included Ms Daniela Popescu, President of the Board of Directors of the European Federation of Clubs, Societies and UNESCO Centres, Special Consultant to the Romanian National committee for UNESCO, who delivered a speech on "Monuments of UNESCO international cultural inheritance".

One-day Conference: "The Celebration of the Day of Europe", Messolonghi, May 9, 2015

The Delegation of the European Committee in Greece and the Office of the European Parliament in Greece, with the support of Patras Europe Direct Information Centre, celebrated Europe Day on May 9 in Messolonghi, through a multiple-themed festive event, with rich content inside and outside of the hall. The celebrations were held through the conduct of a Conference that took place in Trikoupi Cultural Centre, where 9 dis-

tinguished speakers had been allocated with 7 minutes to inform the public about Europe and its policies. The conference was opened by the Head of the Delegation of the European Committee, Mr. Karvounis, along with the attendance of several other members of the European Parliament. At the same time, numerous educational and artistic actions took place outside the hall, in a festive atmosphere.

Messolonghi, November 21, 2015, International Presentation of Album: "MORPHOU – Remembrance of 35 years" Under the auspices of the President of the Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, G. Omirou, and hosted by the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, an event for the presentation of an album was held on Saturday, November 21, 2015 in Trikoupi Cultural Centre, along with the opening of a photography exhibition, with the subject of "MORPHOU – Remembrance of 35 years" The event was held under the initiative of the Association of Expatriates for Morphou in England, through its President, Nikolaos Kotziamanis, with the purpose of supporting the candidacy of the Sacred City of Messolonghi to become the Culture Capital of Europe for 2021. Following the end of the presentation of the album, the opening ceremony for the homonymous photography exhibition was held. The "MORPHOU – Remembrance of 35 Years" presents the course of the expatriate community in Morphou of England, in the 35-year period from its establishment, and is contribution to the Struggle in order to achieve freedom and return to the fatherland.

November 10-12, 2016 The Department of Ichthyology and Aquatic Environment of the School of Agricultural Sciences of the University of Thessaly is holding "International Conferences on Applied Ichthyology and the Aquatic Environment – HydroMedit". The 2nd International Conference of Applied Ichthyology and Aquatic Environment - "HydroMedit 2016" shall be held in Messolonghi, between November 10 and 12, 2016.

Twinning cities The Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, in order to promote its image at a European level and create the necessary infrastructures for its further cultural and financial development, has proceeded to twinnings with numerous European cities or municipalities.

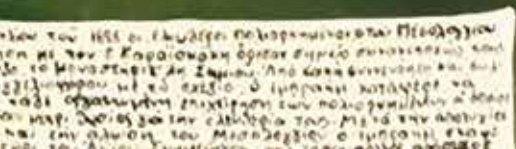
The beginning took place in 1991 with the Borough of Gedling in England, and was continued in 1992 with Schöfflisdorf in Switzerland (the motherland of Mayer), in 2003 with the Municipality of Morphos in Cyprus, with the Municipality of Famagusta in Cyprus in 2012, and in 2012 with Focșani in Romania.



3

Cultural
and artistic
content

This is a
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in the
Bibliothèque
Nationale
de France
in Paris
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3

— What is the artistic vision and strategy for the cultural programme of the year?

“My dream is that we residents have the opportunity again to touch our heaven.

To have a vision.

To make our own E X O D U S from the crisis of individualism and introversion, by taking action...

I was born in Messolonghi,
I am 52 years old.”

— FOKAS EVANGELINOS

Artistic director and manager of the cultural programme

EXODUS

Messolonghi, along with the special historical conditions affecting it, comes to reshape the historical determinism of the Exodus of 1826. Based on the plan of Exodus 2021, the untapped legacy held by the city is transformed within its historical context, through new cultural data and actions, preserving all fertile past elements, while also referring to a collective internal change and to an internal introspection with vivid attention and nostalgic remembrance.

The idea of Exodus 2021 refers to regeneration, extroversion, the externalization of ideas, all under the auspices of the citizens of Messolonghi. It is a collective action, a liberating course and a successive escape from the establishment, with the help of imagination, and not a return to the starting point. Exodus 2021 is an awakening, a renewal, and a crossing ritual; it is a bold effort to consider again and revise, a catalytic passion and an inexhaustible inclination towards creation.

Our objective is to organize radical actions, where the past meets the present, with a collective intention and a revisionary practice, which will convert the city to a field

of experimentation and innovation and shall lead to both personal self-determination and team work.

This is a call to every citizen of the city who are ahead of their times, proactive and renovators, carrying original and fertile ideals, which shall give a pleasant push to the city and overwhelm standard cultural beliefs.

Our vision is to create a developing collective experiment, converting the city to a social laboratory of ideas, through the participation of anthropologists, academics, artists, activists, organisations, citizens and self-managed groups. We want to join forces with non-profitable cultural art facilities, individual artists and groups, capable of converting creating thinking to an activity and this activity to a new structure of the city.

Art can contribute to the expansion of political and financial dialectics, and bridge social research with citizen involvement, who shall participate actively in the European intellectual and artistic processes, with the purpose of promoting the autonomy of creation and render the city of Messolonghi a cultural ambassador of our country at a global scale.

1821-2021

Combination of local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions



Collaboration with local organisations, groups, volunteers, and societies

This noble cause for the candidacy of Messolonghi as the European Capital of Culture for 2021 favours collective action and serves as an excellent opportunity for the productive collaboration between all cultural, social, and financial organisations of the region with citizens, aiming to elevate the city of Messolonghi to a European Capital of Culture, which shall enjoy the unique opportunity of becoming a centre of Europe's cultural life.

Each action shall aim to activate the citizens. They shall be activated to take action and participate in matters of public interest. The city will acquire a vision, when the citizens fall back under a common objective.

Below, we have listed our collaboration with some of the groups and societies available:

Saltsinistas, DOMAK, Herons, Friends of the Lagoon, PROTECTA, Social Solidarity, Voluntary Search and Rescue Group, "Aghios Ioannis" Folk Society of Evinochori, Mountaineering and Skiing Club of Messolonghi, Council of Expatriate Hellenism, "Kostis Palamas" Centre for Poetry and Modern Greek Literature, Greek Musical Society – "Psalter" Institute for the Study of Byzantine & Greek Traditional Music, "Tassos Papastratos" Foundation, Evinochori Equestrian Club, Aetoloakarnania Centre for the Study of Local History and Culture, Art & Culture Centre, Margari Gallery, "Sacrifice" Folk and Cultural Society of Messolonghi, Educational and Cultural Society of the Women of Rural Messolonghi, Messolonghi Radio Station (charity organization), Messolonghi Film Club and Association, New Land Agricultural – Environmental Confederacy, Agricultural - Environmental Group of Organic Farmers in West Greece, Information Centre for the Wetlands of Messolonghi – Aetoliko Lagoon, Greek Mountaineering

Club of Messolonghi, University School of Agrinio, Lifelong Learning Centres, Commercial & Industrial Society of Messolonghi, Ci.Ne.M.A., Messolonghi Photography Club, Photography Festival, Messolonghi Technical Educational Institution (Administration – Economy and Agricultural Technology) .

In addition there is collaboration with various collectives such as: Beforelight, Depresson Era, Avtonomi Akadimia, LO&Beholds, Urbandig, and Alternative tours of Athens.



Performing Arts

- European artists presenting their work. A committee comprised of member from the entire EU shall select the participants, depending on their proposals and portfolios. While in the city, the artists shall conduct workshops, presentations, seminars, and lectures.
- Collaboration with Athens School of Art. Graduates, postgraduate and senior students of Athens School of Art shall present their works, successively, in an empty building. A specific area shall be defined as the meeting point.
- Collaboration with the Union des theatres de l' Europe, the European Youth Orchestra, and the National Theatre for the creation of an artistic platform. Seminars shall be held by the various entities, and the city shall accommodate new musicians and people of theatre from all over Europe. Thematic actions shall be developed through the seminars, residencies, conferences, and symposia.
- Collaboration with the National Theatre School of Drama. Accommodation of the Summer Academy of the National Theatre in the city. Interaction between the artists and the residents.
- Photography competition, by uploading photos in Instagram with hash tag #Messolonghi2021.
- Annual programmes of events for children and teenagers, with theatrical troupes.
- Short-film festival, in collaboration with PSAROKOK-KALO (January / February).
- Classical Music Festival (March / April).
- Dance Festival (May / June).
- Ancient Drama festival in the theatre of Oiniades (July / August). In August 1986, the ancient theatre of Oiniades was resurfaced from the past, after 2,500 years and the re-opening of the theatre shall become a significant cultural event for the entire Greece. Every year, a programme with cultural events is issued, which has had excellent results. Apart from the ancient drama plays, from Greek and foreign theatres, it includes international symposia – conferences, the operation of a theatrical workshop, the theoretical and practical training of students of drama schools, similar to the current visits by Kansas University, deliveries of courses in English and Greek with elements from the Greek culture for foreigners, and excavations. Currently, the Festival of the Ancient Theatre of Oiniades has been integrated in the Festival of Athens, following a resolution in 1994 by the Minister for Tourism. Until this day, 80 ancient Greek drama plays have been presented. This created an unprecedented cultural channel of human communication and art, that keeps cultural creation at a very high level.
- Street Theatre and Dollhouse Theatre Festival (September / October).
- Promotion of the region of Pelades, a very special port holiday settlement filled with fishing huts, which is an integral part of the character of Messolonghi, and holding of events. (e.g. painting and photography exhibitions, theatrical actions).



Redefining the Urban Environment

Showcasing and promotion of architecture

Just a single visit to Messolonghi pushes you to see the unsurpassed charm imposed by the amazing holiday hut city of Tournida, the East wall Gate of the Exodus, with walls from the times of King Otto, the Garden of Heroes, the old mansions – museums, the image of the old quarter, buildings - monuments reminiscent of a past era, ground-level houses of traditional architecture, Neoclassical houses of the 19th century, showing the refinement that has characterized always the city.

We invite the public to explore and understand the value of architecture and of the structured environment. Public and private buildings with architectural interest open their gates for free to the public, and the city is converted to an open museum, exhibiting its own buildings and their architecture. There are hundreds of buildings, each of them is different and special. Have we ever wondered why these were built? How were they designed and constructed? Or, how old are they? Behind the views and the doors of several of these buildings, there are amazing areas to explore and interesting stories to find out.

This applies to the historical sights of the city, to the modern residences and public buildings.

The objective is to set up organized tours to creative and productive sites of the city, by specialists and also by volunteers. In addition, the Exodus 2021 vision includes organised views in some of the programme buildings, which are addressed to school or other organized groups.

Moreover, we propose to visitors to explore the architecture of the city by using a bike and participating in the tours that pass from a specific route and are held for limited groups. Messolonghi, thanks to its level soil, and following the construction of bikeways, is considered as one of the most bike-friendly cities of Greece. A bike and helmet shall be provided to the participants.

- Action in order to raise the awareness of citizens on the issue of urban lighting, its configuration and its consequences to the identity of cities. This is an original platform for discussions, experimentations, and installations.
- A project by young artists in an interactive exhibition about civil construction. For instance, the students of the School of Architect Engineers create alternative proposals for the wider region and intervene to the urban space of the area, with the purpose of discussing with the residents and interact with their needs. The objective is to allow the participatory design to take human dimensions and use new tools towards a constructive discussion with the residents of the city. Events taking place in parallel, such as interactive models, historical narrations, photographic flash-backs, and dj sets, shall be implemented in the platform.
- Visual arts in the city, with the simultaneous activation of urban space, of humans, and of the cultural capital. Modern presentation shall be established, re-introducing these spaces to the public. We hope to create a platform for collective actions and collaborations, which shall be activated by the residents of the neighbourhood themselves, within the context of investigating its cultural treasures.
- Acquaintance with and promotion of the local productive fabric, e.g. winery, botargo manufacture workshop, etc.

The objective is to establish collaboration and covert independent spaces, such as stores and small enterprises active in them.

Creation of the Salt Museum

Passing from the old National Road of Messolonghi - Aetoliko, the eyes fall subconsciously on a rather unusual spectacle, one that will make him wonder, why is there snow on the sea?

The amazing, from any point of view, Lagoon of Messolonghi offers the city an additional treasure: Salt. "Aspri" (White) is the largest salt pan in Greece, with a surface of 1150 ha, capable of producing approx. 120 tons of salt per year, i.e. 60% of the national production, and belongs to a company of public interest.

In Messolonghi, there is an additional salt pan, the one in Tourlida, called the Mavri Alikí (black salt-pan), with a surface of 250 ha, and capable of producing approx. 15 tons of salt per year, belonging to the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi. The swallow depth of its waters, in combination with its great content in natural elements and the existence of suitable meteorological conditions, offer the ability of creating very productive salt-pans.

This is a natural process, achieved by the penetration of the sea in sections of land and the creation of closed gulfs with very shallow waters. In these areas, when the temperature rises during the summer, evaporation is intense and the substitution of the evaporated water is made very slowly, resulting to the crystallization of salt.

The production of salt in the region began at the middle of the 19th century, and was made using traditional methods until 1965. The basic infrastructure works began in the decade of 1960, along with the creation of embankments and water circulation channels, the creation of pans for the evaporation of water and the crystallization of salt, as well as facilities for harvesting, washing, and gathering salt. Until the '80s, horses were used in the salt pan of Tourlida in order to draw the carts carrying the salt.

The salt production procedure commences on March and is completed in October (weather-permitting). The sea water is pumped from the lagoon and feeds the first groups of basins, and then moves to the next basins, where the brine, i.e. the salt, is drawn from the crystallising facilities. In the salt pans, the salt is collected and gathered in pure white colour and clear and is stacked in small piles. Their transportation up to the threshing floor is now made by motorized wagons. After completing the washing operation, it is carried with the assistance of a conveyor belt to the open warehouses, and is placed in salt piles. Huge piles, 15 meters high and dozens of meters long, pure white and shiny impress the visitors of the area.

The area of the salt pans is considered as a special wetland and is protected by the Ramsar Convention. During winter, the flooded basins accommodate numerous rare birds.

The basic categories of Greek salt are natural sea and processed or industrial salt. The natural sea salt is coarse or crystalline, and depending on the location and method of collection, is further characterized: solar (produced by the effect of sun on the surface of the sea), rock salt, fleur de sel.

New uses and actions in areas and city buildings catering the current needs of the city and its residents (Exodus Gate, Gallery, Art and History Museum, the residence - mansion of Trikoupi Family, Valvis library, Christos and Sofia Moschandreu Modern Art Gallery, "Diexodos" Speech and Art Centre, the History and Art Museum in Markos Botsaris square, the Garden of Heroes, the Central Square, Razikotsikas pedestrian way, the house - museum of Kostis Palamas.



Ecology

- Collaboration with the Messolonghi Lagoon Management Organisation, with the purpose of promoting Alternative Tourism Forms in Messolonghi Lagoon National Park and raising the awareness of the citizens – residents.
- Actions in the mountainous and sea region of Aetolia. Showcasing of the two large rivers of Acheloos and Evinos, through a series of cultural and environmentally-friendly actions.
- Collaboration with the Messolonghi Mountaineering – Skiing Club. The purpose is to bring the residents closed to the natural environment, learn about their homeland, and promote alternative forms of tourism.



Additional Actions

- Meetings of artists, scientists, and political activists. Seminars, speeches by artists, gatherings, and projections of films. The subjects examined by the annual Symposium shall come from the particular nature of the Sacred City of Messolonghi (e.g. personalities of the region, such as Palamas, Trikoupi, Drosinis, Malakasis, Iosif Rogon Bishop, John-Jacob Mayer, Lord Buron, the spirit of Philhellenism, etc.).
- Collaboration with international organization SPECIAL OLYMPICS and SPECIAL OLYMPICS Hellas.
- There is a need for greater collaboration with the regional and local authorities, for the creation of a strong network for the social assimilation of and collaboration with the Romani community of the region. The residents of the area and the Romani people shall communicate and interact with each other.
- Promotion of local traditional events (St. Symios fair, Katochi fair, Aetoliko fair, re-enactment of the Exodus on Palm Sunday) and collaboration with the Lyceum Club of Greek Women.
- Collaboration and exchanges of artists and actions with the twinned cities of Schöfflisdorf, Lawrence, Gedling, Famagusta, Naousa, Psara, Hydra, and Spetses.





4

Capacity
to deliver



4

— Please confirm and evidence that you have broad and strong political support and a sustainable commitment from the relevant local, regional and national public authorities.

The effort of “Messolonghi 2021” is based on the strong commitment by the public entities of Messolonghi and on the support by the central administration for regional development. The major impact is mainly political, due to the fact that it is functional and financial. The local representatives of the major political parties have agreed to provide unconditional support to Messolonghi in order to become the European Capital of Culture for 2021; this proves the commitment and the decisiveness of the collaboration for the development and application of the European plan.



Support

The municipality of Messolonghi and the area represented are the direct beneficiary behind the award of the title of European Capital of Culture. For the submission of the application, the Mayor of the city of Messolonghi is the main state pillar for the procedure of the application, since he is responsible for setting the cultural strategy of the city, communicating the importance of “Messolonghi 2021” candidacy to the public domain, informing the stakeholders supporting the agency, intensifying the international relations in order to support the candidacy of Messolonghi, at a European level, and for the design behind the implementation of cultural works and actions.

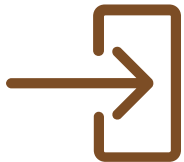
The candidacy of “Messolonghi 2021” enjoys the support of the representatives of the major political parties in Greece and of the representatives of the local government. Already the Prefect of the Peripheral Section of Aetoloakarnania, Mr Apostolos Katsifaras, and Vice-Prefect, Ms Christina Staraka greet and support

the candidacy of Messolonghi as a candidate city for the title of European Capital of Culture in 2021. The long-term cultural strategy of the Municipality of Messolonghi is also supported by the President of the Regional Association of the Municipalities of West Greece and Mayor of Agrinio, Mr. Giorgos Papanastasiou, along with 19 Municipalities of West Greece (Achaia, Ilia, Aetoloakarnania) on their own. The Bishop of Aetolia and Akarnania, Mr. Kosmas Papachristos has expressed his wholehearted support to Messolonghi 2021, along with the Directors of the Regional Division for Primary and Secondary Education. Moreover, the plan of “Messolonghi 2010” is supported by all Army Units in the area, by the Police, the Fire Brigade, the Port Authorities, the Chamber of Aetoloakarnania, the Commercial and Industrial Association of Messolonghi, as well as by numerous representatives of unions, organisations, and societies of the region.

4

— Explain briefly how the European Capital of Culture will make use of and develop the city's cultural infrastructure.

The major role in a cultural region is held by the so-called cultural industries. The definition of cultural industries starts from their products, i.e. plays, fine arts and literature, the reproduction thereof, i.e. books, magazines, newspapers, cinema, radio, TV, recordings, along with activities combining different forms of art, such as advertising. The above also include the procedures for producing, distributing and selling printed materials, the mass media, and the museums, libraries, theatres, and galleries. Protection and renovation of ancient monuments, in order to showcase the archaeological sites. Restoration and renovation of the facades of listed buildings with the purpose of increasing visits. Creation of an archaeological museum containing dedications from burial monuments, findings from the six ancient theatres found in Aetoloakarnania, and artifacts from archaic and ancient settlements, Byzantine and post-Byzantine temples.



Accessibility

The existing infrastructures favour the communication of the district with the remaining Greece. “Charilaos Trikoupis” bridge, at the straits of Rio - Antirrio serves as the main communication gateway for the district. The tunnel - bridge in the straits of Aktio - Preveza is also open to traffic. Ionia Odos, which is currently under construction, shall play a major role for communication with Epirus, Egnatia Odos and the islands of the Ionian Sea. The large harbour in Platygiali of Astakos, which meets international specifications, serves as a major transshipment centre, while the airport in Aktion can contribute further to communication and tourism.



Response by the city to the accommodation of tourists

Messolonghi and the wider region of Aetoloakarnania, as the European Capital of Culture has several civil and tourism infrastructures for accepting visitors and tourists in the region, during the candidacy and the undertaking of the title. Large hotel units, sea resorts, art hotels, along with mountain lodges can accommodate numerous visitors, interested in discovering the unparalleled beauty of the area's landscape. Moreover, there are infrastructures for organized or free camping, agro-tourism, along with infrastructures for accommodation and observation of the natural and environmental beauty abundant in the region, which has been integrated in the Natura 2000 network.

The cities where visitors may stay are Messolonghi, Agrinio, Nafpaktos, the traditional settlements of mountainous Nafpaktia, Aetoliki, neighbouring Patras, and the lagoon huts in Messolonghi.



5

Outreach



5

— Explain how the local population and your civil society have been involved in the preparation of the application and will participate in the implementation of the year.

The local population can support the effort to obtain the award and utilize the Municipality as the Culture Capital of Europe for 2021 first and foremost through volunteer action.

Following the manning of the committee of Culture Capital 2021, each of its members has undertaken the organization and authoring of documents regarding the field of action under their responsibility. The committee is joined and supported both by the stature of its members and by the diverse actions of university professors, technocrats, and professionals from all aspects of life, along with the members of the Board of Directors. The main duty of the committee is to present – promote the candidacy, not only within the municipality, but in the other municipalities of the district of Aetoloakarnania and of the Region of West Greece and through any available resource, such as the internet and the social networks, to the remaining country and abroad.

The response and active participation of the citizens to the event held by the Municipality of the Sacred City of Messolonghi in Athens, and specifically in “Stoa tou Vivliou”, in Arsakeion Mansion, for the official first event – presentation of the candidacy of the Municipality, with the purpose of being awarded as the Culture Capital of Europe for 2021 was overwhelming.

The strengthening – support of the candidacy is made, mainly, through the unanimous support and activation of the Cultural and Volunteering Societies and Organisations of the City, which are numerous and incorporate the participation of citizens through varied and diverse actions and contributions. These actions are of mainly environmental and cultural content.

Among the environmental actions, special reference must be made to the promotion of the natural beauty and of the ecological value of the lagoon of Messolonghi, through the collaboration of citizens and organisations, such as cultural Society “The Friends of the Lagoon” and PRO.TE.KTA. (Protect myself and the others) of Messolonghi. A special place in this effort is held by the projection of movies and documentaries of environmental content, under the initiative of individuals and organisations, and the effort to increase citizen attendance as much as possible. At this point, it should be noted that all environmental actions can be presented in municipal and regional halls, with the largest possible citizen attendance.

The various cultural actions play a major role; the most important among them refer to the showcasing of monuments related to the local and international history (the Garden of Heroes, the museums, the ancient theatres, the orthodox temples, etc.). At the same time, a significant pillar of cultural promotion, at a European and international level (which signifies the extrovert culture of the city), is the twinning of the Municipality with other European municipalities through the precious assistance of cultural centres, societies and groups, such as “Byron Society of the Sacred City of Messolonghi”, “Diegoxos” Art and Speech Centre, and the “Folk and Cultural Society of the Sacred City of Messolonghi”. Public consultation and awareness regarding the key city problems is promoted. Specific citizen actions shall present the comparative advantages of the region in the fields of natural beauty, while showcasing its sensitive environmental balance (wetlands in Messolonghi – Aetoliko lagoon, watershed of Acheloos and Evinos rivers, river forest of Fraxos in Acheloos, protected by RAMSAR and NATURA international conventions). The effort of agrotourism must be noted, spearheaded by the considerable marina for pleasure yachts in the city, which has been included in every reputable maritime map. The important, for the local economy and social and cultural level of the city, capital of tourism is fed by historical – cultural and pilgrimage tourism, due to the rich, in these fields, comparative advantages of the city, as such have been presented in the initial bid book, led by the legendary and total sacrifice to the temple of honour and freedom of the Exodus residents of the city, during the Greek Revolution of 1821, which took place on April 10, 1826.

One of the strong creative points of Messolonghi is its green areas: a huge, immaculate flower garden, catered by the persistent Society “Friends of Green”, which has been awarded by the Academy of Athens for its work. In addition, there are its younger, much promising, human resources, i.e. school students and students of the academic schools of the city, through their numerous artistic actions, such as concerts and painting exhibitions. Finally, let’s not forget the volunteers of the numerous Societies and Organisations of the city (more than thirty), active at the borders of the expanded Municipality.

With regard to the sustainable opportunities for promotion and participation that can be created by title “Sacred City of Messolonghi: Culture Capital of Europe 2021” for the young, the volunteers, the vulnerable population, the population who have been marginalized (= potential for re-integration) and for the minorities (Romani community in the city), the support to the city’s social structure is promoted, through the use of volunteering, along with programme “Help at Home”, which has been implemented by the City for the past ten years, the operation of the Centre for Creative Occupation of the Elderly for the past forty years, as well as the four-year operation of the City’s Social Market, through the initiative of volunteers and the support of the church, aimed to provide the best possible daily relief to fellow citizens and their families, struck by the economy crisis. The structures of the orthodox church, under the auspices of the Diocese of Aetolia and Akarnania, along with the charity Home for the Elder of the city, and the Workshop for young persons with special abilities

“Panagia Eleousa”, serve towards the same direction supporting vulnerable social groups, while providing meals to the poor, under the initiative of volunteer women from the city, and gather clothes, medicines, food, and other everyday items for immigrants, through the hosting of concerts, exhibitions, and lectures by vibrant Societies and Organisations such as the “Radio Friends – Radio Station of the Sacred City of Messolonghi” and the active youth group of “Saltinistas”

Within the context of the above, some proposals are mentioned towards specific actions, with the purpose of implementing the general above purposes.

Firstly, with the purpose of showcasing and promoting the cultural inheritance of the city, the monuments of the city are adopted by schools, for their protection, cleaning and promotion all over Greece and Europe. This allows the showcasing of areas of European interest, such as the Garden of Heroes, the “Fence Fortress” of the city of Messolonghi, the houses of the five prime ministers of Greece, originating from Messolonghi, the Museums, the Art Gallery (former City Hall) in the central square, Katraki Engraving Art Museum in Aetoliko, etc.

An action relevant to the above, at a cultural level and with the participation of the city schools, is the assistance by students to a voluntary effort for the renovation of neoclassical buildings, some of which could be used as libraries and hostels for the accommodation of the poor or immigrants.

In addition, collaboration in actions concerning Environmental Education, Health Education and Cultural issues, under the initiative of the Centre for the Environmental Education of Messolonghi, the Messolonghi – Aetoliko Lagoon Management Organisation, and participation of the Technological Educational Institute of the city (specifically the department of Aquaculture – Fish-

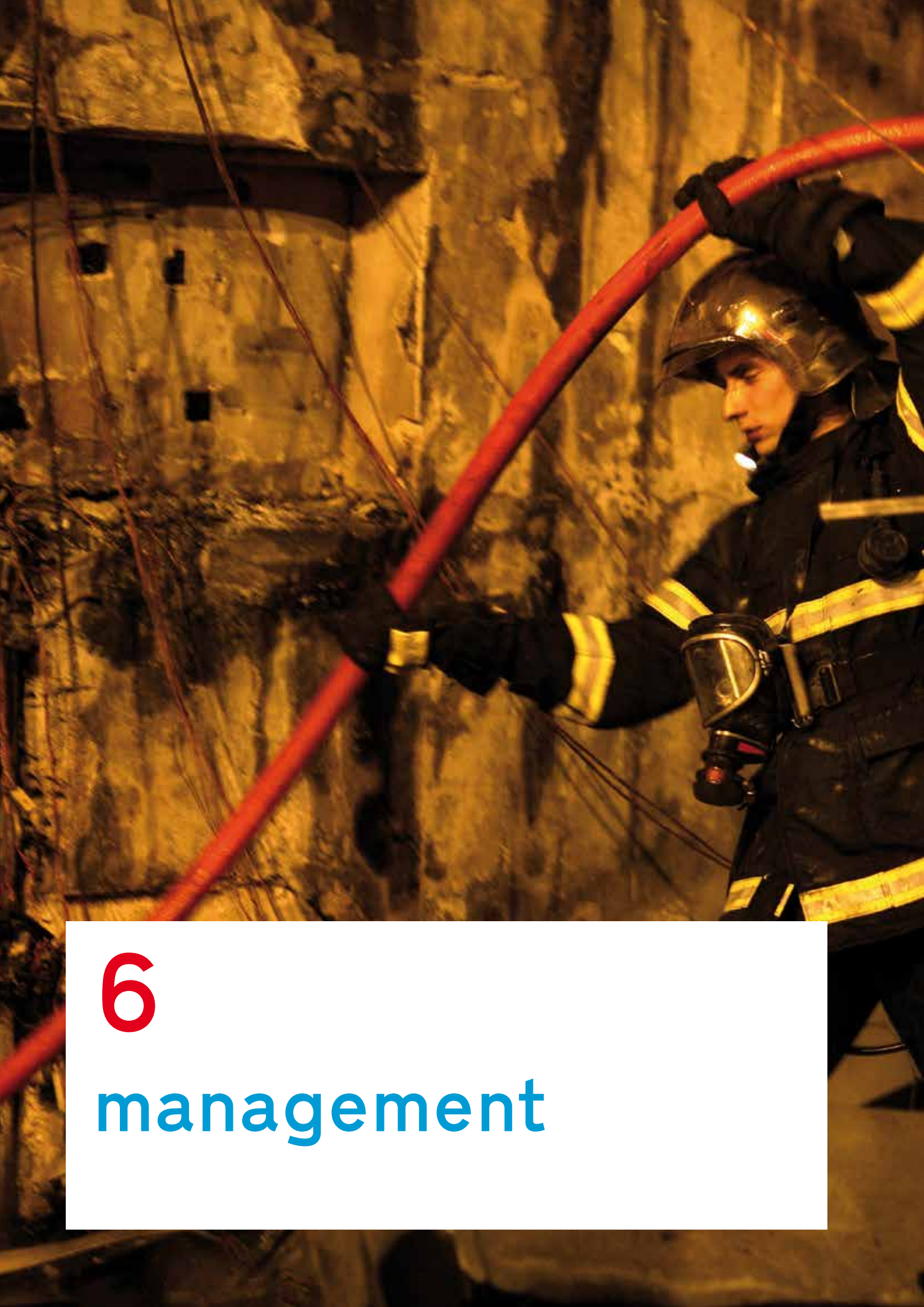
eries, which is directly connected to the basic primary productive structure of the city: fish and salt).

During the conduct of the Health Education programmes, specific actions could involve collaboration between schools and organizations and health authorities in order to help vulnerable population groups. Moreover, there is room for collaboration between the faculties of the schools and of the Parent and Teachers Associations with Societies and Foundations of Primary Healthcare (Red Cross, Society of Volunteer Blood Donators, Society of Volunteers for the donation of bone marrow). In addition, there is the option of raising the awareness and promoting the actions of the Health Education programmes, through the presentation thereof to municipal and regional halls, with the participation of citizens.

In order for students to acquire Traffic Education Safety, relevant programmes in the Traffic Education park of the city could be implemented, which has been operating for years and is the only one in the district of Aetoloakarnania. Cultural awareness could be achieved, through the implementation of diverse cultural programmes, performed during the “flexible educational zone” in the Elementary Schools and during the class hours for projects – experiential and inter-thematic approaches – in the schools of Secondary Education.

Finally, other actions could be pursued, aimed to educational and cultural extroversion, including the twinning of city schools with schools of EU member states, within the context of implementing relevant programmes, with the participation, apart from the faculty, of the Parents and Teachers Associations. A significant culture cell is also the use of the theatrical groups of schools, through the presentation of theatrical school, and more general, plays, and the hosting of theatre competitions in stages and in the ancient theatres of the city.





6

management



A. Finances

City budget for culture

The funds intended to be allocated by the city from its annual budget with regard to culture, in order to finance the project of the European Capital of Culture, starting from the submission date of the candidacy and until the year of the Cultural Capital of Europe, are the following: 40,000 Euros in the year of submission of candidacy, and then, 10,000 additional Euros for each year until 2020. Specifically, 50,000 (2016), 60,000 (2017), 70,000 (2018), 80,000 (2019), 90,000 (2020). For the year of the Cultural Capital of Europe, the amount shall be increased by 20,000 and shall amount to a total of 110,000.

Budget expenditure

The strategy in order to secure financing for the financial support and covering the operation needs is prepared through the CREATIVE EUROPE tool. Our objective is to use new artists in order to cater the needs that will come up, with regard to human resources, with the purpose of bringing their work into the light, along with persons coming from vulnerable social groups, such as the Romani people, to ensure their seamless integration in society and the elimination of their social exclusion.

breakdown of operating expenses								
Programme Expenditure		Promotion and marketing		Wages, overheads and administration		Other		Total of the operating expenditure
€	%	€	%	€	%	€	%	
50.000,00	16,67	70.000,00	23,33	170.000,00	56,67	10.000,00	3,33	300.000,00

annual budget for culture in Messolonghi during the last 5 years			
Year	Annual budget for culture in the city in €	Executable budget	%
2011	215.000,00	150.000,00	69,77
2012	170.000,00	105.000,00	61,76
2013	99.000,00	70.000,00	70,71
2014	91.000,00	60.000,00	65,93
2015	93.000,00	62.000,00	66,67

Revenue from the public sector

Already, both the Municipal Authority and the Region of West Greece have undertaken financial commitments in order to cover the operating and capital needs. The Municipal Authority, with regard to the annual budget of the city for culture, and the Periphery of West Greece with the following: 10,000,000 Euros for Integrated Spatial Investments, 2,500,000 Euros for the creation of an Archaeological Museum (it should be noted that Messolonghi is the only city with three ancient theatres, thus it is necessary to have a museum), 2,000,000 Euros for Urban Renovations, 3,000,000 Euros for Solid Waste Management.

Revenue from the private sector

Our purpose is to ensure the participation of the private sector in the action, by promoting local products and services and showcasing them. Listing of the local products, retrospection to the past centuries, in a city of highly historical value, promotion of the local cooperatives.

revenue from the public sector		
Income from the public sector to cover operating expenditure	€	%
National Government	150.000,00	25
City	150.000,00	25
Region	100.000,00	16,66
E. U. (except Melina Mercouri prize)	100.000,00	16,66
Other-Sponsors	100.000,00	16,66
Total	600.000,00	100

total revenue expenditure				
Total income to cover operating expenditure €	From the public sector €	From the public sector %	From the private sector €	From the private sector %
900.000,00	600.000,00	66,7	300.000,00	33,3

B. Structure

With regard to the level of management and of the operating structure, there is a complete organigram, where the top is held by the Mayor, who holds the exclusive responsibility for the seamless operation of all relevant actions. He shall bear the final responsibility for the entire management of the project.

In order to ensure proper design, management, and implementation of the cultural programme for the year of the title, the human resources called to manage the above are personalities with relevant studies and

proven relevant professional experience. Most of them have already given samples of their services during the Olympic Games of 2004, such as the artistic director of the programme, Mr Fokas Evangelinos.

Due to the fact that this is a common objective that does not refer solely to the achievement of the title of Capital of Culture for 2021, but also to the preservation of a high cultural level, there are no concerns with regard to the relations between all collaborating units and organisations.

Organizational chart

Executive Director

Karapanos Nikolaos

Consultant

Florou Roza

Artistic Director

Fokas Evagelinos

Assistant Artistic Director

Tsimitselis Yiannis,
Kalafrouzou Christos,
Siamos Nikos

Cultural Planning Commission

President:

Kontos Panagiotis

A/ Vice President:

Vikatou Olympia

Organising Committee

Promotion and Publicity Directors

Konstantakopoulou Pepi,
Markakis Yiannis

International Promotion & Networks

Gikas Dimitris,
Markakis Yiannis

Communication Assistant - Media / Online

Markakis Yiannis

Communication Assistant - Volunteering / Events

Konstantakopoulou Pepi,
Plakida Aristeia

Text Editor

Zavitsanaki Eleni

Visual Identity

Karlopoulos&Associates

Coordinator

Kotsalos Aggelos

Public Consultant

Skarmoutsos Tassos

Researcher

Zavitsanaki Eleni

Qualifications

Promotion and Publicity Director

Konstantakopoulou Pepi

PhD Candidate,
Philosophy Sector,
University of Ioannina,
working as Director of
Education, Development
& Quality Assurance at
the Centre of Life-Long
Learning, Municipality of
S.C. Messolonghi

Nomination Coordinator

Kotsalos Agathagelos

City Council President,
working as Director in
the Residence Permit
Agency, Perf. of
Aetoloakarnania

Researcher

Zavitsanaki Eleni

Philosophy School
Graduate, University
of Ioannina, working in
Secondary Education

Finance, Funding & Development Coordinator

Daniil Giorgos

Economist, working
in Corporate and
Organization Advising
Company

Corporate Management Director

Lanara Sofia

Philosophy School
Graduate, University
of Ioannina, working in
Secondary Education

Facilities & Urban Reconstruction Directors

Premetis Konstantinos

Architect – Engineer

Vassi Evanthia

Graduate of Structural
and Mechanics
Technological Institute

Mayor of the Sacred City of Messolonghi, Executive Director of “Messolonghi 2021”

Karapanos Nikolaos

Nikos Karapanos was born in Munich, Germany on 16 August 1973. His parents, George and Zinovia Karapanou were immigrants, originating from Messolonghi. In his youth he returned to his region and later he concluded his studies in Athens. Following his successful studies in the branch of Business Administration and Economy, he was awarded his Masters in Marketing from the University of Middlessex, London. Early on he began working in the field of commerce and large-scale enterprises as a sales director. He also showed intense union activity in addition to his professional occupation, and he has worked as a special scientific advisor for the Vice-president of the European Parliament, Mrs. Rodis Kratsa. In 2009 he was running for member of the Parliament in Aetoloakarnania, while in the 2012 elections he was the only candidate with an increase in ballots by 60%, gaining first position between all candidates in the current municipality of Messolonghi. He is married to Maria Digeni and is a father of a girl daughter.

Artistic director of “Messolonghi 2021”

Fokas Evagelinos

He was born in Mesolongi in 1963. He started his studies at the Dancing School of Kiki Maniati and in 1989 he graduated from the State School of Orchestral Art in Athens where he was taught by eminent teachers such as Dora Tsatsos, Zouzou Nikoloudis, John Metsis, Bokoeva, Michof, L.Erenidis, S. Spiratou, etc. As a dancer he worked with many dancing groups, such as H.Mantafounis's team and at Airesis. In 1987 he took part in the comedy of Aristophanes “Ornithes” directed by G. Lazanis and with Manos's Hadjidakis music as presented in the Ancient Theatre of Philippi, Delphi and at the Atticus Odeon Theatre. He started his own carrier as a choreographer in 1991. In 1996 he founded his own School of Dance in Athens (Kypselis 5A), which is an accredited member of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance. Every two years he directs and choreographs dance performances with the participation of students of the school. All the profits are given for charity reasons. Since 2002 he has been teaching contemporary dance at the Drama School of the National Theatre. In 2005 he was awarded as a choreographer the choreography prize KOULA PRATSIKA by the Greek Theatre Study

& Research Center for Aristophanes ancient comedy “Lysistrata”, directed by K. Tsianos, and “Pia Eleni”, directed by M. Reppas-Th.Papathanasiou, performed at the National Theatre. All these years he has directed and choreographed theatrical plays in the National Theatre of Greece, at the Athens and Epidavrus Festival, at the National Opera and in other theaters. He also directed films, TV shows, music awards shows, dance groups, TV series, videoclips, music venues, concerts and international events.

C. Contingency plan

In any case, a contingency plan has been issued, in order to deal with any unexpected events. There are commitments by all official entities for the swift and effective dealing of all necessities. At the same time, there is a strong movement about volunteering in our city, ready to support the entire effort from its beginning to its end.

The main advantages of our project is the historical course of the city and the strong interest by everyone to showcase and promote it, its continuity in time, and the strong volunteering movement that is available at any moment.

The only probable disadvantage is the lack of structures for the accommodation of large volumes of visitors, which is not a matter of real concern, due to the geographical position of the city, neighbouring with municipalities with sufficient accommodation facilities, such as Patras, one of the largest cities of Greece.

6

Marketing and Communication

EXODUS 1821-2021

The idea of Exodus 2021 refers to regeneration, extroversion, the externalization of ideas, all under the auspices of the citizens of Messolonghi.

The objective of the city of Messolonghi is to create a new reputation for the city, by announcing events that aim to the promotion of “Messolonghi 2021” Candidacy and of the remaining region of Aetoloakarnania. The objective is to promote the city as a new, model European city, defined as the city of discussion, where culture equals the production of ideas and ideas in turn give birth to new standards for growth and new models of social interaction. This is a culturally diverse and open city, with multiple intercultural gateways and solidarity; it is attractive and hospitable, favouring discussion through which new identities and interpretations can come up for its residents.

This is a city that can become a “network exceeding time and space”, thanks to its history and the multi-centred standards of its settlement. A city that shares a deep historic inheritance with the entire region of Aetoloakarnania, allowing it to take a step forward. Under the prism of this historical identity, the city is transformed into a hub open to new technologies, seeking creativity, formulating knowledge, and led to the creation of connections with other cities and organisations in Europe and in the entire world, through the creation of new networks or by making use of the existing ones.

We plan the creation of relations and networks, both at a local and at an international level. This communication shall be performed through a variety of networks. There shall be a combination of different strategies, where the content shall adjust its messages through the communication media selected and shall have multiple recipients. The content itself and the procedure of communication shall be created in combination with the local, national and international bodies, by applying a model of multicultural communication.

Multiple Recipients

“Messolonghi 2021” does not treat its citizens as simple spectators, but as the key players, having a supporting role in the communication procedure. To this end, it is expected from all citizens of Messolonghi, of Greece and other European and non-European citizens to participate in collaboration with the key stakeholders and organisations from the fields of art and city culture, and from the wider region of Greece and Europe. Specifically, the communication strategy must aim towards and request the support and the participation of the public opinion of the citizens of Messolonghi, who are a part of this social and communication strategy (through their blogs, the radio, TV, the internet, the organisations, the various unions, etc.), aimed to young European students, every citizen group in the EU residing in Europe, the elderly, as well as the language, culture, and social minorities, including the disabled.

Procedures and Communication Tools

Additional media shall be used within the context of the collaboration created and the common communication strategies used, based on networks that will serve as infrastructures, by which information shall be disseminated and reproduced. Specifically, a cross-media / trans-media strategy shall be applied, based on the following:

Participatory communication: This is based on continuous discussion and on the participation of a large audience, in order to secure active involvement with the

content of communication. The cross-media communication shall refer to complete, interactive experiences, implemented through multiple media, where the public shall have an active part in a certain action.

Synergetic and viral communication: requiring constantly the spontaneous dissemination of information between the participants.

Joint announcement: with regard to the subjects and the artistic programme of “Messolonghi 2021”, through the direct and proper use of contacts. Its objective shall include large groups of persons sharing a passion for creation.

The following tools shall be used for the application of these procedures and the accomplishment of the relevant objectives: social media, blogs, web TV, internet and radio stations, for a thorough examination of the matters related to contributing, acting as catalysers and amplifiers of the communicative procedure.

Local news media and digital media events: regional events operating as catalysers and increasing the interest of citizens, scheduled events aiming for the active participation of the citizens (i.e. public discussions, focus groups and cultural events of various types), events for the promotion of exchanges between local, national, and international news media, disseminating the content, digital events created and developed through digital platforms.

Competitions: international, open invitations for ideals, plans and suggestions contributing to the creation and common use of the content and its dissemination.

Traditional news media, websites, news bulletins, radio, TV, printed media, and advertisement signs.

The communication campaign shall start without delay and follow up on the impact of marketing, of the strategic communication, and of the resulting consequences. This shall be performed by combining the traditional methods (i.e. performance, result and impact indicators), using innovative tools (netnography, sociability indicators, web monitoring, etc.).

Volunteering

The candidacy of Messolonghi 2021 is a vision based firstly on the exchange of experiences and knowledge through numerous actions, and secondly on the creation of a unique human mosaic, without distinctions and under the sole condition of being interested in active participation and coordinated collaboration.

Volunteering is a subject of concern for all of us. It constitutes an extremely educational process that supports social solidarity, amplifies active participation and co-existence, and gives new content to our lives. It combines the “passion of the amateur, the consistency of the professional, the discipline of the soldier, and the generosity of the higher person”.

The volunteers are the core of our vision, the "heart" of our actions and are as important as those working in this project, since they are engaged with almost every action and cover key needs.

This noble fight favours collective action and serves as an excellent opportunity for the productive collaboration between all cultural, social, and financial organisations of the region with citizens, aiming to promote the city of Messolonghi and become a cultural ambassador of our country on the international stage.

Through this attempt, we are trying to stay in tune with the cultural advances of Europe, laying the historical data and the morphological specificity of Messolonghi on new plans, and combine something new with something familiar.

Our purpose is to reinforce the international reputation of our city; this must evolve to a sense of collective duty, not just a grand wish.

Our objective is to reinforce the international reputation of the city, develop the city's tourism and business fields, while creating and establishing a new culture on volunteering.

We have every ability to fight for the title of European Capital of Culture and win it.

This is our vision and we shall achieve it through a union of hearts and coordinated actions.





ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΙΤΩΛΙΑΣ & ΑΚΑΡΝΑΝΙΑΣ

Τ. Π. Μεσολογγίου τη 27η Νοεμβρίου 2015

Αξιότιμε κ. Δήμαρχε,
κ. Νικόλαε Καραπάνο

Επιτρέψατέ μου πρώτα νά σᾶς συγχαρῶ γιά τήν διοργάνωσι τῆς ὡραίας ἐκδηλώσεως τήν Δευτέρα 23^η τρέχοντος στό Τρικούπιο Πνευματικό Κέντρο τοῦ Δήμου μας καί τήν τιμητική πρόσκλησι νά παρευρεθῶ καί ἐγώ σ' αὐτή.

Πολύ χαίρομαι καί συγχαίρω γιά τήν διεκδίκησι τῆς ἀνακηρύξεως τῆς Ἱερᾶς Πόλεως τοῦ Μεσολογγίου, ὡς **πολιτιστικῆς πρωτεύουσας τῆς Εὐρώπης γιά τό ἔτος 2021**.

Συγχαίρω καί Σᾶς προσωπικῶς καί τούς δημοτικούς συμβούλους καί ὅλους τους δημότες τοῦ Μεσολογγίου.

Ζοῦμε στό Μεσολόγγι, τό ἀγαποῦμε εἰλικρινά, ἀναπνέουμε κάθε μέρα τόν ἀέρα τῆς ἐλευθερίας πού μᾶς χάρισαν οἱ ἀγῶνες, τά μαρτύρια καί οἱ θυσίες τῶν ἡρώων καί μαρτύρων προγόνων μας καί ποθοῦμε τό Μεσολόγγι κάποτε ἀληθινά νά ἀναγνωρισθῇ, νά τιμηθῇ, νά δοξασθῇ, νά ὑψωθῇ στή θέσι πού τοῦ ἀνήκει.

Ἡ τοπική Ἐκκλησία, ἡ Ἱερά Μητρόπολις μας καί ἐγώ προσωπικῶς εἴμαστε κοντά σας, μαζί σας, ἔτοιμοι νά προσφέρουμε ὅ,τι ὡραῖο, καλό καί ὠφέλιμο γιά τό Μεσολόγγι.

Εὐχομαι οἱ ἀγῶνες ὅλων μας νά εὐοδωθοῦν καί τό ἔτος 2021 τό ἡρωικό καί μαρτυρικό Μεσολόγγι μας, νά πρυτανεύῃ ὅλης τῆς Εὐρώπης, νά λάμπῃ καί νά διδάσκῃ ὅλο τόν κόσμο.

Καλή ἐπιτυχία κ. Δήμαρχε στον Ἱερό αὐτό ἀγῶνα.

«Νά ζῇ τό Μεσολόγγι μας»



Μετ' ἐγκαρδίων εὐχῶν,

Ο ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ

Ο Αιτωλίας & Ακαρνανίας Κοσμάς

Ο ΑΙΤΩΛΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΚΑΡΝΑΝΙΑΣ ΚΟΣΜΑΣ



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑ ΔΥΤΙΚΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΑΣ

Πάτρα 26 Νοεμβρίου 2015

Α.Π. : 315861/3864

ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑΡΧΗΣ

ΠΡΟΣ: Το Δήμο Μεσολογγίου

ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ ΣΤΗΡΙΞΗΣ

Ο θεσμός της Πολιτιστικής Πρωτεύουσας της Ευρώπης αναδεικνύει τον πλούτο, την πολυμορφία και τα κοινά χαρακτηριστικά των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτισμών, προωθεί τον πολυπολιτισμικό διάλογο και συμβάλλει στην εμπέδωση βασικών αξιών της κοινωνικής και πολιτικής ζωής, όπως η αλληλεγγύη, η υπευθυνότητα, η ανεκτικότητα, ο σεβασμός.

Η υποψηφιότητα της Ιεράς Πόλης του Μεσολογγίου είναι μία μοναδική ευκαιρία για να αναδειχθεί η πολιτιστική ζωή, η ιστορία και η πολιτιστική ανάπτυξη της περιοχής.

Πρόκειται για μία μεγάλη πρόκληση, ζωτικής σημασίας, όχι μόνο για το Μεσολόγγι, αλλά και για ολόκληρη τη Δυτική Ελλάδα, να προχωρήσει στη μεταμόρφωση της πολιτιστικής βάσης και ακόμη περισσότερο στην ανάπτυξη ενός στρατηγικού οράματος για την περιοχή, με τη συμμετοχή των πολιτών, καθώς και όλων των δημόσιων και ιδιωτικών φορέων που ασκούν δραστηριότητα.

Μία σημαντική, μα τόσο όμορφη πρόκληση, για την οποία θα πρέπει όλοι να συνεργαστούμε και σύσσωμη η τοπική κοινωνία να στηρίξει αυτή την προσπάθεια, ώστε το Μεσολόγγι να λειτουργήσει για έναν ολόκληρο χρόνο ως το κέντρο της πολιτιστικής ζωής της Ευρώπης.

Η Περιφέρεια Δυτικής Ελλάδας ενώνει τις δυνάμεις της, στέκεται στο πλευρό κατοίκων και φορέων και στηρίζει με κάθε τρόπο αυτή τη μεγάλη προσπάθεια για την υποψηφιότητα της Ιεράς Πόλης του Μεσολογγίου ως Πολιτιστική Πρωτεύουσα της Ευρώπης 2021.

Απόστολος Κατσιφάρας

Περιφερειάρχης Δυτικής Ελλάδας



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑΚΗ ΕΝΩΣΗ ΔΗΜΩΝ
(Π.Ε.Δ.) ΔΥΤΙΚΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΑΣ

ΑΠΟΦΑΣΗ ΑΡΙΘ. 286:

Θέμα: "ΜΕΣΟΛΟΓΓΙ – ΥΠΟΨΗΦΙΑ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΤΙΚΗ ΠΡΩΤΕΥΟΥΣΑ 2021".

Ο Πρόεδρος της Π.Ε.Δ. Δυτ. Ελλάδας κ. Γ. Παπαναστασίου, έφερε στο σώμα το αίτημα που υπεβλήθη από τον Δήμο Ιεράς Πόλεως Μεσολογγίου, για στήριξη από την Π.Ε.Δ.Ε. της υποψηφιότητάς του: «ΜΕΣΟΛΟΓΓΙ – ΥΠΟΨΗΦΙΑ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΤΙΚΗ ΠΡΩΤΕΥΟΥΣΑ 2021», βάσει του υπ' αρ. πρωτ. 276/ 23.10.2015 εγγράφου του, όπου αναλύονται όλες οι παράμετροι του θέματος.

Ο Πρόεδρος κάλεσε τα μέλη του Δ.Σ. να λάβουν ομόφωνη απόφαση στήριξης της υποψηφιότητας και τους Δήμους της Περιφέρειας Δυτ. Ελλάδας, να λάβουν ανάλογες αποφάσεις.


Ο Δήμαρχος Ι.Π. Μεσολογγίου παρουσίασε εκτενώς το θέμα και κάλεσε τα μέλη του Διοικητικού Συμβουλίου να παρευρεθούν και στην παρουσίαση της υποψηφιότητας της Πόλης στις 11.11.2015 στην Αθήνα και στις 12.11.2015 στο Μεσολόγγι.

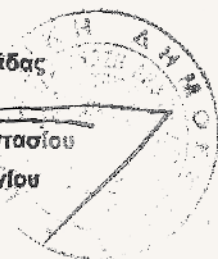
Επιφυλάξεις εξέφρασαν τα μέλη της Λαϊκής Συσπείρωσης, καθόσον έχουν βασικές αντιρρήσεις σχετικά με τον θεσμό της Πολιτιστικής Πρωτεύουσας αυτό καθαυτό.

Το Δ.Σ. μετά από διαλογική συζήτηση

Αποφασίζει Κατά Πλειοψηφία

Υποστηρίζει θερμά την υποψηφιότητα του Δήμου Ιεράς Πόλεως Μεσολογγίου ως Πολιτιστική Πρωτεύουσα 2021, αναγνωρίζοντας ότι διαθέτει όλα ανεξαιρέτως τα πλεονεκτήματα, ώστε να λειτουργήσει ως κέντρο της πολιτιστικής ζωής της Ευρώπης, ενώ παράλληλα το όραμα και η πρωτοβουλία αυτή, θα αποτελέσουν σημαντικό εργαλείο για την αναγέννηση της πόλης και της ευρύτερης περιοχής.

Ο Πρόεδρος
της ΠΕΔ Δυτ. Ελλάδας

Γεώργιος Παπαναστασίου
Δήμαρχος Αγρινίου



Ο Γραμματέας
της ΠΕΔ Δυτ. Ελλάδας

Καραπάνος Νικόλαος
Δήμαρχος Ι.Π. Μεσολογγίου

From the Master
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Mr Nikolaos Karapanos
Mayor of the Sacred Town of Messolonghi
Road, J.J. Mayer 20
30200 Messolonghi
Greece

22 November 2015

Dear Mr Karapanos,

I have only recently heard of the proposal that the Sacred Town of Messolonghi should become the European Capital of Culture. I was myself the Chairman of the City of Liverpool's Capital of Culture Company, which organized that City's year as Capital in 2008. I have experienced, through my interest in Byron, the warm hospitality of your wonderful town, and the contribution it has made over many years to International Culture, in particular through the conferences it has held for young people studying literature of the Romantic Period, and its interaction with those crucial years of your national history at the beginning of the 19th Century.

I send my support and very best wishes for your bid.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "D Bone". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Drummond Bone

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Balliol College is a registered charity in England and Wales (No. 1144032)



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sacred city