

**NATIONAL WORKSHOPS IN KOVATCHEVZI, ZLATOGRAD, BOZHENZI, CHEPINZI, BULGARIA, May-September 2007**

The National Museum of History organised four national workshops of different type and size in different parts of the country in order to involve more local cultural operators as well as museums professionals.

- The main session was held on June 15-16, at the National Ecological Children's Complex in the village of Kovatchevzi region Pernik, some 60 km from Sofia.
- A preliminary session took place at the Branch Ethnographic Complex in the small town of Zlatograd in the south-east of Bulgaria at the Greek-Bulgarian border on May 21-22, with the cooperation of the Director of the Regional Ethnographic Museum in the city of Smolyan.
- The third session was held on August, 7-8 at the Architecture Historic Reserve of the village of Bozhenzi and the Open-air museum of Etara, district of Gabrovo with the cooperation of the Director of the Regional Museum of History in Gabrovo.
- The fourth session took place in the village of Chepinzi, district of Sofia on September 10-11, with collaboration with the Local museum attendant, a retired ex-MP.

Invitations were sent to the regional museums which are coordinating the rural branches (or annexes), to rural municipalities, the Ministry of Culture, the University of Sofia and the New Bulgarian University, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, as well as to the international partners participating in the Thematic Group 3 – the colleagues from Euracademy (Greece) and Muzeum Kresów in Lubaczów (Poland).

In the Kovatchevzi workshop the schedule included an opening ceremony, light lunch, plenary session with reports (prof. Kiril Topalov - Academy for Balkan Civilisation and Sofia University, prof. Georg Kraev - New Bulgarian University, prof. Simeon Nedkov- Sofia University) and presentations of the foreign guests and of the research and activities of the Cult-rural team in the National Museum of History; workshops in three groups, two exhibitions opening ceremonies, participation in the Georgi Dimitrov-festival of the village, dinner, special event – a documentary about the most popular Bulgarian painter Vladimir Dimitrov and his models - rural people from the same region and presentation of the book of Simeon Milyov about the "fat" folklore stories. On the second day an environmental study trip was organised to the near mountain as well as a visit to a small museum in the village of Svetlya in order to discuss the foreseen renovation of the exhibition as one of the activities under the CULT RURAL project.

Results: Seven presentations were delivered by speakers and discussion followed. During the discussion the topic that emerged as the most promising for further research was the contemporary festive folk system with its symbols as bearers of the tradition and capacity for sustainable rural development. During the workshops and the study trips the CULT-RURAL network was established. Every museum received a special "label" as a partner in the network

and the possibility to be in connection with all the museums being part of the international network of CULT RURAL. The workshop was followed by the following exhibitions and events.

1. "Kukeri masks for children" – a long-term exhibition organised at the National Ecological Children Complex in the village of Kovatchevzi region Pernik. The exhibition was the result of an atelier for children organised in the context of CULT RURAL (see Activity 6).
2. "The Master and ...Maria" – a short term (15.06.- 4.07.2007) exhibition organised at the National Ecological Children Complex in the village of Kovatchevzi. Paintings of Maria Radeva, a late artist who created very expressive "rural" themes were exhibited as well as some works of Vladimir Dimitrov-the Master. Special event attached to the exhibition - a documentary about the artist focusing on his models-rural people from the same region.