**COOPERATION AGREEMENT**

**BETWEEN**

**ARGEȘ COUNTY OF ROMÂNIA**

**AND**

**BANSKO MUNICIPALITY, BLAGOEVGRAD REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

Arges County of Romania and Bansko Municipality, Blagoevgrad Region of the Republic of Bulgaria, hereinafter referred to as the ”Parties";

Considering the friendly and collaborative relations between Romania and the Republic of Bulgaria, based on mutual respect and support in various areas of common interest;

Arges County of Romania and Bansko Municipality, Blagoevgrad Region of the Republic of Bulgaria, through the representatives of the two administrative-territorial units, hereinafter referred to as "Parties",

Desiring to promote collaborative relations between local public administration authorities and to support the achievement of cultural programs and partnerships in different sectors of the local economy, for the benefit of the local communities they represent and in accordance with the laws in force in their states,

Have agreed as follows:

**Article 1**

**Objective**

The objective of this Cooperation Agreement is to lay the foundations for an efficient and mutually beneficial collaboration between the two Parties and for a partnership focused on a friendly relationship.

**Article 2**

**Areas of Cooperation**

The Parties have agreed to cooperate under the framework of this Cooperation Agreement in the following areas:

1. Public administration – exchange of experience and best practices regarding the capacity of local authorities to solve the various problems that arise within the communities they represent;
2. Culture – participations in festivals, fairs, specific events;
3. Tourism – promotion of common projects with the objective of exploiting the local tourist potential and increasing the flow of tourists between the two administrative-territorial units;
4. Technical collaboration between the Romanian mountain rescuers from Salvamont Argeș County Public Service and the Bulgarian mountain rescuers from Bansko Mountain Rescue Service – “*Planinska Spasitelna Slujba Bansko*”;
5. Exchange of experience and best practices regarding the organization, legal framework and activities carried out by mountain rescue services.

**Article 3**

**Implementation**

1. To implement this Cooperation Agreement, the Parties will conclude a written Action Plan that will include programs and activities in accordance with the areas of cooperation as referred to in Article 2.
2. The Action Plan, as referred to in Paragraph 1, will specify the details concerning the program or activity, schedule/period, personnel involved, financial arrangement, responsibilities of each Party, contributions of the Parties, terms and conditions, and other necessary details. The Action Plan will become an integral part of this Cooperation Agreement.
3. The Action Plan referred to in Paragraph 1 will be approved and signed by the Parties after the passage of a period of at least 6 (six) months from the date of signing this Agreement.
4. The Parties may conclude separate implementing arrangements to elaborate further details of cooperative activities under this Cooperation Agreement.
5. If deemed necessary, the Parties may involve a third Party in the implementation of programs and activities under this Cooperation Agreement, subject to the mutual written agreement of the Parties and after obtaining approvals from the competent authorities of their states.
6. Each Party will designate a coordinator who will pursue the effective implementation of this Cooperation Agreement. The coordinators appointed by the Parties will develop an implementation plan and propose additional actions that can be taken by both parties.

**Article 4**

**Funding**

The Parties will independently bear the expenses incurred during the implementation of this Cooperation Agreement, within the limits stipulated by the laws in force in their countries.

**Article 5**

**Intellectual Property Rights**

In accordance with the laws in force in their countries, each Party respects the Intellectual Property Rights of the other Party with respect to the implementation of this Cooperation Agreement on the territory of its country.

**Article 6**

**Joint Working Group**

1. The Parties will establish a Joint Working Group to plan, prepare and recommend programs or activities, as well as to monitor and evaluate the progress of cooperation under this Cooperation Agreement.
2. The members of the Joint Working Group will consist of representatives of the Parties and of the local civic associations and non-governmental organizations. The two Parties may establish collaboration partnerships with local authorities from other states after fulfilling the legal procedures provided by the laws in force in their countries.
3. The Joint Working Group will meet annually or otherwise as agreed, alternately in Arges County or Bansko Municipality or virtually.

**Article 7**

**Collaboration between the Mountain Rescue Services**

1. In case of cooperation between the Mountain Rescue Services, the Parties will mutually recognize the professional qualification of the mountain rescuers and will ensure that, on the date of carrying out the joint activities, all participants have completed the instructions on work protection and fire safety, as well as the medical exam.
2. All participants will have valid personal accident and malpractice insurances, in accordance with the laws in force in their countries.

**Article 8**

**Measures to comply with the working framework**

1. The Parties will ensure that their personnel engaged in activities under this Cooperation Agreement will comply with the laws and regulations of the host country and will avoid performing any activities inconsistent with the objectives of this Cooperation Agreement.
2. In the event of violation of Paragraph 1 of this Article, the other Party may terminate the cooperation or programs under this Cooperation Agreement.

**Article 9**

**Settlement of Differences**

1. Any dispute arising regarding the interpretation or application of this Cooperation Agreement will be settled amicably, by the Parties, through direct negotiations.
2. This Cooperation Agreement is not intended to create legally binding rights and obligations under international law.

**Article 10**

**Amendments**

This Cooperation Agreement may be modified by mutual written consent of the Parties. These changes take effect from the date of signing these documents and are an integral part of this Cooperation Agreement.

**Article 11**

**Application, Duration and Termination**

1. This Cooperation Agreement takes effect on the date of its signing by the Parties;
2. This Cooperation Agreement will remain in force for an unlimited period;
3. Either Party may terminate this Cooperation Agreement at any time by giving written notice to the other Party of its intention to terminate this Cooperation Agreement;
4. The termination of this Cooperation Agreement will not affect the implementation of programs and projects started, unless otherwise agreed by the Parties.

**SIGNED** at ………… on the date ………..in three original copies, in the English, Romanian and Bulgarian languages, all texts being equally valid. In case of differences in interpretation, the English text will prevail.

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| **For**  **Arges County of România**      **President,**  **Ion MÎNZÎNĂ** | **For**  **Bansko Municipality, Blagoevgrad Region**  **of the Republic of Bulgaria**  **Mayor,**  **Stojcho BANENSKI** |
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