

Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS)



"Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS)"

Preliminary Technical Assessment

Revitalization of the Decebal area Between the Stefan cel Mare and Maria Cebotari Streets

Soroca

Republic of Moldova

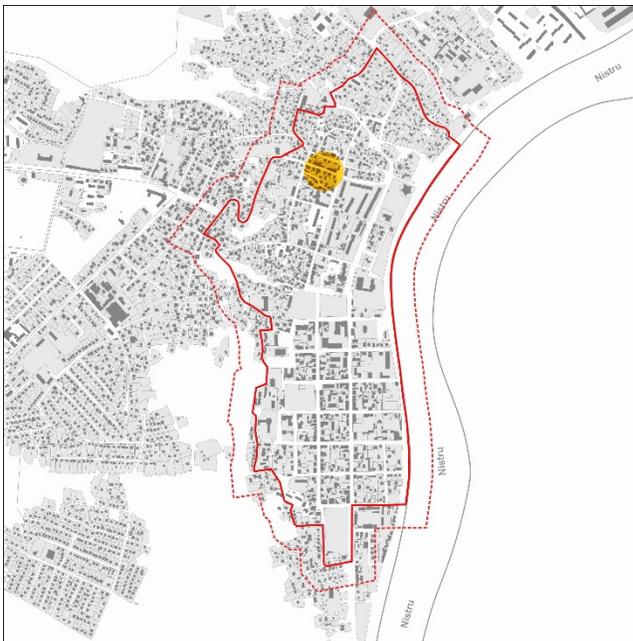
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1. Introductory page

This document was produced within the framework of the Joint Project EU/CoE “Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns”. The content does not necessarily represent the official position of the European Union and/or the Council of Europe.

The Decebal neighbourhood



Location in the historic centre of the town



Location on site

1.1 Country or Territory: Republic of Moldova

1.2 Name of organisation compiling the information: Soroca District Council

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1.5 Name and address of building or site: The Decebal neighbourhood comprised in the perimeter of the streets: Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni, Colcher, Decebal (to the Aleinikov Villa and both street fronts), Maria Cebotari, Chișinăului and Ștefan cel Mare.

1.6 Inventory reference number(s): not applicable

1.7 Building/Monument/Site type: urban site, proposed to be included in the city's protected historic area

1.8 Main dates: mixed-use single-story houses

1.9 Current use(s): dwellings, owner-owned commerce

2. Executive Summary: the site and its management

The project targets the revitalization of the urban area that has a medieval and 19th century urban pattern, which is located along the oldest road of the city (Old Road). In the past, this road connected the Soroca fortress with the former capital of Moldavian Principality, Suceava. The neighbourhood contains a unique combination of irregular streets, low-rise individual houses with basements and recent constructions. The uses are mixed, mostly housing and owner-occupied shops. Currently, the area is not part of an established protected area and is inhabited by a predominantly by people suffering from high levels of poverty.

Although this neighbourhood's identity and historical significance is relatively important – it was once a vibrant quarter of the interwar city – today it is in poor physical condition and urgently requires an integrated rehabilitation policy. Starting with ensuring the primary needs of the inhabitants, such as minimum sanitary requirements, and ending with its reorganization. The addition of complementary functions, for example, community-led and heritage-based projects, would have a major impact on the transformation of the site, and could be easily replicated in other similar residential areas.

Furthermore, considering the difficulties arising from the large number of houses and owners, and their diverse needs, it is important to consult and discuss in advance with tenants to identify priorities for intervention on each building.

The streets and the public spaces are an important element of the site, especially in those cases where the original aspect was preserved, as at Chisinaului Street. These should be conserved and enhanced, to encourage open-air activities. The intersections and the squares could be improved so as to be able to accommodate events and fairs. The proposed revitalization programme should help the area regain its vitality and importance turning it into one of the attractions of the city, mobilizing its local community and exploiting urban-type tourism.

3. Administrative information

3.1 Responsible Authorities

- Ministry of Culture
- Soroca City Hall
- Soroca District Council
- Ministry of Regional Development and Construction
- Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure
- Ministry of Environment

3.2 Building/Site, Name and Address

The project area dealt with in this report is limited by the following streets: Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni street, Colcher street, 40, Decebal street, the buildings situated on 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33 Decebal street, Maria Cebotari street, Chişinăului and Ştefan cel Mare streets. The area contains 43 buildings, the majority are individual houses. It is situated in the centre of Soroca, in administrative district No. 3.

3.3 Map reference

Spatial reference X, Y coordinates: (the geographic centre of the site): 336121.85, 192631.60

3.4 Type of monument

The site is not currently protected. Only one building (the former inn situated on 5, Decebal street) is a protected historic monument.

3.5 Ownership

The 43 buildings are individual or collective houses, commercial establishments serving the neighbourhood. Ownership may vary: 16 are private single houses, 16 are private shared houses, two are public owned, four have mixed ownership and there is no available information for seven of the houses.

3.6 Statutory Protection/Constraints

The building of the former inn, situated on 5, Decebal street, is an architectural monument of local importance. It is currently being used as a dwelling by two families, and its ownership is uncertain. Any intervention on the site will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements and constraints imposed by its status as a protected architectural monument of local importance. Any construction, modernization, modification, transformation, consolidation and repair works will be executed based on the design developed by individuals or legal entities with permits to work in this field and approved by authorised professionals. Conservation and restoration works will be approved and co-ordinated with the Ministry of Culture. Any activity that could endanger the integrity of buildings will be co-ordinated with governmental bodies for Monument Protection, with the bodies of local administration and with the advisory service provided by the Ministry of Culture. This service is responsible for examining and approving project documentation related to interventions (conservation, restoration, consolidation) of buildings situated in protected areas.

For the other houses, there are no legal constraints. However, considering the historic value of the area, and that it is to be included in the historic area of Soroca (the registration of the historic centre of the city is in progress), proposals for intervention should consider the specificities of the site. New developments should be compatible with the character and function of the place.

The boundaries of the protected area will be set up according to the existing urbanism documentation and will require multidisciplinary analysis based on scientific and cultural criteria, as well as on legal regulations. The following steps will be carried out:

- Identification of heritage elements;
- Technical assessment;
- Elaboration of the project for the protected area (Government decision no. 100 of 05.10.2009 on approving the Regulation on natural and built protected areas);
- Project approval from the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction, the Ministry of Culture, the National Tourism Agency and by the local authority. After being approved by these institutions, the project will be included in the urban planning documentation. The population will also be consulted.

The construction works will be executed according to designs submitted by authorised individuals or legal entities and verified by certified specialists. The conservation and restoration works will be co-ordinated and approved by the Ministry of Culture.

4. Summary of condition

The physical condition of the buildings

Nr.	Address of the building	Summary of the physical condition (very bad to good)	Condition on Risk Assessment A-H	Priority for intervention – High/Medium/Low	Has historic value - yes/no	Current use
1	Decebal 12	Satisfactory	C	Medium	Yes	Dwelling, commercial
2	Decebal 14	Satisfactory	C	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
3	Decebal 16	Satisfactory	C	Medium	Yes	Dwelling, commercial
4	Decebal 18	Good	F	Low	Yes	Dwelling
5	Decebal 20	Satisfactory	F	High	Yes	Dwelling, commercial
6	Decebal 22	Satisfactory	D	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
7	Decebal 24	Satisfactory	C	High	Yes	Dwelling
8	Decebal 26	Satisfactory	C	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
9	Decebal 28	Good	F	Low	Yes	Dwelling, commercial
10	Decebal 30	Good	F	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
11	Decebal 32	Good	F	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
12	Decebal 34	Good	F	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
13	Decebal 36	Good	F	Low	?	Dwelling
14	Decebal 38	Good	F	Low	Yes	Dwelling
15	Decebal 5	Satisfactory	C	High	Yes (listed)	Dwelling
16	Decebal 7	Satisfactory	F	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
17	Decebal 9	Good	G	Low	Yes	Dwelling
18	Decebal 11	Good	C	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
19	Decebal 13	Satisfactory	B	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
20	Decebal 13A	Satisfactory	C	High	Yes	Dwelling
21	Decebal 15	Satisfactory	B	High	Yes	Dwelling
22	Decebal 17-17/1	Satisfactory	F	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
23	Decebal 21	Very good	G	Low	Yes	Dwelling
24	Decebal 23	Very good	F	Low	No	Dwelling
25	Decebal 25	Good	F	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
26	Decebal 27	Satisfactory	C	High	Yes	Dwelling
27	Decebal 29	Very bad				Abandoned
28	Decebal 31	Good	F	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
29	Decebal 33	Good	F	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
30	Str-la Decebal 2	Good	F	Low	No	Dwelling, commercial
31	Chişinăului 8	Good	G	Low	Yes	Dwelling
32	Chişinăului 6	Good	G	Low	Yes	Dwelling
33	Chişinăului 4	Good	F	High	Yes	Dwelling
34	Chişinăului 2	Good	C	Medium	Yes	Dwelling
35	Ştefan cel Mare 43	Good	F	Low	Yes	Dwelling, commercial
36	Ştefan cel Mare 45	Good	D	High	Yes	Dwelling
37	Ştefan cel Mare 47	Good	F	Low	No	Dwelling, commercial
38	G. B.-Bodoni 15	Very bad				Abandoned
39	G. B.-Bodoni 17	Good				
40	G. B.-Bodoni 17a	Satisfactory				
41	G. B.-Bodoni 19	Good				
42	G. B.-Bodoni 21	N/A				
43	Maria Cebotari 39	N/A				

5. Existing information

5.1 Documentary sources:

The area is included in various studies and urban projects about the historic centre of Soroca. Several pieces of research have focused on the medieval town of Soroca, most of them are historic in approach, and comprise doctoral theses, etc.

However, the site does not feature as an issue in urban plans (Urban Zonal Plans or Urban Detail Plans) and is treated superficially in the Urban General Plan of Soroca adopted in 2011.

Plans of both the existing houses and those demolished are available in the local archives. There is very little documented information on the historic evolution of the site.

5.2 Bibliography:

1. Historical and geographical landmarks of urban heritage in Moldova, Alexandru Prodan, Institute of Cultural Heritage, Chişinău 2012
2. Multi-Ethnic Built Heritage in West Ukraine and Moldova – a Challenge for Urban Planning and Development, Volume V, Bo Larsson, Gorag Skoog, Lund University, Sweden, 2006
3. Retro Soroca, Ion Ştefăniţă, Nicolae Bulat, "Continental Grup SRL", Chişinău 2012
4. Newsletter of the project "Integrated revitalization of historic cities for sustainable polycentric development " within the INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme CADES, Chisinau 2007
5. Study on the situation of Moldovan historic towns, Nesterov Tamara, Chişinău 2007
6. Smirnov V., Urban Planning of Moldova, Cartea Moldoveneasca, Chisinau 1975
7. Soroca Urban General Plan, Chişinău 2011
8. The Strategy for Social-Economic Development of Soroca 2015-2020, Soroca 2015

Legal acts:

1. Law on Local Public Administration 436-XVI of 28.12.2006
2. Law nr. 1530 of 22.06.1993_ on Monuments Preservation
3. Government Decision nr. 73 of 31.01.2014 on the approval of the Regulation of Organization and Functioning of the National Council of Historical Monuments
4. Government decision no. 100 of 05.10.2009 on approving the Regulation on natural and built protected areas
5. Law nr. 721 of 02.02.1996 on quality of constructions
6. Law Nr. 835 of 17.05.1996 on the Principles of Urbanism and Spatial Planning
7. Note of 21.04.2016 on amending the Criminal Code and the Contravention Code

5.3 Fieldwork already conducted:

Non-existent

5.4 Projects in progress:

Non-existent

5.5 Projects already planned:

Non-existent

5.6 Financial estimates already made:

Non-existent

6. Scope of the PTA

6.1 Extent/Nature of the assessment:

The PTA has been developed by a team of local experts:

- A specialist in the management of investment projects, responsible for assessing project profitability, sustainability, risk assessment, and for compiling final reports;
- A specialist in construction and construction management, responsible for assessing the physical condition of the site and the need for intervention, preliminary assessment of the restoration costs;
- An expert in heritage, responsible for assessing the heritage value of the site and for formulating the concept of rehabilitation;

The final version of PTA will be examined by a specialist from the Directorate of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Moldova, after which it will be sent for review by international experts. In addition, specific contributions will be sought from the central authority, as well as existing studies on the area. The current PTA was drafted over the period of one month.

6.2 Limitations of the study:

- The archive information is limited to the cadastre plans, lack of available information on the historical evolution of the buildings, on use and occupation, etc;
- Large number of buildings to be analysed;
- Availability and co-operation of the tenants;
- Lack of documentation on ownership;
- Migration / abandoned houses;
- Time limitations.

7. PTA

7.1 Background: Form, Function and Evolution

7.1.1 Summary description of the building/site, with comments on its urban or rural context if appropriate

The project area is part of the historic centre of Soroca, situated on the route linking the Medieval Fortress and the "Roma Hill" neighbourhood. It is a part of the Old Medieval town, built with single-story houses with large stone basements. The preserved houses form a continuous frontage and are special, town houses with 19th century wooden verandas. These buildings are now in a very poor physical condition and in many cases have been subject to interventions which have altered their original aspect.

Most of them are dwellings inhabited by one to two families or small commercial units (barber shops, repair services, shops) of local importance. Their residents are subject to high levels of poverty, and cannot afford to rehabilitate their properties. Some houses are abandoned and ruined.

New buildings are generally not in keeping with the character of the area. At present, the project area is unprotected and there is no local policy in place for conservation and improvement. The biggest building and the only listed monument is the former Inn, a two-story building dating from the 19th century, which is been subdivided into a shared dwelling.

The street network is very old. Even though the main roads were repaired and adapted to today's requirements, some side streets, irregular and paved with cobblestone, have been preserved.



The intersection of the Decebal and Ștefan cel Mare, the building of the former Inn is in the foreground



View of the Chișinăului street with a traditional Moldovan house and cobblestone paving

7.1.2 Summary historic development and evolution of the building or site, from the earliest times until the present day.

The current configuration of the area is linked back to the historic evolution of Soroca's medieval town, then an important economic and military centre of the region. Due to its location in an area of transit, the Decebal street (the Old Road) mainly had a commercial profile.

The project area here proposed is the only one unaffected by the 19th century development plans (the street grid near the Medieval Fortress was completely changed). Some buildings and streets have been preserved, but are in need of conservation and rehabilitation.



Development plan dating from 1846. The Old Road is visible and is the most densely built. In the southern part on the city the regular street grid is foreseen.

7.2 Significance

The site has a strong identity due to the various historical and political influences and communities that inhabited and shaped its layout over time. The typology of the buildings, the placement on the parcel and the alignment of the street reflect a unplanned development and evolution.

The site does not possess outstanding monumentality or artistic features, most experts and locals do not consider it to have any historic value. On the contrary, as it is one of the poorest and oldest (but central) quarters of the city, demolition is often proposed to make way for new development. During the 19th century these houses were inhabited by the Jewish community of Soroca, who immigrated and the houses were left abandoned. It was and still is a transit zone; in the past it was the gateway to the west of the country, and it now leads to the "Roma Hill" quarter. Together, these districts are unique in their combination of styles and cultures.



7.3 Vulnerability/Risk assessment

In addition to physical threats, including the demolition of old buildings and the continuous deterioration of the existing heritage, there are vulnerabilities due to the lack of awareness of the population and the local authorities concerning the site's importance:

- Lack of a conservation and rehabilitation policy for the site;
- Lack of legal protection tools for the site;
- Improper interventions, demolitions;
- Financial issues of the owners, high rehabilitation costs;
- The inhabitants and the authorities are not aware about the historic importance of the place.



An example of inappropriate use of public space: the square near the College of Arts is used as a car park

7.4 Technical conditions

Due to the large number of buildings included in this study, two typical houses and the former Inn will be detailed as examples. By analogy, the conditions and the requirements of the whole area will be assessed.

5 Decebal st. (The former Inn)	Current condition	Necessary interventions / repair	Estimated costs, thousands MDL
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			* - priority ** - non-priority	
Public utilities	Sewerage	Yes	No	
	Drinking water	Yes	No	
	Gas	Yes	No	
	Electrification	Yes	No	
Physical condition	Foundations	Good	No	
	Walls, structure	Satisfactory	*Consolidation	500
	Floors	Good	No	
	Ceilings, Slabs	Very bad	*Repair	400
	Doors, windows	Very bad	*Restoration	150
	Plasters, decor	Satisfactory	*Repair	600
	Balconies, verandas	Satisfactory	**Restoration	250
	Courtyards, gardens, fences	Satisfactory	**Repair	200
Roofs	Very bad	*Replacement	800	
Total costs				MDL 2900 = €131,818

2 Chișinăului st. 		Current condition	Necessary interventions / repair * - priority ** - non-priority	Estimated costs, thousands MDL
Public utilities	Sewerage	Yes	No	
	Drinking water	Yes	No	
	Gas	?	?	
	Electrification	Yes	No	
Physical condition	Foundations	Good	No	
	Walls, structure	Satisfactory	*Consolidation	250
	Floors	Good	No	
	Ceilings, Slabs	Satisfactory	*Repair	100
	Doors, windows	Very bad	*Restoration	70
	Plasters, decor	Good	No	
	Balconies, verandas	Good	No	
	Courtyards, gardens, fences	Satisfactory	**Repair	50
Roofs	Satisfactory	**Repair	50	

Total costs	MDL 520 = €23,600
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15 Decebal st.		Current condition	Necessary interventions / repair *- priority ** - non-priority	Estimated costs, thousands MDL
				
Public utilities	Sewerage	Yes	No	
	Drinking water	Yes	No	
	Gas	?	?	
	Electrification	Yes	No	
Physical condition	Foundations	Satisfactory	*Consolidation	150
	Walls, structure	Satisfactory	*Consolidation	150
	Floors	Satisfactory	*Repair	80
	Ceilings, Slabs	Satisfactory	*Repair	80
	Doors, windows	Satisfactory	*Repair	60
	Plasters, decor	Satisfactory	**Repair	70
	Balconies, verandas	Very bad	*Reconstitution	100
	Courtyards, gardens, fences	Satisfactory	**Repair	40
Roofs	Very bad	*Replacement	100	
Total costs				MDL 830 = €37,727

7.5 Outline summary of required repairs

The required repairs may vary according to the physical condition and necessities of each house. Generally, the following works should be considered:

- Repair or replacement of roofs;
- Repair of roof slabs;
- Repair of floors;
- Plasters, finishes;
- Repair or reconstitution of windows and doors;
- Consolidation of foundations and structures;
- Repair or reconstitution of wooden verandas;
- Landscape improvement of courtyards and repair of fences;
- Connection to basic utilities;
- New sanitation, heating and electrical equipment, insulation measures.

7.6 Conservation/rehabilitation policy and proposals

7.6.1 Broad summary of the vision for the site, and its sustainability, at this preliminary stage

The initiative seeks the conservation and gradual rehabilitation of the considered area, in order to increase the comfort of the inhabitants and explore the possibilities of functional diversification. The

rehabilitated houses would be able to accommodate various commercial activities and comfortable dwellings:

- Improved quality of life of residents;
- Some houses could accommodate owner-occupied businesses such as small workshops, cafes or rustic accommodation. This will increase the revenue of the owners and will integrate the houses into the local economy;
- The area will be included in the Moldovan Medieval tourist Route, linking Soroca Fortress, the Aleinikov Villa and "Roma Hill". It could also become a part of an extended tourist route over the Nistru river into Ukraine;
- The rehabilitation of public infrastructure and open spaces will contribute to the promotion of outdoor events and activities;
- The enhanced public spaces will provide added value, increasing the value of the buildings. This will further improve the quality of life of the residents;
- The participative rehabilitation and public-private partnerships will increase ownership among the members of the community and will serve as good example for other similar sites.

7.6.2 Conservation philosophy

The conservation process will be based on the development of a local policy to secure the site's integrity. This will confirm the local and central authorities' aim of improving the state of the built heritage in order to increase the quality of life and boost local social and economic development. Before elaborating concrete plans and restoration works, the criteria of intervention and the level of appropriateness should be established. The proposed policy should allow public-private partnerships and consider financial instruments to support owners who are willing to restore their houses. The policy should safeguard the site's authenticity and ensure that works are high-quality. It should encourage the use of traditional materials used in accordance with the type of house.

The public space will be reorganised and designed so as to encourage walking and outdoor activities and discourage car use.

7.6.3 Level of intervention

A central aim is to conserve those buildings with historical value and limit interventions on them. Given that there are no legal instruments in place at present to protect the site, the area should be listed in a local register of monuments, or the process of setting up the Soroca Historic Centre should be hastened.

After precise mapping of necessary works for each type of building, a step-by-step intervention strategy needs to be elaborated, such as:

- Step 1: connecting to public utilities, water supply;
- Step 2: primary consolidation works as needed: repair of the roofs, consolidation of the foundations, of the structure, walls, etc;
- Step 3: floors, ceilings, doors, windows, verandas;
- Step 4: finishes, paintings;
- Step 5: exterior works - landscape improvement, fences, etc.

7.6.4 Preliminary proposals for appropriate uses, as applicable

The exact use of each of the buildings will be determined by the owner. However, it is important to specify that the main function of the site will remain as dwellings, while commerce and services will be complementary activities. Considering the current profile of the site, the following activities could be suggested:

- small craft workshops for children or tourists;

- Rustic short-term accommodation, mixed use;
- owner-run shops with traditional products;
- traditional food, small cafes;
- for the former Inn – accommodation, restaurant;
- in the public space – open-air activities, fairs.

7.6.5 Opportunities for social uses and sustainable development

The project will create new jobs; if 20 new commercial units are established, 30-40 new jobs will be created. In addition, it is estimated that some 200 seasonal jobs could be created annually, associated with various workshops, outdoor fairs, events.

7.6.6 Broad assessment of priorities for consolidation and covering, repair, conservation, restoration, rehabilitation

Described at 7.5

The following interventions on houses can be anticipated:

- 20 houses will be connected to public utilities;
- 20 houses will be repaired and consolidated;
- 20 outdoor spaces and courtyards will be improved.

In addition, the following interventions can be considered for streets and public spaces:

- Introduction of speed limit, traffic signs and equipment for the Decebal street;
- Conservation of the Chisinaului street'
- Repair and reconfiguration of the profiles for the streets: G. Bănulescu-Bodoni, Colcher, str-la Decebal;
- Landscape improvement and equipment of the intersection of the streets Chişinăului and Ştefan cel Mare.

7.6.7 Public access

The rehabilitation project does not intervene on property and public access of the area. The buildings will remain private or semi-public, based on the concept of rehabilitation.

7.6.8 Other benefits

Given the specificity and favourable location, the site has the potential to become an important emblematic place for Soroca, able to mobilize an entire community of residents. In addition to its touristic and economic potential, it may become a catalyst for local cultural life, utilising its specific qualities.

7.7 Finance

7.7.1 Broad assessment of budgetary needs and phasing

The exact costs of the repair works are difficult to assess, given the large number of houses and the variety of needs. Some financial requirements have been described in section 7.4.

By inference, some preliminary estimates can be calculated for the whole area. The average amount for repair / rehabilitation of one house is 1,297,000 MDL =€58,900. For 20 houses the amount is €1,179,000.

7.7.2 Assessment of (real) possibilities for attracting investments

In order to proceed with the rehabilitation of the site, the following sources can be considered:

- National and regional development funds;
- Owners of the houses;
- Local funds of the city and of the district of Soroca (the applicant).

7.7.3 Assessment of (real) possibilities for recovering investments

The houses have very limited recovering possibilities. However, in the event of generating economic activities, the owners, especially those who have direct access to the street, could gain additional income. For example, rustic-rental costs on average €30 per person per night, etc.

7.7.4 Have you already tried to raise funds for this site or monument?

No

7.7.5 Have you already received funds for this site or monument?

No

7.8. Management

The process of rehabilitation this historic quarter consists of several consecutive steps which will be managed by a project implementation unit (PIU). This unit is responsible for: the detailed assessment of conditions on the site; of needs and priorities of intervention; and, of the next stages of the project. The process will require close collaboration with inhabitants and the local authorities. The activities of the PIU will involve, other than technical steps, the following actions:

1. Setting up a consultative working group consisting of representatives of the local community and other stakeholders to oversee and contribute directly to the action;
2. Organize working meetings and debates to assess needs and opportunities for development;
3. Additional fieldwork and research by specialists;
4. Workshops and training courses for the inhabitants, to share experience and acquire skills;
5. Visibility and promotion: interactive activities involving the community.

8. Documentation / additional images





9. Conclusions and recommendations for the elaboration of a feasibility study

In the event that a feasibility study is drafted for the restoration of the Decebal area, the following recommendations should be taken in account:

- Extended research, visibility and community-involvement activities should take place in partnership with the inhabitants;
- Additional expert advice should be sought from structural engineers and professional restorers;
- Consultation with international experts should be considered;
- Assessment of the allowed types of interventions should be conducted, especially regarding:
 - Buildings with historic value;
 - New insertions;
 - Listed buildings;
 - Public spaces.

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Tatiana ROBU
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