



CITY PROFILE

GABROVO

JULY 2017





CITY DESCRIPTION

GENERAL INFORMATION

Province: Gabrovo

Country: Bulgaria

Area: 233.8 km²

Population: 58,950 inhab. (2011)

Density: 250 inhab/km²

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Mayor: Tanya Hristova

Website: www.gabrovo.bg

CONTEXT

Undoubtedly Gabrovo impresses with its history and people, giving nowadays its citizens grounds for pride and self-esteem. Free-spirited, independent, enterprising and inventive...such were the Gabrovians, according to all the artefacts, that time left. One French traveler, Henri Fourcat, left for Gabrovo the words: "Bulgaria starts here". Gabrovo has a valuable contribution in the 'Bulgarian national revival' period and not only concerning the historical time span called Renaissance, but rather to the process of acknowledging the Bulgarian people as part of the European. Gabrovo has given to this process names and events, drawn up the way to the highest human value – liberty:

A Gabrovian organized the building of the first Orthodox Church in Tsarigrad.

A Gabrovian founded the first Bulgarian secular school.

A Gabrovian was the first prime minister of Bulgaria.

A Gabrovian was the creator of the first Bulgarian opera.

European industrialists went to Gabrovo and brought Gabrovo to the European markets, at the beginning of the 20th century. At the same time, owing to the miracle of its economic boost, the city compared with the English Manchester. Gabrovians considered their city the capital of the industries, because of the highest concentration of factories here, in comparison with the other cities in Bulgaria.

Gabrovians' self-esteem as being citizens of the capital of humour has another dimension, related to the emblem of Gabrovo and the region, contained in the artefact "Gabrovian humour" and expressed by the symbolic character of "Gabrovian" – circumspect, sparing and thrifty. Nowadays "The capital of humour" is the brand of the Gabrovian identity.

The most valuable currency for Gabrovians is laughter. They believe that the world lasts, because its laughs and they have converted humour into the local reception of the world and life. They indulge themselves the luxury to have a "fifth annual season" – the Carnival and a reserve territory – the planet "Gabrovo".

Gabrovians are famous for their sense of humour as well as for their pragmatism. The things they could not laugh at, they analyze and act so as to transfer the weaknesses into strengths.

According to Dostoevsky there are two types of cities – intentional and unintentional. According to this rate, Gabrovo is one of those unintentional cities with a special type of urban environment – although it wouldn't astound one with architectural masterpieces or heavy archaic layers of history, it possesses spirit and its own character. The mountain and the river are the attractive power, owing to which Gabrovo has emerged – naturally and unintentionally.



GABROVO'S CULTURAL PROFILE

TERRITORY AND POPULATION

The city is located in the geographical centre of Bulgaria, situated in the central part of the Balkans. The population amounts to 54,004 people. The municipality includes 133 villages, impressive with their natural sights. The Gabrovo villages are part of the magic of the region. Perched on the slopes of the Balkans, they are the ideal place for relax, summer residences for artists, art camps, performances. The nature of this mountainous city is this nuance, which softens the typical characteristics of city, whose industry cohabits in harmony with the cultural life and whose socio-economical and community development involves messages and practices for an environmentally-friendly and healthy life.

CULTURAL LIFE IN GABROVO

Fundamental for the cultural life of Gabrovo are the crafts and traditions, industry, humour and satire, modern arts.

Unique in its kind are the cultural institutions of Gabrovo – the “Etar” Ethnographic Open-Air Museum, the Museum of the architectural historical reserve Bozhentsi, the Museum “House of Humour and Satire”, the Interactive Museum of Industry. Some world-famous names that became an emblem of the contemporary art originate from Gabrovo – Hristo Yavashev – Kristo, and Nedko Solakov.

The indicative, for the city, cultural events have emerged from the natural preconditions and historical datum. Gabrovo is the host of an International fair of crafts, an International festival of humour and satire, the International meeting of illusionists “Zaltna kotka”, a Festival of the spiritual music, an International festival of chamber music and a number of other musical and theatrical forums, which form a knowledgeable audience with acute sensitivity.

CULTURAL POLICY

The Municipality is highly motivated by the principles and ideas of the Agenda 21 for culture and Culture 21 Actions, leading purposeful and continuous policy for development of the relation between the cultural activities of the city and its sustainable development.

The process includes: creation of a Strategy for development of culture in Gabrovo municipality for the period 2014-2020; inclusion of Gabrovo in the competition for European Capital of Culture 2019; launching of a Culture programme for co-financing of projects with an annual budget of 100,000 BGN; including the city in the “Pilot Cities” programme.

The cultural policy of the municipality is based upon several key principles:

- Equal access to culture;
- Cultural diversity;
- Using of the community spaces as cultural ones;
- Transparency of information and participation of the community in the formation of cultural policy;

- Preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage;
- Stimulation of civic and private initiatives, directed at diversity and quality of the cultural projects.

The leading goal of the cultural strategy is Gabrovo's long-term development as an influential national platform and an international platform of contemporary arts.

The document envisages, in the period 2014-2024, that the cultural sector will develop as a space favourable for training, experiment and innovation in the sphere of arts and culture, with a focus upon education, active exchange of experience, information and good practices at local, national and international level. The long-term vision for the development of Gabrovo municipality involves cultural initiatives with international content, participation, dimension, value and audience, which include:

- To support the cultural and economic development of the city;
- To offer sustainable mechanism for stimulation of youth employment;
- To stimulate the development of cultural tourism and the cultural and creative industries in the region.

Examples of the cultural life of Gabrovo show a successful model of cultural products, which change the quality of life of people.

- The carnival as a possibility for self-expression and overcoming of social differences;
- "Take me to the countryside" as a possible solution for one of the most poignant problems of modern Bulgaria – the demographic crisis and depopulation of the small settlements;
- Working community centers as an expression of a civil society position.

SOME LOCAL CHALLENGES

In the last years the population of Gabrovo has decreased considerably. The number of elderly people increases. As a consequence of the decreasing birth-rate and migration, the percentage of the young and actively working citizens shrinks. This is one of the most serious challenges for culture as a possibility for solving concrete problems. Participation in initiatives such as Pilot Cities can help Gabrovo reconsider the place of cultural assets in the city, and see how these can be relevant to addressing key urban issues. Relevant cultural elements in this context may include the cultural use of urban spaces and buildings, industrial heritage, enrichment of the international cultural cooperation, modernization of the vision for cultural diversity, establishment of an effective communication system, etc.

Another serious challenge is a balance to be achieved - between the past and the future, between the traditional and innovative, between the young and the elderly, a balance not only between definite categories but the inner balance as well, or the one, subject to upgrading. In this process Gabrovians aim to achieve a working, completely balanced model of relations between people and their attitude towards the surrounding environment.

The participation of Gabrovo in the "Pilot Cities" programme is part of the way to achieve the goals set by the city. The inhabitants of the city want to join the efforts of the people born and grown up in Gabrovo, of those, who went away but long to come back, and the ones curious to visit it and to tell them for Gabrovo – a unique city of the present.



CONTACTS

For additional information about this exercise, please contact:



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