

Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS)



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

**Preliminary Technical Assessment**

**Rehabilitation of the Nistru Riverbank and its Adjacent Public Space to Pedestrian Area**

**Soroca**

**Republic of Moldova**

**January 2017**



## **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 Nistru Riverbank



The considered project area, current situation

- 1.1 Country or Territory: Republic of Moldova
- 1.2 Name of organization compiling the information: Soroca District Council
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- 1.5 Name and address of building or site: The bank of the Nistru river (Malul Nistrului Street and the adjacent public space), Soroca city, Soroca district, Republic of Moldova
- 1.6 Inventory reference number(s): N/A
- 1.7 Building/Monument/Site type: open-air public space
- 1.8 Main dates: The street Malul Nistrului and the adjacent public space, from the entrance in the city to the Soroca Noua neighbourhood, within the limits of the urban area – a 4.2 km length section of variable width
- 1.9 Current use(s): recreational, mixed use

## **2. Executive Summary: the site and its management**

The bank of the Nistru river, with the Soroca Fortress as its central element, is an important landmark of the city, which shaped its development from ancient times to the present days. With a wide range of strip and picturesque open spaces along its length, the riverbank is the favourite public space of the majority of Soroca's inhabitants, who visit for recreation and leisure. During the restoration of the fortress, some works were undertaken on the surrounding park and parts of the street. In the absence of an integrating vision for the site, these interventions contributed to the fragmentation of the landscape, as the design and quality of works do not correspond to modern restoration standards.

The street "Malul Nistrului" (the Bank of Nistru) was built in Soviet times and is reinforced by a tall concrete wall to prevent flooding. The parapet, with its industrial appearance, significantly limits the access to the water and encloses the view over the river to Ukraine, at the same time separating it from the city. While the configuration of the space allows open-air activities and festivals, the design and the physical condition do not encourage use at its full potential. The unregulated access of cars also creates pollution and disrupts the experience of pedestrians.

One of the main problems in Soroca is the lack of a functional sewage treatment plant. Currently all the waste of the city is disposed in the river, causing strong smell and serious ecological issues. The problem is exacerbated as the waste disposal is located near the Fortress, which is considered one of the city's main tourist attractions.

The main objective of the project is to enhance the bank of the river in order to provide a vibrant and attractive public space for the inhabitants and visitors, and to reconnect the urban space to the Nistru. The initiative aims to propose an integrated policy for the site which would encourage open-air activities and public participation. While it is foreseen that the regeneration project would be attractive for national and international tourists, the main target group of the site are the local children and adults from different sections of the community, who would have ownership and direct responsibility.

As the central part of the site near the Fortress, with its surrounding park, is the most intensely used space, the project takes into consideration some other adjacent and even distant points of interest, which could be integrated into a tourist route. For example, the natural reserve "Bechirov Iar", a natural monument situated at the entrance in the city, contains a wide range of natural and archaeological features which add value for visitors. The two ferryboats could be improved so as to provide tours on the

other side of the river to Ukraine. The brooks and the wetlands in the Northern part of the site could become an important natural area used for passive recreation.

While it is difficult to provide design recommendations at this early stage, it is generally agreed that the new space should encourage large and small-scale events, festivals and sports competitions; a mixed use of the space. For a project of national importance, as this project is, it is feasible to organize an international design competition.

Along with the design recommendations, some specific technical measures should be implemented. These are mainly related to mechanical cleaning of the waters, construction of the wastewater treatment station, public utilities and street light.

It is estimated that the regeneration project will have a significant impact on local development, even at a national level. It will mobilize various sectors of the community and attract investors. Commercial activities such as leisure, restaurants, cafes, fairs, workshops and events will be encouraged, making a positive economic contribution to the city. The process will generate jobs and thus will increase the city's attractiveness and improve the inhabitant's quality of life.

The proposed policy will avoid overexploitation of the area and favour the needs of the community over private economic interests. Moreover, all interventions should respect the historical status of the site and to the limitations that it imposes.

### **3. Administrative information**

#### **3.1 Responsible Authorities**

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

#### **3.2 Building/Site, Name and Address**

The Nistru riverbank, the urban sector of the city of Soroca

#### **3.3 Map reference**

Spatial reference X, Y coordinates: (geographic centre) 335316.191077, 193158.777507

#### **3.4 Type of monument**

Not listed as historic monument, except the Soroca Fortress and the Petru Rares park

#### **3.5 Ownership**

Public property under management of the Soroca Municipality

#### **3.6 Statutory Protection/Constraints**

The main constraints of interventions are imposed by the following aspects:

1. *The Sorooca Fortress and the Petru Rares park* are historic monuments of national importance, included in the Register of State Protected Monuments (no. 2608). Some other historic monuments of national importance are situated in the immediate vicinity, such as the Sorooca District Hospital.

2. *The “Bechirov Iar” cliff* situated in the southern part of the project area is a registered monument; (a natural geologic and paleontological site, no. 65) managed by the State Forest Service of Sorooca.

3. The project area is situated in the *state border area*, which requires a specific approach.

The Nistru riverbank does not have an individual status of protected monument, with the exception of the section situated near the Fortress (as part of the monument) and partially the Petru Rares park. Nevertheless, the proposal takes into account the registration of the Sorooca Historic Centre (ongoing registration procedure), which includes the project area. The proposed interventions will be co-ordinated and approved by national and local competent authorities who manage cultural heritage. The interventions near the natural reserve “The Bechirov Iar” cliff will be coordinated with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Environment, in order to precisely determine the type of interventions allowed in relation to the status of archaeological and natural protected area.

Any intervention on the site will be undertaken according to the requirements and constraints imposed by the status of protected border area. The design, the construction and modernization works, as well as the activities carried out on the site, will be approved and co-ordinated with the local government and the border police. Commercial activities, of any field but mainly recreational boating, will only take place with the approval of the border police. The maintenance of the banks and the sanitation of waters in the border area is done according to the provisions of treaties signed by Moldova with neighbouring states.

The project will be approved by the local public authority. Only after receiving the respective notice from the local government, will the project be included in the urban planning documentation of Sorooca. The expenses for updating the planning documents will be borne by the beneficiary (the local government of 1st level).

For any proposed intervention on the site an environment impact assessment, will be carried out.

During the development of the landscape improvement project and related local regulations for the site, the local population will be consulted and directly involved in the process.

#### **4. Summary of condition**

The street “Malul Nistrului” (the 4.2km section within the city limits) is in an unsatisfactory physical condition (the covering is damaged, the vegetation is spontaneous, there are no quality street furniture or services). The adjacent public spaces are largely abandoned or neglected. Both are a high priority for intervention.



*The Square near the Palace of Culture and the recently installed Summer Scene is an untidy and rather unattractive space for open-air activities.*

## **5. Existing information**

### **5.1 Documentary sources:**

The documentary sources and studies regarding the project area are quite limited. There is no data or research about the evolution of the site or its use or occupation in time. Some archive photographs offer important details about the configuration of the riverbank in the past.





## 5.2 Bibliography:

1. 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
2. Retro Soroca, Ion Ștefăniță, Nicolae Bulat, “Continental Grup SRL”, Chișinău 2012
3. Newsletter of the project "Integrated revitalization of historic cities for sustainable polycentric development " within the INTERREG III B Neighborhood Programme CADES, Chisinau 2007
4. Orasul Soroca Istorie si contemporaneitate, Vasile Trofaia, Chisinau 2007
5. Study on the situation of Moldovan historic towns, Nesterov Tamara, Chișinău 2007
6. Soroca Urban General Plan, Chișinău 2011
7. The Strategy for Social-Economic Development of Soroca 2015-2020, Soroca 2015
8. The State Archive of Soroca

### Legal acts:

1. Law no. 436-XVI of 28.12.2006 on Local Public Administration
2. Law no. 1530 of 22.06.1993\_ on Monuments Preservation
3. Government Decision no. 73 of 31.01.2014 on the approval of the Regulation of Organization and Functioning of the National Council of Historical Monuments
4. Law no. 83-86 of 05.08.1999 on Culture
5. The Land Code of the Republic of Moldova
6. Law no. 215 of 04.11.2011 on the State border of the Republic of Moldova
7. Law no. 283 of 28.12.2011 on the State Border Police
8. Law no. 440 of 27.04.1995 on Protected Areas and Strips of Rivers and Water Basins
9. Law no. 1538 of 25.02.1998 on State Protected Natural Areas
10. Law no. 721 of 02.02.1996 on Quality of Constructions
11. Law no. 835 of 17.05.1996 on the Principles of Urbanism and Spatial Planning
12. 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, except some technical proposals for constructing the sewage treatment plant

## **6. Scope of the PTA**

### **6.1 Extent/Nature of the assessment:**

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

- 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 reviewed by an international expert.

In addition, contributions will be sought from the local authority, and existing studies on the area will be considered. The PTA was drafted during a one-month period.

### **6.2 Limitations of the study:**

- Lack of information on the historic evolution and use of the site;
- Poor involvement and cooperation of the local inhabitants and of owners of the adjacent lands;
- Big number of partners, authorities and stakeholders;
- Lack of technical documentation of the site;
- Time limits.

## **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 site extends for 4.2km from the entrance to the city to the suburban limit in the Soroca Noua district, with variable width. To the southwest lies its neighbour, the The "Bechirov Iar" cliff reserve, which contains multiple natural and archaeological features. The central element of the site is the Medieval Fortress of Soroca, the main architectural structure on the riverbank, dominating the space. The riverbank is used as promenade, but cars also have access to the site, creating pollution and discomfort. At present, the main role of the bank is to protect from flooding. In this context, it causes separation, disconnecting the urban space with the river.

As the process of restoration of the fortress was initiated, additional landscape works were started, such as the park near the fortress and separate parts of the road, with no intervention on the bank itself. In the absence of an integrated strategic vision for the site, these works were not part of a single concept and did not tackle the current fragmentation of the landscape. At the same time, the quality of the works has proved unsatisfactory, and the design does not meet modern standards for restoration.

### *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 bank is the result of the systematization works carried out during the Soviet period, more precisely, between 1965-1972, when a concrete wall was built along the bank to prevent flooding and serve as a supporting wall for the terrace. The waste collector was built under the sector used as promenade, at a depth of 4-5m.

## **7.2 Significance**

The Nistru riverbank is very significant to the identity of Soroca, it is an important natural feature, shaping the development of the medieval town, and later the modern city. It is the “spine” of the area, determining the configuration of the main streets and generating important landmarks. Besides its historic and urbanistic role, the riverbank has a social and community importance, as it is the main recreational public space for the inhabitants of Soroca.

## **7.3 Vulnerability/Risk assessment**

There are numerous physical threats, such as the danger of flooding and the danger of landslide / crumbling banks. There are additional threats such as floods received from tributary rivers.

Additional risks associated with design, management and exploitation, comprise:

- lack of extensive documentation before formulating the proposal for intervention;
- the construction works may focus on the renewal of the covering of the street, without considering the surrounding open spaces;
- outdated design, which is not in keeping with current community needs;
- lack of a fruitful co-operation between the community, the local authorities, national and local experts;
- lack of highly qualified expertise (restoration specialists, landscape architects, economists, etc.);
- poor quality of the works, cheap materials, outdated technologies, etc.;
- ownership issues and lack of an integrated policy;
- crime in the public space (vandalism, destruction of the urban utilities);
- conflict of interests, favouring private interests over the community needs.

## **7.4 Technical condition**

The current state of the site is rather unsatisfactory, especially in terms of capitalizing on its touristic potential and integration in the local economy. The following issues should be considered:

- circulation of cars creates discomfort;
- asphalt on the street and squares is damaged;
- pedestrian infrastructure is underdeveloped, there are no cycling facilities;
- present landscape design has an industrial aspect;
- trees and bushes are not in keeping with the site and enhance or reflect the values of the historic monument, but limit visibility and access;
- lack of tourism infrastructure (orientation signs in international languages, tourism information points, public toilets, opportunities for recreation and catering);
- access routes require improvement.

### **7.5 Outline summary of required repairs**

The following types of works are here proposed for the rehabilitation of the site:

Technical works:

- mechanical cleaning of the waters;
- construction of the sewage treatment plant;
- enhancement of utility infrastructure;
- improvement of the flooded area in the northern part of the site, flooding prevention works.

Landscape and architectural improvement works:

- reorganization of the river bank, with specific improvement within the limits of the historic centre;
- improving access and the stairs to the river and the city;
- organization of the river terraces for camping and other activities;
- replacement of the covering of the paths and of the stairs;
- organization of facilities for recreation and sport (bicycle lanes, ramps for skateboarding etc.);
- improvement of the beaches;
- improvement of the ferryboat facilities, including for touristic purposes;
- landscape improvement of the flooded area for camping;
- landscape works near the fortress as part of the monument;
- replacement of the greenery, improvement of the lawn;
- improvement of the open spaces near the Palace of Culture;
- modification of the concrete parapet.

Equipment of the public space:

- street lighting;
- tourist orientation signs and boards in international languages;
- urban furniture and devices.

The works will be carried out in consideration of the principles of sustainable development and adaptive use. The regeneration project will encourage mixed use of the space and will avoid rigid prescriptions, except the defined area near the fortress.

### **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 bank of the Nistru and the surrounding urban, open spaces offer a series of opportunities for activities and recreation. At the same time, through its variety of landscapes, it can accommodate large festivals and open-air performances. In order to improve pedestrian access and increase the opportunities for exploitation of the site, these spaces must be integrated, and access to the water must be facilitated. The riverbank regeneration project envisages rehabilitation in two main sections: 1: The historic town; 2: the section outside the historic town. The waterfront and the green space around the Fortress will be included in the work on the Soroca Fortress, a historic monument of national importance.

In order to attract a wider range of experts and improve the visibility of the project, it is recommended that an international architectural-landscaping competition is organised. Applicants should integrate existing elements, such as: the "Bechirov Iar" cliff, the ferryboat customs (including for touristic and recreational purposes), the medieval fortress, the 7 brooks and the landscape opportunities that they offer. It is also recommended that the connection with "Roma Hill" be explored through an extended touristic route.



Proposal for intervention – main elements

### 7.6.2 Conservation philosophy

The conservation and regeneration process will require a high degree of public participation and involvement of the community. Public-private partnerships are encouraged, but the public interests should be favoured over private economic interests.

The Regeneration project will encourage sports activities, active and passive recreation, taking into account the needs of different age and social groups.

Materials and technologies should be of high quality. The imitation of historic materials, finishes and furniture is not recommended, except for the space surrounding the medieval fortress. The public space should be reconfigured so as to allow cycling and pedestrian walks, seasonal activities such as sports

competitions, festivals, fairs and outdoor games. For this purpose, it is recommended to remove the excessive vegetation and physical barriers as needed.

#### *7.6.3 Level of intervention*

Described at 7.5.

#### *7.6.4 Preliminary proposals for appropriate uses, as applicable*

The main use of the site will be recreational. The following activities may be organized:

- local, national and international festivals;
- sports competitions and events, games;
- seasonal fairs;
- open-air performances.

#### *7.6.5 Opportunities for social uses and sustainable development*

The regeneration process and future use of the site will mobilize various parts of the local community and increase the level of civic participation. This project is important due to the high level of involvement and ownership among inhabitants. It also has the capacity to generate income from commercial activities and tourism.

The project will be implemented in respect of the principles and practice of sustainable urban development, by encouraging adaptive reuse of the existing built heritage and safeguarding the integrity of the natural landscape.

#### *7.6.6 Public access*

The site will remain under public property with universal access, managed by the local authority.

#### *7.6.7 Other benefits*

Other benefits will include:

- increased attractiveness of the city;
- increased quality of life of the inhabitants;
- improved visibility and image of Soroca city on a national and international level;
- development of local and international tourism;
- development of creative activities based on cultural heritage;
- increased involvement of the local community.

### **7.7 Finance**

#### *7.7.1 Broad assessment of budgetary needs and phasing*

The accurate financial estimations will be calculated as part of the Feasibility Study. The following estimations can be made at this preliminary stage:

Description of measures	Estimated costs, MDL / including salaries
Repair works of the covering of the street	3,000,000 MDL
Repair works of the street in the medieval area	2,000,000 MDL
Repair of the accessed to the water	5,000,000 MDL
Landscape improvement	1,000,000,000 MDL
Street lighting	2,000,000 MDL
Sanitation works	3,000,000 MDL
Total estimated	115,000,000 MDL = €5,227,300

#### 7.7.2 Assessment of (real) possibilities for attracting investments

In order to attract investment, the following financing bodies can be considered:

- national and regional development funds;
- international and cross-border cooperation funds;
- local funds of the city and of the district of Soroca (the applicant).

#### 7.7.3 Assessment of (real) possibilities for recovering investments.

Income may result from:

- organization of local and international entertainment events;
- fairs and workshops during national holidays;
- sports competitions;
- catering, entertainment, services.

#### 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 regeneration project will be implemented by a Project Implementation Unit (PIU), responsible for planning, organization of the process, monitoring and visibility. The PIU is composed of long-term and short-term experts, responsible for specific tasks of the project. The PIU members will complete their tasks according to the skills and requirements detailed in the guidelines of the funding partner, and approved by the beneficiary. Highly-skilled activities requiring will be led by a specific co-ordinator, supervised and supported by the Lead expert.

The project activities will include creation of a working group consisting from representatives of the local community and various stakeholders, including the managing partners, who will oversee and directly contribute to the process. The following activities should be carried out:

- organization of meetings for the working group and debates involving the wider community for assessing the needs and opportunities for the site development;
- organization of promotional activities to raise the visibility and awareness of the project, foster dialogue and attract investors;
- community-involvement activities with different age groups, including children and the elderly;
- additional fieldwork and research with qualified specialists;
- workshops, study visits and training courses with the community for learning good practices and sharing knowledge and skills.

The technical steps will be carried out hand in hand with community-led activities. The final design for the site will be developed according to the outcomes of the latter.

The Soroca municipality is the main partner responsible for ensuring sustainability, planning the annual funding for maintenance of the rehabilitated site.

8. Documentation / additional images



## 9. Conclusions and recommendations for elaboration of a Feasibility Study

The Feasibility study for the rehabilitation project should take into consideration the following recommendations:

- defining the exact perimeter of the project area;
- assessing and designing methods for community participation;
- additional consultancy with all involved partners (specified at 3.1);
- additional advice from professional qualified specialists: restorers, landscape architects, environmental specialists;
- international expertise.

PTA elaborated by  
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