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Archethics Dissonant European heritage as a laboratory of democracy

Integrated Action Plan of the Kazanlak Municipality for the Buzludzha Monument

Buzludzha as a global cultural destination - a place for sustainable tourism, education and art.



Kazanlak
Municipality

ARCHETHICS

URBACT



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Executive summary

The Buzludzha Monument, a state-owned heritage site of national significance located on the territory of Kazanlak Municipality, stands as one of Europe's most emblematic and controversial examples of 20th-century post-war modernist architecture. After decades of abandonment and decay, its status as a dissonant heritage site presents a profound challenge: how to preserve its high architectural value while navigating a complex and polarized public narrative. This Integrated Action Plan (IAP) provides a comprehensive strategic framework to address this challenge with the overarching vision to establish **“Buzludzha as a global cultural destination - a place for sustainable tourism, education and art.”**

This vision is built upon **three interconnected strategic pillars**, which integrate cross-cutting themes of environmental sustainability (green tourism), digitalisation, and social inclusion. These pillars are put into practice through the following 10 concrete actions, which are grouped below by their primary strategic objective:

1. Strategic Planning: Securing the monument's legal and administrative foundation to ensure its long-term protection and sustainable development.

- Action 1: Enhance heritage protection and recognition
- Action 2: Include in strategic plans
- Action 3: Develop a conservation management plan for the complex

2. Tourism Development: Analyse and develop the site to transform the monument into a high-quality, organised, and integrated tourism destination.

- Action 4: Develop a visitor access plan
- Action 5: Establish a Buzludzha information and archive centre
- Action 6: Include in local events and tourist materials

3. Citizens' Involvement: Fostering a deep sense of local ownership and stewardship, which is essential for the long-term social and economic sustainability of the project.

- Action 7: Include in school educational programs
- Action 8: Train citizens to be local tour guides
- Action 9: Produce a documentary film
- Action 10: Develop a sustainable framework for the ULG group

STRATEGIC PLANNING	TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 1: Enhance heritage protection and recognition • Action 2: Include in strategic plans • Action 3: Develop a conservation management plan for the complex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 4: Develop a visitor access plan • Action 5: Establish a Buzludzha information and archive centre • Action 6: Include in local events and tourist materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 7: Include in school educational programs • Action 8: Train citizens to be local tour guides • Action 9: Produce a documentary film • Action 10: Develop a sustainable framework for the ULG group

The actions follow a clear, multi-layered logic, moving from foundational strategy to public involvement. The planning begins with **securing the monument's formal, legal and strategic planning framework** (Actions 1, 2, 3), which establishes the necessary groundwork for all future development. The second part supports the development of **tourism and informational infrastructure** (Actions 4, 5, 6), making the site more accessible on- and off-site. Finally, this work is anchored by **a set of community-focused actions** (Actions 7, 8, 9, 10) designed to build long-term local ownership, manage the site's complex narrative and ensure its social sustainability through education, co-creation and a permanent participatory structure.

The successful implementation of this 10-action plan relies on a **collaborative, multi-level governance model**. It will be guided by the central coordination between the Kazanlak Municipality and the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora, with the expert support of the Buzludzha Project Foundation. This plan is grounded in a diversified funding strategy, leveraging EU funds, public administrative capacity, private sponsorships and self-funding models.

This IAP marks a definitive shift from preservation-by-emergency to a strategic, long-term vision. It provides the comprehensive framework to engage with the community, and build the durable, sustainable ecosystem required to use a dissonant heritage site as a source of opportunities for local and national development.



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1. Context, needs and vision

1.1 Introduction

Kazanlak Municipality

Kazanlak Municipality is located in the central part of Bulgaria, within the Rose Valley, known for its natural beauty. According to the latest data from December 2024, the municipality has a population of 63,529 people. 41,537 reside in the administrative center, the town of Kazanlak. Thanks to its strategic location, the municipality has excellent transport connectivity. It is crossed by European Transport Corridor No. 9, as well as key national road and railway routes, making it attractive for business, logistics and regional development.

Kazanlak's economy plays a leading role in the Stara Zagora region, with well-developed mechanical engineering and textile industries. The town is home to the largest employer in Bulgaria - Arsenal AD, a manufacturer of armaments and ammunition, alongside major companies such as M+S Hydraulic and Caproni. Agriculture is also a vital sector, with traditions in cultivating oil-bearing roses, lavender, mint and fruit crops. Kazanlak is the center of Bulgaria's rose oil production, and its rose products are internationally recognised.

Tourism in the region is based on unique Thracian archaeological monuments, proximity to the Central Balkan Nature Reserve and cultural events like the Rose Festival. The area features nine Thracian tombs, including the renowned Kazanlak Tomb - UNESCO heritage site. It also hosts the only Museum of Rose Industry in Bulgaria and mineral springs with healing properties in the village of Ovoshnik.

Buzludzha Monument

The Memorial House of the Bulgarian Communist Party, known today as the Buzludzha Monument, is the largest ideological monument in Bulgaria. The location was chosen because of its great significance in Bulgarian history. At Buzludzha Peak (today Peak Hadzhi Dimitar), three key historic events took place: in 1868, the last and fatal battle of Hadzhi Dimitar's rebels fighting for Bulgaria's liberation from the Ottoman Empire; in 1891, the Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers' Party was founded; and in 1944, a World War II battle occurred between fascist and partisan forces.

The decision to build the monument was made by the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1971, and the project was led by architect Georgi Stoilov. Construction began in 1974 and lasted seven years, with the participation of more than 6,000 people, including volunteers, military construction troops, and various professional and supporting brigades. Funding was provided through public contributions amounting to over 14 million leva. Infrastructure was also built to connect the site.

The architecture combines styles such as Brutalism and Modernism. The main materials used in the construction were concrete, steel, and glass. The building was constructed with 70,000 tons of concrete, 3,000 tons of reinforced steel, and 40 tons of gilded glass. The main elements are a spherical body with a diameter of 56 meters (a concrete shell and steel dome) and a 70-meter-high pylon holding two red pentagrams. The principal spaces include an entrance foyer, a main hall with a diameter of 35 meters, and a panoramic walkway by the windows. The interior is decorated with almost 1,000 square meters of mosaics. The mosaics depict the struggles of the Bulgarian Communist Party and the building of a socialist society.

During the monument's eight years of use it was visited by more than two million people, serving as a political museum and ceremonial venue. No entrance fee was required, but advanced written application was necessary. Up to 500 people could enter every hour and they would see the sound and light show in the main hall and walk around the panoramic walkway with a guide explaining the mosaics. Additionally, regular ceremonial events such as accepting new members to the party were held here.

After the political changes and the transition of Bulgaria to democracy in 1989, the monument, representing the power of the Bulgarian Communist Party, was closed. In 1992, it was nationalized and shortly afterwards the last employees were laid off and the monument was abandoned. First, the inventory of the building was stolen. Then all metal elements from the building were removed, including the 2,500 square metres of copper roof covering. Many marble and granite plates were taken off and reused in housing projects. In the following years, due to the lack of a roof covering, as well as exposure to constant severe climatic conditions, the monument suffered significant damage. However, it represents an internationally significant dissonant heritage site, deserving preservation and reassessment.

1.2 Current situation

Ownership and status

The Buzludzha Monument is located within the territory of Kazanlak Municipality. It lies within the scope of the National Park-Museum "Shipka-Buzludzha". The monument itself is state-owned and managed by the Regional Administration of Stara

Zagora. Since 2021, the monument has been classified as an architectural, construction and artistic immovable cultural property of the most recent period, with the category “of national significance”.

Condition of the building

While some of the elements are missing or in advanced stages of decay, others are intact or in good condition. Most importantly, currently the primary load-bearing elements are in good condition. A main challenge is the missing roof covering. As the copper roof cladding was entirely dismantled in the mid-1990s, due to constant exposure to severe weather the roofing layers—wooden cladding, insulation, and metal sheets—began to degrade and disintegrate. The remaining debris were professionally removed in 2022. Currently, only the metal structure remains; it needs to be treated and covered with a new roofing system.

The building has 16 window openings measuring approximately eight by two metres each. All glazing is completely missing. The original water supply and sewage systems, as well as the electrical system, are non-functional and most of their integral elements are missing or degraded. Temporary electrical power is available.

Among the monument’s most valuable elements are the mosaics, which cover nearly 1,000 square metres. The lack of roof coverage, snow and rain infiltration and overall exposure to the elements are the main causes of the loss of roughly one third of the mosaics. The remaining mosaics have been stabilised and protected with temporary shelters and installations that successfully prevent further degradation.

Preservation Initiative

The initiative for the preservation of the monument was started in 2015 by the Buzludzha Project Foundation. The NGO managed to involve experts, institutions and citizens for developing sustainable solutions for the monument’s future. They developed a Conservation Management Plan for the monument (2019 - 2021), implemented the emergency measures for the monument’s mosaics (2020 - 2022), and since 2021, have organised an annual festival attracting thousands of visitors.

Dissonance

The monument represents a dissonant heritage site as there are contrasting views about its past, present and future. While there are still people who want to see it destroyed, the majority of Bulgarians now support the idea of its preservation. How this is going to be implemented is also a dissonant topic as the views vary significantly. This presents a major challenge, but equally a great opportunity for inclusive planning and implementation.

1.3 Existing strategies and policies

Integrated Development Plan of Kazanlak Municipality

The active role of Kazanlak Municipality and the search for solutions for the Buzludzha Monument was outlined as early as 2019, when the Municipality joined the EU Urban Agenda program under the sub-theme "Dissonant Heritage", with the specific goal of socialising the Buzludzha Monument.

Furthermore, the Kazanlak Municipality included Buzludzha Monument in the currently active plan "Integrated Development Plan of Kazanlak Municipality 2021–2027". The specific action related to the monument is "Restoration, improved access and socialisation of the monument on Buzludzha Peak and its integration into tourist routes and products." This plan is laying the foundation for its restoration, adaptation and future development.

Thanks to this strategic document, the municipality was able to include Buzludzha within its Concept for Integrated Territory Investment (ITI) with the project "Conservation and Adaptation of the Buzludzha Monument - Stage 1: Consolidation". The project application was successful, and funds will be allocated for the implementation of the action. It includes concept development for Buzludzha Monument, planning and construction work for the implementation of a new roof covering and new windows. These are the most important actions to stop the water infiltration and process of decay for the building. The project will be implemented by the main partner and site owner, Regional Administration of Stara Zagora in partnership with Buzludzha Project Foundation. The project started in October 2025 and it is expected to be finalized within a maximum of 36 months.

The activities for implementing this measure are key to expanding the region's tourism potential. Moreover, these measures form the basis for the further conservation and development of the monument.

As part of the application process, a sustainable form of managing the monument was sought, as the development of Buzludzha would take a considerable period of time and continuous commitment. However, turning this vision into reality will take a considerable amount of time and continuous commitment. In this regard, the mayor of Kazanlak asked the citizens of the municipality whether the municipality should acquire the right to manage the monument for a period of 10 years. This question was put to a local referendum on November 17, 2024. Over 12, 075 citizens voted, which is 19.44% of the people who have voting rights. Of those, 11,240 (93.08%) answered positively and 611 (6.92%) negatively. However, the validity threshold for a referendum in Bulgaria is that 40 percent of people should vote. Therefore, administratively the referendum's result was not binding. Nevertheless, it showed the interest and support of the people in the municipality. As a result, the ownership of

the monument stays within the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora, who will be carrying the responsibility of implementing the project for the consolidation of the monument with new roof covering and windows.

Conservation Management Plan by Buzludzha Project Foundation

The Buzludzha Project Foundation has developed a comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for the Buzludzha Monument, which was key for the application development for the Concept for Integrated Territory Investment (ITI). Starting in 2019, over 100 experts from 10 countries collaborated for the strategic document. The plan includes a digital database with over 2,000 scanned archival drawings, detailed laser scanning with 7 billion points, and a precise 3D BIM model of the structure. Extensive structural and utilities surveys assessed the condition of materials, supporting elements and technical systems. Architectural and landscape studies documented materials, technologies and the surrounding area, while laboratory tests identified hazardous substances. Historical analyses explored the monument's architectural and artistic context. A thorough significance assessment defined conservation principles based on national and international standards, establishing a 10-year strategy for protection and adaptation. Reuse studies proposed new functional and design concepts, including options for roof refurbishment. Finally, the tourism potential, sustainability and investment needs were analysed to provide a long-term business and management model for the monument's revitalization. Authored by the Buzludzha Project Foundation, the plan is not publicly available but has informed the strategic development of the monument.

1.4 Problem identification

Lack of Approved General Concept

A major challenge is the lack of a comprehensive and state-endorsed long-term concept for the conservation, development and management of the monument. Such a concept is to be developed within the framework of the Integrated Territory Investment (ITI) in partnership between Kazanlak Municipality, the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora and the Buzludzha Project Foundation. Developing a management method that allows the building to open to visitors is of fundamental importance.

Misinterpretations

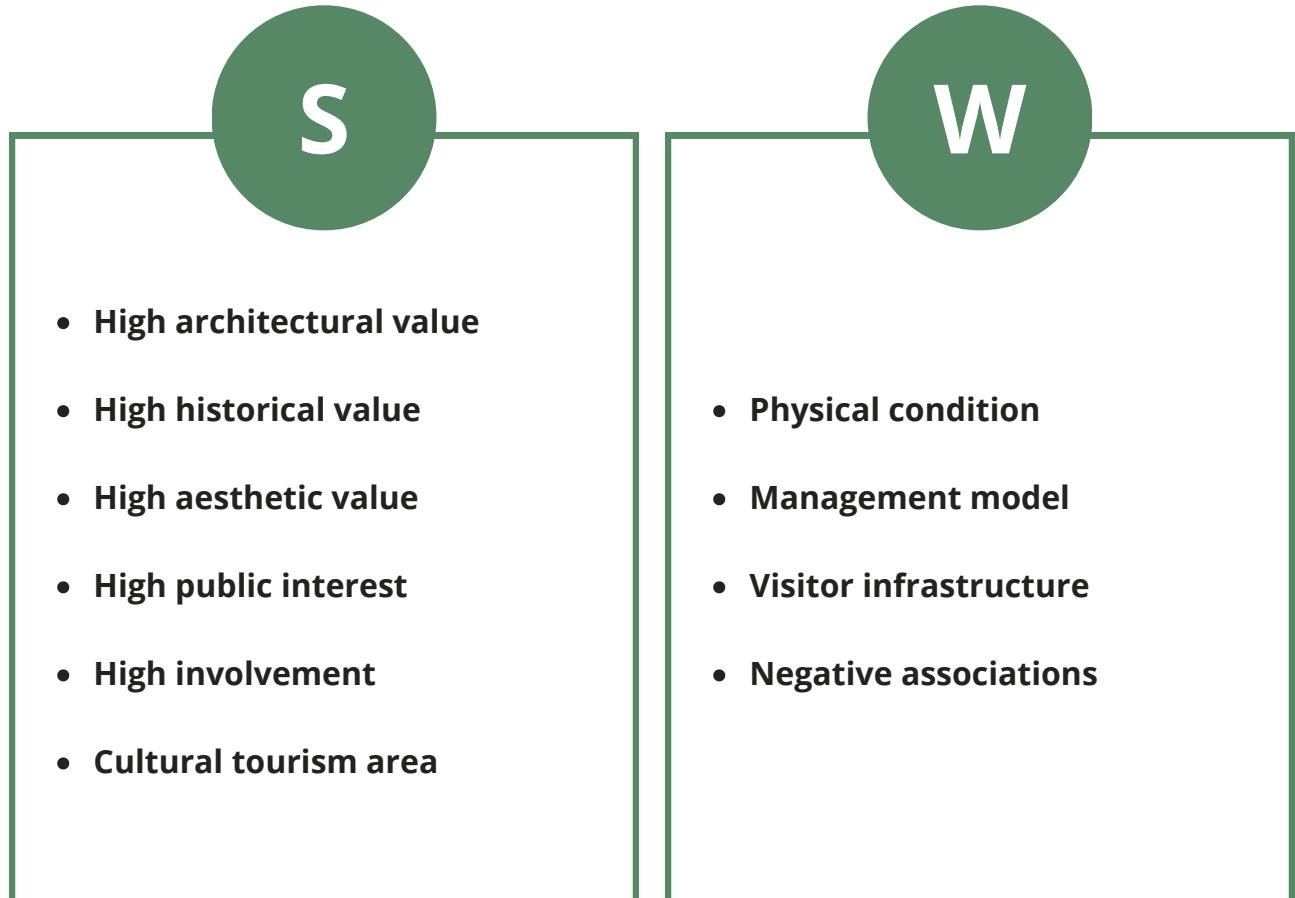
Another challenge is the misunderstandings of the Buzludzha preservation project due to its dissonant nature. It evokes strong and divergent emotions and associations. According to a minority the monument should be demolished, as they associate it with the political regime in Bulgaria in whose honour it was built, and they refuse to perceive it through a different lens—as a site of high cultural and architectural value.

Due to the complexity of the topic, some individuals incorrectly believe the preservation of the monument aims for a restoration of both the building and its associated ideology. This provokes negative reactions and opposition. Therefore, timely and comprehensive communication about its future development is essential.

Physical Challenges

The preservation of the Buzludzha Monument faces major physical challenges due to its remote mountain location and harsh climatic conditions, which restrict conservation work to the period between May and October. The building was constructed with contemporary materials and experimental techniques that have been severely exposed to decades of extreme weather. This has led to rapid degradation of some elements, creating complex conservation issues. Combined with the monument's remoteness and scale, these factors demand innovative and non-standard technical solutions to ensure long-term preservation of both the monument and its surrounding landscape.





S

- High architectural value
- High historical value
- High aesthetic value
- High public interest
- High involvement
- Cultural tourism area

W

- Physical condition
- Management model
- Visitor infrastructure
- Negative associations

O

- Integration into a regional cultural and tourism network
- International recognition and funding
- New functionality
- Diverse and sustainable tourism

T

- Fast deterioration
- Vandalism and theft
- Financial resources
- Public perception

SWOT analysis

Strengths:

- **High architectural value** - The Buzludzha Monument is one of the most emblematic and significant buildings of post-war modernism in Bulgaria and in Europe.
- **High historical value** - Deeply connected to Bulgaria's history, from the battles for liberation to the socialist period.
- **High aesthetic value** - The monument has a strong cultural and artistic impact. The complex is among the most prominent examples of contextual Bulgarian architecture.
- **High public interest** - Despite being abandoned and closed to visitors for years, Buzludzha remains one of the most visited and debated abandoned sites in Europe.
- **High involvement** - Experts, young people, and the general public both in Bulgaria and abroad have been involved and are supporting the preservation process
- **Cultural tourism area** - The region is offering multiple cultural destinations and is a developed tourist destination, creating preconditions for linking the monument.

Weaknesses:

- **Physical condition** - The missing roof covering and damage caused by vandalism and harsh weather pose serious challenges to conservation and restoration.
- **Management model** - There is still no clear long-term management model, which will allow the opening and operating of the monument.
- **Visitor infrastructure** - The monument is closed and there is currently no information system or visitor infrastructure on-site.
- **Negative associations** - People associate the monument with Bulgaria's communist past. This is politicising the topic and challenging each new development.

Opportunities:

- **Integration into a regional cultural and tourism network** - The monument can be included in cultural tourism routes connecting sites such as the Monument of Freedom, the Thracian Tombs in Kazanlak, the Etar complex, etc.
- **International recognition and funding** - Thanks to its architectural significance, the site has strong potential for inclusion in key strategic documents and development strategies, EU funding and even the UNESCO world heritage list.
- **New functionality** - The monument can become a multifunctional cultural centre, museum, and venue for events, discussions and creative activities.

- **Diverse and sustainable tourism** – The area around the monument allows for historical, cultural, eco and other types of tourism. Investment in eco-friendly infrastructure can increase attractiveness while protecting the environment.

Threats:

- **Fast deterioration** – The high-mountain location exposes the monument to severe weather, especially in winter, accelerating the deterioration of materials and creating preconditions for further damage.
- **Vandalism and theft** – Without permanent security, unauthorized visits may continue to threaten the building's condition and development.
- **Financial resources** – The high costs of conservation, restoration, development and maintenance require long-term financial planning and substantial investment.
- **Public perception** – Broad public support is needed for the monument's future development. Changing negative perceptions is a slow and complex process.

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1.5 Stakeholders

The success and long-term sustainability of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) depend fundamentally on a broad and collaborative partnership involving a diverse range of stakeholders. The revitalisation of the monument is not the work of a single entity but a collective effort that brings together public authorities at national, regional and local levels, civil society, diverse organisations and the local community.

The **key stakeholders** involved in planning and implementation are grouped as follows:

KEY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	KEY PUBLIC INSTITUTION	CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGO	PRIVATE SECTOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kazanlak Municipality• Regional Administration of Stara Zagora• Ministry of Culture• Ministry of Tourism• Gabrovo Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Park-Museum "Shipka-Buzludzha"• Bulgarka Nature Park• Municipal Tourism Enterprise "Kazanlak ART"• Historical Museum "Iskra"• Art Gallery Kazanlak	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buzludzha Project Foundation• "Eagle's Nest" Tourist Association• Local citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Hotel, Guesthouse and Hut Owners• Restaurant and Bar Owners• Local Tour Guides & Tour Operators• Local Transport Companies• Major Regional Businesses

1. Key public authorities (National, Regional and Local)

The authorities that provide essential administrative, legal and strategic framework. Their involvement is crucial for management, policy integration, official recognition and public funding.

- **Kazanlak Municipality** – responsible for the territory, the tourism development and the community engagement.
- **Regional Administration of Stara Zagora** – responsible for the administrative management of the monument
- **Ministry of Culture** – responsible for heritage protection policy; through the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage (NIICH) provides methodological guidance and official validation for planning, conservation and status enhancement.

- **Ministry of Tourism** – responsible for tourism strategic development and for integration of Buzludzha into national tourism strategies and promotional campaigns.
- **Gabrovo Municipality** – neighboring municipality on the north side of the mountain, a key partner for future territorial integration and the development of joint tourism routes.

2. Key public institutions (Cultural, Heritage, and Nature)

The public and municipal institutions that manage related cultural, natural and tourism assets, acting as key partners for content, regional integration, and visitor experience.

- **National Park-Museum “Shipka-Buzludzha”** - A national historical park, within which Buzludzha Monument is located. It is a key partner for all on-site activities, visitor access and landscape preservation.
- **Bulgarka Nature Park** - A protected nature park located near to Buzludzha Monument. It is a key partner for landscape preservation and eco-tourism.
- **Municipal Tourism Enterprise “Kazanlak ART”** – responsible for promoting Kazanlak as a destination and developing new tourism products. It is a key partner for integrating Buzludzha into all regional tourism promotions and developing new visitor packages.
- **Historical Museum “Iskra”** - The primary municipal museum of Kazanlak, housing regional history and Thracian artifacts, a key partner for projects development
- **Art Gallery Kazanlak** - The municipal art gallery, a key partner for projects development

3. Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organisations

The civic drivers, community representatives and non-profit organizations essential for co-creation, public engagement and ensuring the project's social sustainability.

- **Buzludzha Project Foundation** - provides expert knowledge, drives the conservation and development concept, leads community engagement and facilitates stakeholder dialogue.
- **“Eagle's Nest” Tourist Association** - represents local mountain and hiking tourism, owners of the two Buzludzha huts.
- **Local citizens** - ultimate beneficiaries and co-creators.

4. Private Sector

Local and regional businesses who are key economic stakeholders and partners for developing sustainable tourism products, services and providing financial or in-kind support.

Accommodation & Hospitality:

- **Local Hotel, Guesthouse and Hut Owners** (e.g., places located near the monument like **guesthouse Diana, hotel Edelweiss, Kings' Valley SPA & Wellness hotel**) – Key partners for developing "stay and visit" tourism packages and promoting the site.
- **Restaurant and Bar Owners** – (e.g., "Gradini" bar) engaged local businesses, beneficiaries from more tourism that can promote the project

Tourism & Transport Services:

- **Local Tour Guides & Tour Operators** (e.g., "**Voyage**" tour operator) – Private guides and agencies who can partner and sell tourism packages.
- **Local Transport Companies** – Potential private operators for a pilot shuttle service and other visitor transport.

Local Industry & Sponsors:

- **Major Regional Businesses** – Potential partners for corporate sponsorship and in-kind contributions.

This coalition of partners forms the backbone of the IAP, ensuring that the transformation of Buzludzha Monument is comprehensive and resilient—anchored in high-level strategy and deep community ownership.

ULG group meetings

After analysing and mapping the stakeholders, all main actors were invited to join the **URBACT Local Group (ULG)**, which embodies the participatory spirit of the URBACT methodology. Bringing together representatives from local authorities, residents, cultural and educational institutions, and private-sector actors, the ULG serves as a collaborative platform where strategies and actions are co-produced.

The IAP's development was structured as a deliberate two-phase consultation process to ensure this co-production was effective:

- **Phase 1: Inform about project and invite ideas (2023-2024)**

The stakeholders in the fields of culture and tourism were identified as most relevant, most influenced and most interested in a future development for Buzludzha Monument. Additionally, the young people of Kazanlak were specified as important stakeholders especially in the field of dissonant heritage. On the one hand, they often have unbiased points of view. On the other hand, they are the future guardians of the heritage preserved now. Therefore, three initial meetings were held: one with the cultural sector, one with the tourism sector and one with local students. The purpose was to present the Archethics project and the IAP's goals, and to gather foundational ideas and recommendations. These sessions focused on co-creating the vision for Buzludzha and brainstorming ideas that could become actions to contribute to this vision short and long-term.

- **Phase 2: Inform about ideas and invite co-creating actions (2025)**

The recommendations from Phase 1 were used to build the IAP's core logic and draft main ideas for actions. In 2025, three more targeted ULG meetings were held with representatives from the same three groups: the cultural sector, tourism sector and young people. In this phase the Buzludzha volunteers were identified as a highly engaged group of young people, caring deeply for the monument development. The purpose of this phase was to present concrete ideas for actions to prove their relevance with the participants, to check for missing ideas and to design the planning details with multiple aspects. This phase received specific recommendations, which were used to finalize the actions and their details.

This two-phase approach proved to be a highly successful model for collaboration. The participants were very satisfied. First, because they were invited to co-create and second, because they saw specific progress and development, which they have co-designed. This approach ensures that the IAP is not only technically sound but is genuinely co-produced, socially inclusive, relevant and widely supported.



1.6 Vision

“Buzludzha as a global cultural destination - a place for sustainable tourism, education and art.”

The vision for Buzludzha redefines one of Europe's most emblematic and controversial modernist monuments as a living space for dialogue, education, creativity, and sustainable cultural tourism. Once a symbol of ideological power, the monument is envisioned as a centre for encounters and exchange, where the past is not erased but critically interpreted through the prism of democracy, culture, and shared European values. At the core of this transformation lies the conviction that dissonant heritage can serve as a source of understanding and critical reflection rather than division, and that through dialogue and creativity it can become a catalyst for innovation, civic engagement, and community development.

The ultimate objective is the transformation of Buzludzha monument into an international cultural centre, operating year-round and offering diverse opportunities for conferences, congresses, symposia, cultural events, exhibitions, and artistic programs. The extensive natural surroundings of the monument provide favourable conditions for the development of tourism, sports, and educational activities, complementing its primary function and positioning the region as a preferred destination. In this way, Buzludzha can evolve into an integrated cultural and tourism product, combining existing assets - monuments, mountain lodges, eco-trails, with newly developed services and facilities, grounded in sustainable principles and designed to support the local economy while generating added value for the community, the region, and the country.

This future rests on three interlinked pillars: strategic heritage planning, ensuring the protection and sustainable management of the monument; tourism development, creating meaningful and accessible experiences rooted in cultural and environmental responsibility; and citizen participation, fostering local ownership, pride, and active involvement. Together, these pillars form the foundation for Buzludzha's evolution into a global cultural and tourist destination within the European framework of dissonant heritage.

The vision for Buzludzha's future is aligned with European priorities for the green transition, digital innovation, and social inclusion. It is not merely a project for the preservation of an architectural and historical landmark, but an ambitious initiative to transform it into an international forum for culture, education, and democracy, where the past informs the future, and heritage inspires progress.



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1.7 Integration challenges

This section addresses the main integration challenges for the implementation of this plan. It focuses on the aspects which are crucial for it to be an integrated action and not just an isolated idea. The plan's design provides a coherent response to the following complex and interconnected challenges:

Complex Governance & Stakeholder Structure

The responsibility for the monument's future is distributed across multiple organisations at national, regional and municipal levels (e.g., Ministry of Culture, Regional Administration of Stara Zagora, Kazanlak Municipality), all with different mandates. In this regard, one of the primary integration challenges for this IAP's implementation is to create a coherent process that unifies these diverse actors and overcomes the high risk of administrative conflict, siloed decision-making and the lack of a shared, actionable vision. This is why the IAP's actions are designed to build a collaborative and participatory framework, ensuring a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities from the outset.

Consolidation Project

A further primary integration challenge is the co-existence and co-development of the IAP and the forthcoming large-scale consolidation project for Buzludzha. The IAP is designed to complement this project, led by the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora in partnership with Kazanlak Municipality and the Buzludzha Project Foundation. The project will address urgent structural needs by constructing a permanent roof and installing new windows within the next three years. While the restoration focuses on physical stabilization, the IAP addresses the social, cultural and communicative dimensions of the process and focuses on **“soft” investments** (human capital) **rather than hard investments** (physical/infrastructure). Given that Buzludzha is a complex and sensitive dissonant heritage site, transparent communication, education and community engagement are essential to build understanding and prevent polarization. The actions outlined in the IAP ensure that public dialogue and citizen participation advance in parallel with the construction phase, strengthening trust and ownership among the community. Moreover, proposing further conservation works, adaptive reuse or activities inside the building at this stage would be premature due to the ongoing project for a new roof and windows (please refer to 2.1. Overall logic and integrated approach). In addition, any work and activity at the monument is directly dependent on the building's owner—the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora. Therefore, the activities in this plan are designed to build the long-term framework for development, tourism and community engagement so that, while conservation works are ongoing, the monument is supported by a durable ecosystem.

The two processes described above are separate, yet critically co-dependent. A clear strategy is required to ensure these two tracks remain interconnected and advance in parallel. This challenge is amplified because the progress or even the direction of the large-scale consolidation project could face difficulties, which could affect the successful implementation and relevance of this IAP's "soft" actions.

Environmental, social and economic sustainability

The vision for Buzludzha's future requires a sustainable approach, creating a significant integration challenge across three interconnected pillars:

- **The Environmental Challenge** is rooted in the project's scale and long-term nature. Transforming Buzludzha into a global cultural destination is a massive, multi-stage undertaking that will inevitably have a significant impact on the entire surrounding area. This scale presents a primary challenge in protecting the wider complex and preventing its long-term degradation. This challenge is amplified because the entire complex is located within the protected territories of both Park-Museum "Shipka-Buzludzha" and close to the Nature Park "Bulgarka". Therefore, every action must be carefully integrated to balance development goals with the legal and ecological requirements of these two parks.
- **The Social Challenge** lies in achieving active involvement from all key stakeholders, especially citizens, given the monument's dissonant history. This makes it difficult to build a shared community vision and foster inclusion rather than deepen polarisation. This is why a key priority in the plan's development is to find how to overcome the high risk that any action could be misinterpreted as ideological, creating opposition, which in turn could create significant public opposition and undermine the plan's goals.
- **The economic challenge** in securing funding for implementing the vision is a long-term endeavor. Changes in the political situation and the levels of dissonance could be a challenge for continuous public financial support. On the other hand, there is no system put in place for involving private investments or loans.

Ownership of the monument and of the actions

A key institutional challenge for the IAP's integration is that Kazanlak Municipality is not the monument's owner (it is state-owned and managed by the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora), yet the municipality is a primary driver of this IAP. This creates a complex political and administrative situation where the municipality should include the plan's actions into its own existing portfolio of projects, strategies and budgets without having the leading ownership role. Therefore, this poses a significant challenge for securing funding for the IAP's actions.

It makes it difficult to internally justify the allocation of a dedicated municipal budget for a long-term plan focused on an asset the municipality does not legally control, making the IAP dependent on external grants. It is critical to rely on a collaborative and participatory multi-level governance framework to successfully implement the plan's actions.

Spatial integration

A key spatial integration challenge stems from the monument's location on the border between Kazanlak and Gabrovo Municipality. Although Buzludzha is a shared tourist and cultural asset with interest from both sides, the two municipalities are in different administrative regions. This territorial divide means they operate under their own, separate funding strategies and, as a result, have no history of common strategies or joint projects for the monument. Therefore, it is important to find strategic opportunities to include nearby regions like Gabrovo and transform the monument into a shared regional asset for cross-municipal collaboration and joint tourism development.

1.8 Testing activity

To prove some main concepts and ideas of this Integrated Action Plan the Kazanlak Municipality conceptualized and implemented a testing activity as part of this project. It was a photo competition titled "Buzludzha Through the Lens of Time", which took place in August 2025. A main goal is to check what would be the interest of the public to be active participants in campaigns related to the Buzludzha monument, having in mind the work done for the popularization and conservation of the monument so far. The philosophy of this testing activity includes co-design and active outreach. Participants are providing their pictures, becoming active ambassadors of the project. These are displayed in different contexts, reaching further audiences. The content is done by the public for the public and is not an imposed view or message.

Description of the testing activity

The photo competition was announced with three categories:

- **"Archive Photography"** - Share personal archival photos from the construction and operation of the monument
- **"Contemporary Photography"** - Share current shots of the monument from recent years – your unique angle, light or emotion.
- **"Future Vision"** - Show us how you see the future of Buzludzha – through images created using AI, photo manipulation or artistic techniques.



The campaign was announced officially on the Kazanlak Municipality webpage and social media as well as the social media of Buzludzha Project Foundation. A jury was established, led by Bedros Azinyan, the official photographer of Buzludzha from 1981 to 1989, and the winners were awarded at the opening ceremony of the OPEN BUZLUDZHA festival in August. The 10 winning photos were exhibited during the three days of the festival directly on the facade of Buzludzha monument, reaching the festival visitors. In September during the Zagreb Museum Weekend the top three photos were exhibited in the gallery of the largest museum in Zagreb, the Museum of Arts and Crafts. In October the exhibition was displayed during the Kazanlak meeting of the Archethics project partners. Moreover, the pictures illustrate this strategic document, giving it a high visual impact.

The photos highlight the visual appeal of Buzludzha Monument, one of its strongest assets. They can be used multiple times in the future in different contexts and serve as ambassadors of the plan, the vision and this project.

Learnings from the testing activity:

Public interest in Buzludzha campaigns: Considering a rather simple and short communication campaign, the 57 submissions from participants show high interest in such formats of engagement. The participants were aged between 16 to 68, and were both local and international, showing the potential of inclusion between generations, regions, countries and genders.

Communication campaign: While the category "Contemporary Photography" had a high number of entries, the other two categories "Archive Photography" and "Future Vision" had fewer. Feedback revealed that more time is needed for people to find and scan their archive pictures and more clarifications and instructions are needed for creating completely new visuals for the future vision. For future campaigns it is important to have a broader information campaign and a longer application window. Also, under consideration is conducting separate contests for each category, so that the communication is clearer and more specific.

Multiple levels of outreach: The idea of implementing such campaigns is that they activate citizens on different levels multiple times. First, more than 20,000 people were reached on social media with the announcement of the competition, which represents positive and inclusive communication on the topic. Second, over 1,000 saw the exhibition on the Buzludzha facade and at the Zagreb Gallery. Third, over 30 000 people saw pictures of the exhibitions on social media.

The public is influencing the public: In such campaigns a very positive feature is that the public is reached and influenced by content created by the public. This shows open and democratic communication instead of imposed content.

Impact on the monument: Exhibiting the winning photos on the monument's façade during OPEN BUZLUDZHA 2025 symbolically transformed the closed structure into a living gallery. This highlights the potential of the monument in a very direct and accessible way, which creates support for its preservation.

Cooperation model: Organised by the Kazanlak Municipality, with the support of the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora and the Buzludzha Project Foundation, it demonstrated effective multi-level cooperation.

In conclusion, the testing activity proved successful for the implementation of public activation campaigns about Buzludzha. Further, such campaigns are suggested as part of Action 5 within the work of a Buzludzha information and archive centre as well as part of Action 7 as an extracurricular activity for students within the inclusion in school educational programs

The activity proved that accessible, creative and collaborative initiatives can effectively motivate citizens to become active participants in the process.

2. Overall logic and integrated approach

2.1 Overall logic and integrated approach

The vision of this IAP is “Buzludzha as a global cultural destination - a place for sustainable tourism, education and art.” To implement the vision, multiple coordinated steps and projects should be developed by multiple stakeholders. The actions in this IAP are proposing specific feasible and realistic next steps for Kazanlak Municipality in this process.

The forthcoming large-scale consolidation project, led by the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora in partnership with Kazanlak Municipality and the Buzludzha Project Foundation, will address urgent needs by developing a concept for the monument, building a new permanent roof and installing new windows within the next three years. Consequently, proposing further conservation works, adaptive reuse or activities inside the building at this stage would be premature. First, because these questions will be regulated by the concept for the building’s revitalisation. This strategic document will be approved and adopted by the authorities and will set the direction for further conservation and consolidation works, as well as for functionalities and activities in the building. Moreover, any work and activity at the monument itself is directly dependent on the building’s owner, the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora.

However, while these essential works will consolidate the building and halt decay, there is a need to build sustainable protection, tourism and a community framework around the monument.

Therefore, the actions proposed in this IAP deliberately focus on constructing a solid foundation that will support and maximise the impact of the future conservation efforts. This approach ensures sustainable development by seizing key opportunities for engaging with more tourists and locals in the vision. The activities in this plan are designed to build the long-term framework for development, tourism and community engagement so that, while conservation works are ongoing, the monument is also developing a durable supporting ecosystem.

Given Kazanlak Municipality’s strategic leadership of this IAP, the city plays a central role as a stakeholder in most planned activities. The integrated nature of this plan is expressed through three interconnected strategic pillars that build upon one another:

strategic planning, tourism development and citizens' involvement. These pillars intentionally integrate cross-cutting principles of environmental sustainability, digital innovation and social inclusion, and a commitment to gender equality.

This multi-layered approach ensures the revitalisation of Buzludzha is resilient, sustainable and creates lasting value for the local community, the region, and the international public.

2.2 Strategic objectives and actions

Strategic objective 1: Strategic planning

Ensure the recognition, protection and sustainable development of the whole Buzludzha complex as a cultural heritage site of national and international significance.

This foundational set of actions aims to secure official recognition, protection and long-term viability. By enhancing its heritage status at national and international levels, embedding it in key municipal and national development strategies and putting policies in place for preserving the cultural landscape, the essential legal and administrative framework for all future activities will be established - balancing cultural, social, economic and environmental dimensions.

STRATEGIC PLANNING	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Sustainable preservation and additional resources through recognition at national and international level	Action 1: Enhance heritage protection and recognition
Continuous development and funding	Action 2: Include in strategic plans
Preserving the nature and culture surrounding Buzludzha	Action 3: Develop a conservation management plan for the complex

Strategic objective 2: Tourism development

Enhance public access, awareness and engagement with the Buzludzha monument through tourism development, interpretation and cultural promotion.

Building on formal recognition, this pillar focuses on unlocking Buzludzha's potential as a tourist destination, improving access, visitor experience and regional integration. By developing an archive centre, improving visitor infrastructure and linking Buzludzha to local events, the protection will be enhanced through meaningful public engagement with tourists. Innovative digital tools will support responsible, eco-friendly tourism that respects the site's natural setting.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Organised and safe tourism infrastructure	Action 4: Develop a visitors' access plan
Transparency and support for tourism and research	Action 5: Establish a Buzludzha information and archive centre
Visibility and integration of the monument into regional cultural life and the tourist offer	Action 6: Include in local events and tourist materials

Strategic objective 3: Citizens' involvement

Motivate citizens to understand, value, promote and get involved in the preservation and development of the Buzludzha Monument.

This pillar is crucial for long-term sustainability and roots the project in the local community. Through educational programs, training local guides, participatory film production and a framework for participation, ownership and stewardship will be fostered. All engagement activities will be inclusive and accessible, ensuring diverse voices and gender-balanced narratives are central to co-creating the monument's future story.

CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT

Motivate citizens to understand, value, promote and get involved in the preservation and development of the Buzludzha Monument.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Education and engagement for youth - building awareness and future stewardship	Action 7: Include in school educational programs
Empowering community members to participate in tourism and interpretation	Action 8: Train citizens to be local tour guides
Capturing of community narratives, strengthening of identity and encouraging of emotional connection	Action 9: Produce a documentary film
Promoting participatory public engagement	Action 10: Develop a sustainable citizens involvement mechanism

The proposed actions build a pathway from recognition and protection to the creation of accessible and engaging visitor experiences, and finally to the active involvement of citizens as co-creators. This multi-layered approach strengthens the site's resilience and secures its role as a driver of regional development and identity.



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3. Action planning details for Buzludzha Monument

3.1. Enhance heritage protection and recognition

Short description:

Buzludzha Monument was listed as a heritage site of national significance in 2021. Additional protection of the Buzludzha complex as part of a heritage ensemble, together with other monuments and sites, could guarantee preservation of the heritage landscape. Kazanlak Municipality could take part in the ATRIUM route, connecting municipalities with dissonant heritage sites in Europe. Moreover, the site could benefit from international recognition within the European Heritage label and a UNESCO world heritage listing.

Links to strategy:

Enhancing the protection and recognition of Buzludzha and the complex is a strategic action, which will provide long term results in sustainable development and tourism. On the one hand it will attract more attention by tourists, on the other it will prevent destructive development. It will also allow international networking and access to tools, knowledge and additional funding on national and international level. In addition, such international recognitions will be extremely helpful considering the dissonant nature of the heritage site and would allow a more open and accepting approach.

Stakeholders:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Regional Administration of Stara Zagora
- Ministry of Culture
- National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage
- UNESCO
- Park-Museum Shipka-Buzludzha
- Buzludzha Project Foundation
- experts

Responsible entity:

Partnership between:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Regional Administration of Stara Zagora
- Park-Museum Shipka-Buzludzha
- Ministry of Culture

Finance & Ressources:

- **National heritage status for the Buzludzha ensemble** - no funding needed, staff time from key partners for preparing and reviewing the proposal
- **ATRIUM Membership:** Annual membership fee (approx. EUR 1,620) following a successful application (which has no fee).
- **European Heritage Label listing (expert services):** Minimum EUR 5,000 for fees for specialized consultants to prepare the complex application
- **UNESCO World Heritage Sites listing (expert services):** Minimum EUR 20,000 for preparing the application with all needed expert evaluation and strategic planning
- **Stakeholder Coordination (In-kind):** Staff time from all partners for meetings, data provision, and joint advocacy.

The total costs could be in the region of

EUR 27,000

RISK & RISK MITIGATION

Risk	Risk Mitigation
National heritage status, EHL and UNESCO listing are processes dependent on decisions taken on national level. This could be a long and unpredictable process.	Discuss and get support from the responsible national level before starting the procedures.
Listings and more protection could limit the possibilities for free economic development in the area.	Create a clear plan of the protected areas and what could be potential acceptable development, which is strategically embedded in the concept.
Listing Buzludzha for EHL and UNESCO could be accepted critically as Bulgaria has only one site in the EHL - Alexandrovo Tombs and has not inscribed tangible heritage sites in the UNESCO list since 1985.	The process could be developed as a best practice, with the focus on empowering other heritage sites to do it as well.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

National heritage status for the Buzludzha ensemble

The legal protection will safeguard the whole ensemble against demolition, inappropriate alterations or development that could damage its historic, cultural or natural value. This is important for the authenticity of the site and its future potential to attract tourism.

- Submit a proposal letter (**1 month**)
- Evaluation phase by the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage
- Decision by the expert committee of the Ministry of Culture
- Signing of the Minister of Culture and official listing

atrium Cultural Route application

Membership in the ATRIUM Association connects cities to an international network focused on 20th-century totalitarian heritage, offering opportunities for research collaboration, expert exchange and participation in cultural programs.

Members gain access to best practices in preservation, increase their visibility and benefit from training, cultural route development and policy collaboration, making it valuable for those seeking expertise and impact in heritage and memory work.

- Submit a written application (**2 months**)
- Decision by the general assembly and assessment by the Scientific Committee (**3 months**)

European Heritage Label listing

Applying for the European Heritage Label recognizes a site's symbolic value for European history, strengthening its importance. Benefits include joining a prestigious network, boosting cultural tourism, gaining access to funding opportunities, fostering a sense of European belonging and developing joint projects with other labeled sites.

- Complete the common application form and send it to the National Coordinator (**minimum of 2 working months**), usual application deadline is **March 1st**
- If selected by the National Coordinator, the application will be forwarded to the European Commission - **several months**
- Selection process by the European Commission - **up to two years**

UNESCO World Heritage Sites listing

Including a site on the UNESCO World Heritage List offers increased prestige, enhanced protection and access to funding to help with preservation. It also boosts tourism and its economic benefits, promotes national pride and provides access to global project management resources and expertise.

- Bulgaria must first include Buzludzha in its “Tentative List”—a list of sites considered for future nomination. (**1 year**)
- Prepare and submit a detailed Nomination Dossier including descriptions, management plans, statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). (**2 years**)
- Evaluation by the International Council on Monuments and Sites - ICOMOS (**1 year**)
- Decision by the World Heritage Committee (**1 year**)



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3.2. Include in strategic plans

Short description:

Including Buzludzha in local, regional and national strategic plans for tourism and development is crucial for its further sustainable development and funding. On the local level, this is the Integrated Development Plan of Kazanlak Municipality as well as the Annual Program for the Development of Tourism in Kazanlak Municipality. On the regional level is the Regional Development Strategy, if such will be developed for the next program period. An example for the national level is the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism in the Republic of Bulgaria - in the event of an update or when drafting for the next period.

Stakeholders:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Regional Administration of Stara Zagora
- Ministry of Culture
- Park-Museum Shipka-Buzludzha
- Buzludzha Project Foundation
- experts

Finance & Ressources:

- **Staff Time & Coordination:** If the responsible entities develop the plans with internal resources, no external funding will be needed. If the plans are assigned to an external consultant, additional financial resources will be required. Its amount will be very dependent on whether the whole plan or only the part for Buzludzha is calculated.

If implemented internally, no extra budget required.

Links to strategy:

This action reinforces the strategic objective by embedding the preservation and development of the Buzludzha complex within broader policy and planning frameworks. Integrating the site into multi-level strategic agendas ensures institutional recognition, continuity and access to coordinated resources. It establishes the necessary policy environment for balancing heritage protection with sustainable economic and social growth. In doing so, the action aligns Buzludzha's future with regional and national development priorities.

Responsible entity:

Depending on the type of document:

- At national level - Ministry of tourism, Ministry of regional development and public works; Council of ministers etc.;
- At regional level (NUTS 2) - Regional development center; (NUTS 3) - Regional governor and Regional administration; Regional development council;
- At municipal level - Mayor and municipal administration; Municipal council.

RISK & RISK MITIGATION

Risk	Risk Mitigation
Lack of vision - individual or shared, among the involved institutions.	Establishment of a timely, clear and coordinated vision through joint working meetings between Kazanlak Municipality, the Regional Administration and other stakeholders to define common goals and priorities.
Administrative disagreements between institutions and delays in coordination and decision-making processes, potentially leading to missed opportunities for funding or inclusion in strategic documents	Close cooperation and early, proactive communication among all responsible administrative bodies and institutions - Kazanlak Municipality, Regional Administration of Stara Zagora, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Tourism, etc.
Absence of funding programs and/or limited access to appropriate financial instruments, hindering the implementation of proposed measures.	Preparation of a preliminary analysis of funding opportunities, including European programs, national funds and public-private partnerships.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

Annual Program for the Development of Tourism in Kazanlak Municipality, 2027

The document serves as a strategic platform for developing the municipality's tourism potential. It coordinates the efforts of key stakeholders, including national and local tourism associations, cultural institutions and non-governmental organizations. The document identifies opportunities for project development related to tourism products, their promotion, the restoration of cultural and historical monuments and the modernization of local infrastructure. The program is based on a concise analysis that defines its main goals and priority activities for sustainable tourism development. The next feasible inclusion of Buzludzha Monument is in the annual plan for 2027, which will be developed in 2026.

(timeframe: 2026)

Integrated Development Plan of Kazanlak Municipality, 2028 - 2034

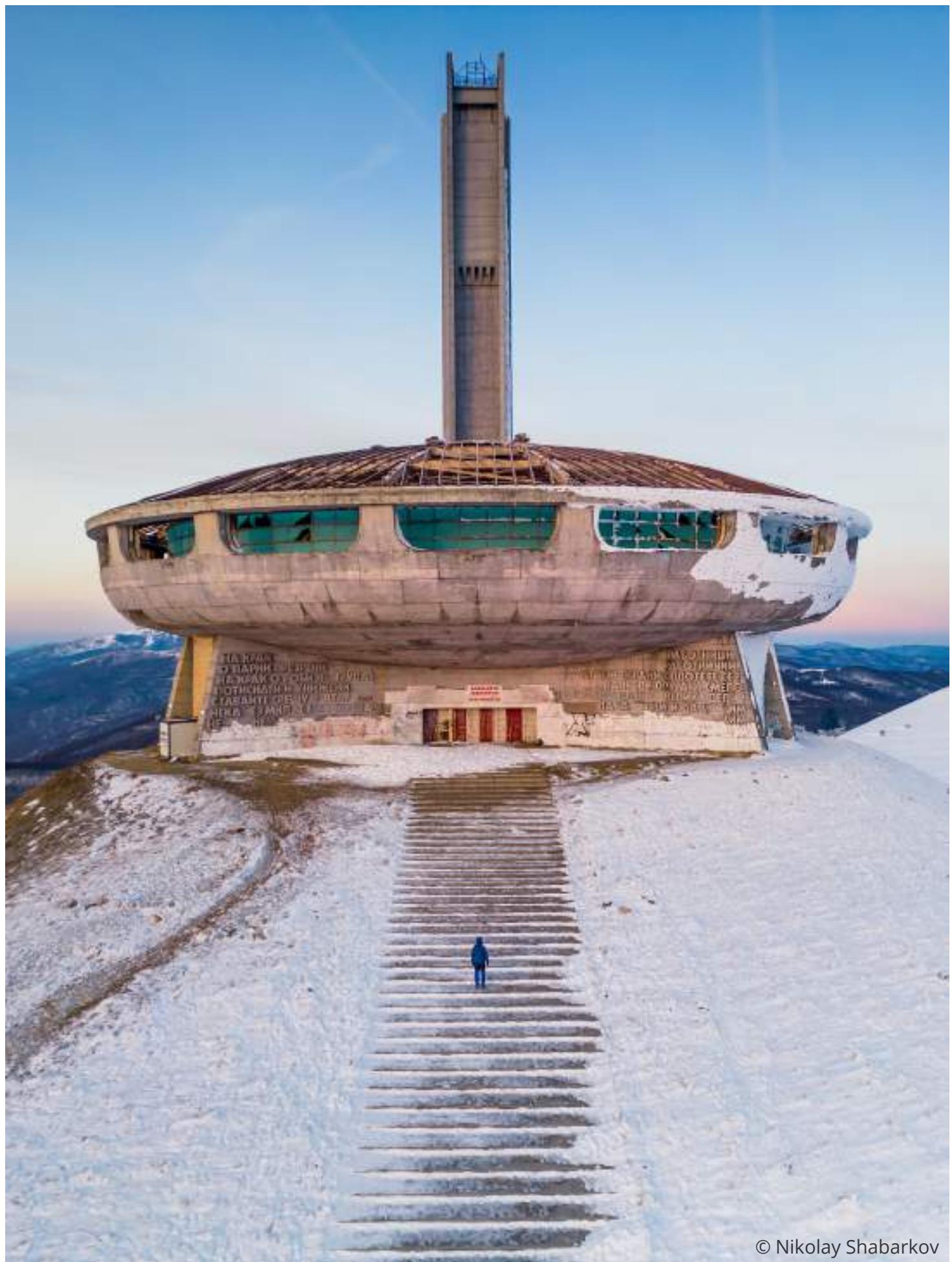
An integrated development plan for Kazanlak Municipality will be drafted in 2026 for the new 2028-2034 programming period. Kazanlak Municipality could include additional measures related to the preservation and conservation of the monument, in addition to those being implemented during the current program period.

(timeframe: 2026-2027)

Strategy for Regional Development of the Stara Zagora Region, 2028 - 2034

During the previous programming period 2014-2020, a Strategy for Regional Development of the Stara Zagora Region was adopted. For the current period 2021-2027, no updated strategy has been publicly released. There is no available information whether a strategy for the 2028-2034 programming period will be developed. The preparation of such a document would be highly beneficial for the region, and especially for the Buzludzha Monument as its development is of regional development scope.

(timeframe: 2026-2027)



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3.3. Develop a conservation management plan for the complex

Short description:

Conservation management plans (CMP) are the best practice when it comes to sustainable preservation of cultural and natural heritage. A CMP was developed for the Buzludzha Monument by the Buzludzha Project Foundation. However, a CMP is needed for the broader complex, as Buzludzha is not just one building, but a living symbiosis between natural habitats and manmade structures such as paths, huts, sculptures, parking lots, etc. A CMP for the heritage landscape would analyse the condition and will propose sustainable solutions for preservation and further development, preserving and enhancing the value of the site. The plan will integrate the principles of the European Green Deal, linking heritage preservation with climate resilience.

Responsible entity:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Buzludzha Project Foundation

Finance & Ressources:

- **Research & Data Collection:** Fees for experts (historians, archivists, surveyors) to gather, analyze, and digitize all documentary evidence and create a unified database.
- **Significance & Condition Assessment:** Costs for specialized consultants (landscape architects, ecologists, structural engineers, art historians) to conduct on-site surveys, assess flora/fauna, and evaluate all manmade structures (paths, other monuments, etc.).
- **Policy & Plan Development:** Main fees for the lead CMP consultant team to draft all management policies, conservation guidelines, risk assessments (incl. climate change), and the sustainable tourism plan.
- **Business & Financial Planning:** Costs for economic experts to develop the detailed cost analysis and long-term business/sustainability plan.
- **Stakeholder Consultation:** Budget for organizing public and expert workshops to validate the plan's findings and proposals.

The total costs could be in the region of

*for research and planning; one to two years
for developing.*

Links to strategy:

This action advances the strategic objective by extending heritage protection from the monument itself to the entire Buzludzha complex and its surrounding landscape. Developing a CMP for the complex will align conservation with ecological and developmental priorities. By addressing both the built and natural elements of the area, the plan will ensure that interventions respect the integrity of the heritage landscape.

Stakeholders:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Regional Administration of Stara Zagora
- Ministry of Culture
- Park-Museum Shipka-Buzludzha
- Nature Park Bulgarka
- Buzludzha Project Foundation
- experts
- local property managers and owners

EUR 100,000

RISK & RISK MITIGATION

Risk	Risk Mitigation
This is a complex task with little experience and expertise to implement.	Use existing know-how from CMP developed for natural reserves and the CMP for Buzludzha Monument.
No funding	Consider national and international applications for granting programs in the field of green transition, climate change, sustainable tourism, preservation of nature, interconnection between nature and culture.
The plan is not accepted by the Ministry of Culture	Follow the instructions in the national regulation document for CMPs and consult the development with the Ministry of Culture at an early stage.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

Understand the place

Gather documentary and physical evidence

- Analyse existing documents and materials
- Creating a database

Assess significance

Identify attributes and heritage values. Develop a statement of significance.

- Assess significance of the park according to the Bulgarian legislation to defend and propose its listing as an ensemble
- Assess significance of the park according to international standards

Condition assessment

Assess physical condition. Identify vulnerabilities and risks.

- Assess the flora and fauna of the park
- Assess functionality and uses
- Assess the condition of monuments, buildings, installations, road network, paths

Management and conservation policies

Develop policies covering governance and interpretation. Develop site policies on planning constraints, risk assessment, climate change, adaptation and landscape preservation. Develop detailed conservation and management policies.

- Conservation guidelines
- Adaptation program
- Implementation plan

Monitoring

Establish implementation priorities and phasing. Monitor implementation process.

- Costs analysis and business plan
- Sustainable tourism plan



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3.4 Develop a visitors' access plan

Short description:

This action will develop a comprehensive, integrated visitors' access plan to ensure that tourism at Buzludzha is organized, safe, sustainable and respectful of the surrounding environment. The plan will analyze the entire visitor journey, from digital information to on-site experience. It will prioritize sustainable green tourism solutions, including the enhancement of hiking eco-trails, investigating sustainable collective transport (like electric shuttles), and improving orientation with clear signage. This plan will form the basis for all future tourism infrastructure and will be developed in close coordination with all relevant park and regional authorities to respect the complex legal and territorial regimes of the area.

Responsible entity:

Kazanlak Municipality in cooperation with the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora

Finance & Ressources:

- Legal & Territorial Analysis:** Expert fees for a legal/surveying analysis to precisely map boundaries and land use regimes (a prerequisite for all other steps).
- Visitor Study:** Costs for a research agency to conduct visitor surveys and analysis of interests and experience.
- Trail Enhancement Budget:** Costs for materials (benches, eco-friendly path rehabilitation) and potential contracts with local hiking associations for trail improvement.
- Signage Production:** Costs for graphic design, material production and installation of a unified, multilingual orientation and information signage system.
- Pilot Project Budget:** A dedicated budget for a short-term (e.g., 3-month) "pilot activity" of weekend public transport to test demand.
- Digital Integration:** Staff time (from Kazanlak Municipality) to comprehensively update the "Visit Kazanlak" portal.

The total costs would be between

depending on the scope of the physical implementations.

Links to strategy:

This action is a cornerstone of the strategic objective: Tourism development. It directly addresses the goal of "enhancing public access, awareness and engagement" by tackling the physical and informational barriers to a high-quality visitor experience. By focusing on sustainable transport, eco-friendly trails and digital connectivity (via the Visit Kazanlak portal), it unlocks the monument's potential as a destination. It fosters the creation of a safe, well-managed and respectful visitor experience, integrating the monument into the wider regional tourism ecosystem.

Stakeholders:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Regional Administration of Stara Zagora
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Tourism
- Park-Museum Shipka-Buzludzha
- Nature Park Bulgarka
- Gabrovo Municipality
- Buzludzha Project Foundation
- local hiking associations
- local property managers and owners
- experts in transport and tourism

EUR 100,000 and 200,000

RISK & RISK MITIGATION

Risk	Risk Mitigation
Implementation of infrastructure (signs, benches, transport stops) is blocked or delayed by unclear legal/zoning regimes within National Park Museum Shipka-Buzludzha and other surrounding areas.	Conduct the mandatory legal & territorial Analysis as the first step of this action. Secure formal agreements with National Park Museum Shipka-Buzludzha and other relevant institutions before any physical work begins.
The pilot public transport project shows insufficient demand, proving financially unviable.	Precede the pilot with the visitor study to accurately gauge demand. Promote the pilot through the "Visit Kazanlak" portal and tourism partners.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

Conduct Legal & Territorial Analysis:

Clarify all territorial boundaries, ownership and legal/environmental regimes with National Park Museum Shipka-Buzludzha and other relevant institutions to define precisely where interventions are possible. **(3 months)**

Conduct Visitor Study:

Launch a study (surveys, data analysis) to understand current visitor demographics, interests, experience and demand for transport, tours and information. **(4 months)**

Develop Integrated Access Plan:

Based on the study and legal analysis, draft the comprehensive plan covering:

- A new, unified signage and orientation concept.
- A feasibility study for transport options, prioritizing a sustainable (e.g., electric) shuttle from Kazanlak.
- A plan for enhancing and connecting existing hiking eco-trails (rehabilitation, benches) in partnership with local associations.
- A concept for new, integrated eco-tourist products (e.g., guided nature & history hikes). **(6 months)**

Upgrade Digital Information:

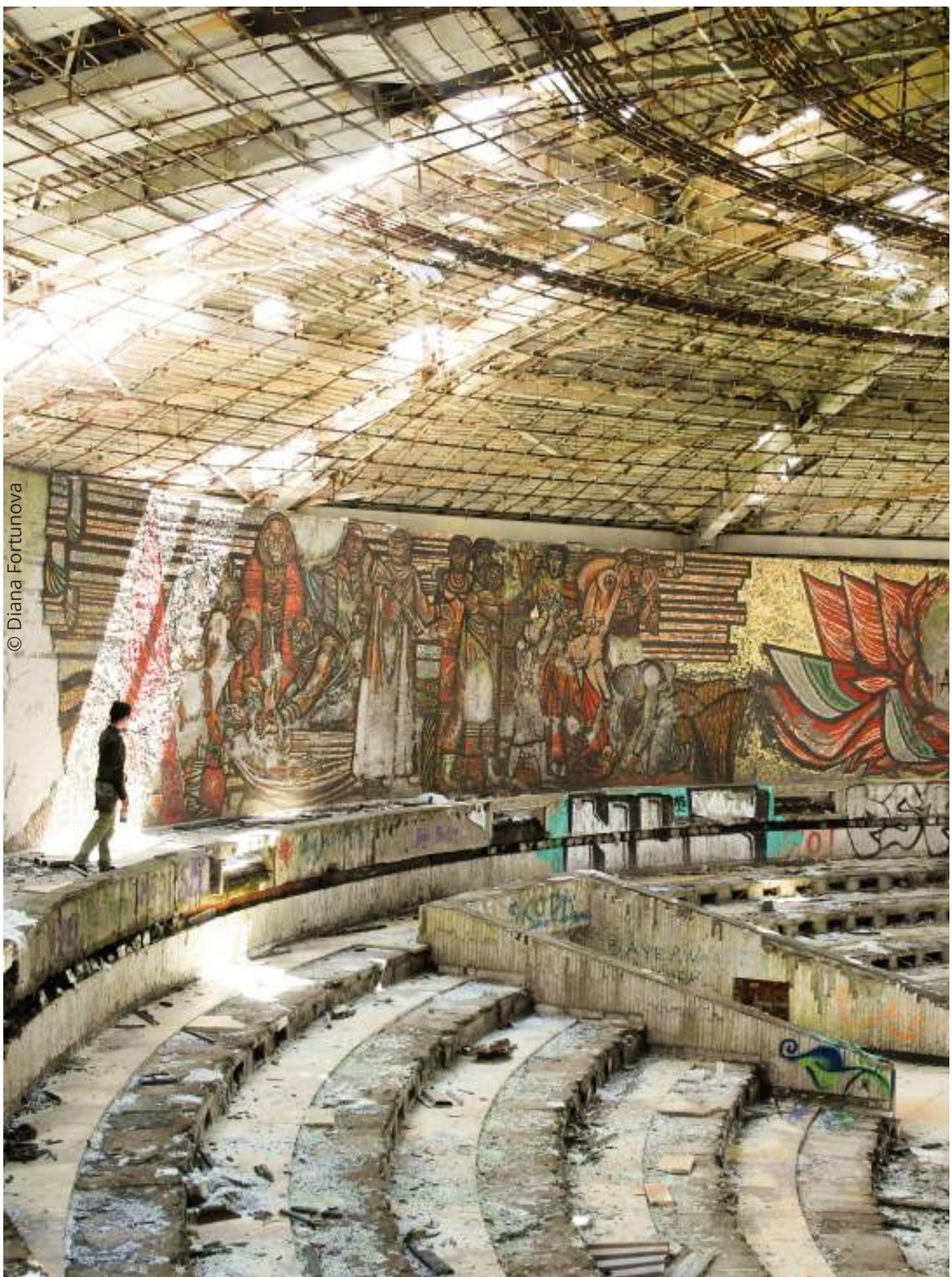
Update and fully integrate all new access information (trails, transport, tours) and the monument's status into the "Visit Kazanlak" tourist portal. **(Ongoing)**

Launch Pilot Transport Service:

Implement a "pilot activity" for weekend public transport to Buzludzha during the high season to test demand and logistics. **(three-month pilot)**

Implement Phase 1 Infrastructure:

Install new orientation signs and trail improvements (e.g., benches) in the agreed-upon, legally-cleared zones. **(4 months)**



© Diana Fortunova

3.5. Establish a Buzludzha Information and Archive Centre

Short description:

A Buzludzha information and archive centre in the city of Kazanlak could cover multiple functions and uses. It could be the place to gather the archive of Buzludzha, which is scattered through public and private owners. It could be the place for locals and tourists to get information and get inspired about Buzludzha. The center could also be the hub for local initiatives and involvement for Buzludzha leading various activities such as an annual photo contest.

Links to strategy:

The Buzludzha information and archive centre is a cross-cutting action that unites all three strategies - strategic planning, tourist development and local involvement. It will collect and protect archive materials and develop a digitised database, important for the further planning of the site. It will attract Buzludzha visitors to visit the city of Kazanlak as part of their trip and locals to visit the monument. It will engage local citizens to participate through campaigns and activities.

Stakeholders:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Regional Administration of Stara Zagora
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Tourism
- Park-Museum Shipka-Buzludzha
- Nature Park Bulgarka
- Iskra Museum
- Kazanlak Info Centre
- Kazanlak Gallery
- other local cultural venues and museums
- Buzludzha Project Foundation

Responsible entity:

Kazanlak Municipality and a local coordinator

Finance & Resources:

Initial Setup Costs (One-time):

- **Physical Space (In-kind):** if provided by the municipality
- **Fit-out & Equipment:** Budget for minor refurbishment, furniture (desks, exhibition panels, archival shelving), and essential IT equipment (computers, professional-grade scanner).

Annual Operating Costs (Est. EUR 50,000):

- **Staff:** This is the primary cost, covering salaries for 1-2 dedicated staff (e.g., a Coordinator/Archivist and an Information/Events Officer).
- **Operational Budget:** Covers utilities, internet, software, office supplies, and basic running costs.
- **Exhibition & Activity Budget:** A modest budget for printing materials, producing merchandise, and running the community campaigns (e.g., contest prizes, event promotion).

The total costs would be in the region of
if the location is provided by the municipality.

EUR 50 000 (annually)

RISK & RISK MITIGATION

Risk	Risk Mitigation
No funding	Apply for state funding to cover costs of staff and/or introduce business models for the entity such as providing tourist services, adding a merchandise shop or cafe etc. and/or apply for project grants to cover costs.
Rights to collect and store archive	Early arrangements with the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora as a site owner and owner of some archive materials.
Limited interest of the local citizens and the tourists to visit the center	Providing temporary exhibitions, good and efficient promotion, developing strong campaigns for activating the local community such as events, competitions and crowd-sourcing.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

Archive center

The archive includes blueprints, documents, pictures, videos, personal stories, mosaic pieces etc., which needs to be structured and digitized to establish an accessible and usable database.

- Clarify rights (**3 months**)
- Collect originals or copies of existing archive and digitize it (**1 year**)
- Create a systematic accessible database (**2 years**)

Information centre

The centre will give updated information to locals about what is going on and how they can get involved. It will also attract more tourists to Kazanlak, as Buzludzha enthusiasts will add it to their list.

- Produce informational materials and Buzludzha merchandise
- Create and promote temporary exhibitions
- Offer tours and experiences
- Coordinate trained local guides
- Coordinate a sustainable citizens involvement mechanism

Activities hub

The centre could be the living heart of Buzludzha even prior to its official opening. It could be the focal point for Buzludzha for citizen engagement and community building. It could organise a Buzludzha annual contest according to the learnings of the implemented successful testing activity of this IAP. The results of the contest could form a temporary exhibition and merchandise for the information centre. In this way citizens will be once activated by the collecting of results and a second time by presenting, using and communicating the results. Here are some possible annual contests and campaigns with their respective results:

- Photo competition - exhibition, postcards, catalogue etc.
- Video competition - promo videos, film
- Design competition - merchandise for the centre
- Stories competition - storytelling events
- Lost mosaic pieces gathering campaign - include in material archive
- Archive gathering campaign - include in document archive



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3.6 Include Buzludzha in local events and tourist materials

Short description:

This action will strategically and systematically integrate the Buzludzha Monument into the region's core cultural and tourism offerings. This moves beyond ad-hoc mentions and ensures the monument is included in all relevant promotional materials (both print and digital), tourist information centres, sites and routes and major relevant local events like the Rose Festival, Thracian Kings celebrations, the Chudomir celebrations and others. The action also includes the involvement of citizens in the OPEN BUZLUDZHA festival and the development of new, smaller-scale seasonal events (e.g., a kite festival) to maintain year-round interest.

Stakeholders:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Kazanlak Tourist Information Center
- Regional Administration of Stara Zagora
- Buzludzha Project Foundation
- Local museums and cultural institutions (e.g. Iskra museum, Kazanlak Art Gallery)
- Local sports and tourism associations (e.g. for hiking, cycling, ski orienteering)
- Local event organizers

Finance & Ressources:

- **Content & Design:** Graphic design fees for creating a unified brand, a new annual brochure and updated tourist maps.
- **Printing:** Budget for annual printing of high-quality, up-to-date informational materials.
- **Event Development:** Seed funding for a pilot seasonal event (e.g., kite festival), covering logistics and promotion.
- **Staff Time:** Dedicated staff time from the Kazanlak Tourist Information Center and the municipality for content updates and coordination with local cultural and tourism institutions.

The total costs would be between

depending on the scope of the pilot event, the activities during the existing events and the amount of printing materials.

Links to strategy:

This action is a core component of the Strategic Objective: tourism development. It directly delivers on "enhancing public awareness and engagement" and "integrating the monument into the regional tourism ecosystem". By creating a unified brand and presence in all relevant local materials and events, this action positions Buzludzha as an integral part of the Kazanlak tourism "product". It also directly addresses the need for a targeted communication campaign, highlighting the monument's economic potential to the local population.

Responsible entity:

Kazanlak Municipality (Department of Culture and Tourism) and the Kazanlak Tourist Information Center

EUR 30,000 and 50,000

RISK & RISK MITIGATION

Risk	Risk Mitigation
Creating informational materials and funding them for an object, which is not property of the municipality.	Coordinate the action with the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora timely. Fund the activity through dedicated projects or private funding if municipal funding is not appropriate.
Difficult integration into major local events (e.g., Rose Festival) because of no direct connection between Buzludzha and the topic of the event	Propose specific customised activities like a dedicated tourist route during the festivals, a "Buzludzha" themed art exhibition in the city or other interactive action, matching the goals of the events.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

Develop Unified Information Package:

Design and print a high-quality, multilingual, and annually updated brochure detailing the monument's status, history, access and future plans. Distribute this to all cultural institutions. **(4 months)**

Create Festival Integration Strategy & Implement It:

Develop a formal proposal on how to meaningfully integrate Buzludzha into the programs of the Rose Festival, Thracian Kings celebrations, Chudomir Festival and other relevant events (e.g., new tourist routes, themed events, presentations) and implement it for one year. **(1 year)**

Audit & Update All Tourist Materials:

Conduct a full audit of all existing tourist maps, municipal websites ("Visit Kazanlak"), flyers, and info boards to ensure Buzludzha is accurately and prominently featured. **(6 months)**

Pilot a Seasonal Event:

Design and launch one new, small-scale, seasonal event (e.g., a "Buzludzha Kite Festival" or a guided "Buzludzha in Winter" snowshoeing day) in partnership with a local association to test the concept. **(6 to 8 months)**

Involve citizens in the OPEN BUZLUDZHA Festival:

In partnership with the Buzludzha Project Foundation, establish an annual open call for local citizens, artists and community groups to propose activities as part of the festival's official program. This will invite citizens to become active participants. **(4 months)**



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3.7 Include in Schools Educational Programs

Short description:

Develop a framework of engaging activities and resources to facilitate the integration of the Buzludzha Monument and Mount Hadzhi Dimitar into local and regional schools (primary and secondary). This initiative aims to inspire innovative educational approaches to build awareness and foster a sense of future ownership among youth. The focus will be on creating inclusive and accessible resource toolkits, organizing structured (and outdoor) school visits (prioritizing local and marginalized children) and developing extracurricular projects (e.g., history, ecology or photography clubs). A key component will be engaging students from local tourism schools to be trained as "Youth Ambassadors," who can then guide peer visits or manage a pop-up information stand in Kazanlak.

Stakeholders:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Ministry of Education
- Regional Education Management (part of Regional Administration Stara Zagora)
- Local school directors and teachers
- Kazanlak High School of Light Industry and Tourism
- Buzludzha Project Foundation
- Local cultural institutions
- NGOs working with marginalised youth

Finance & Resources:

- **Resource & Toolkit Development:** Fees for educational experts, historians and designers to create an 'Educator's Toolkit'
- **Accessibility Fund:** A dedicated budget for adapting materials for children with disabilities (e.g., tactile models, audio guides, large print) and for translating key materials.
- **School Visit Logistics:** budget for outreach visits to schools and to support transport for outdoor lessons/visits to the monument, covering transportation, coordination and presentation materials.
- **Training Program:** Modest costs for materials, certificates and expert time to train the "Youth Ambassadors".
- **Info Stand:** Low cost for a portable, branded stand and printing of informational brochures designed by and for youth.
- **Coordination:** Staff time from public institutions' representatives and school coordinator.

Links to strategy:

This action is a core component of Strategic Objective 3: citizens' involvement. By focusing on youth, it directly invests in building long-term "future stewardship". The monument and Mount Hadzhi Dimitar are not only symbols of particular historical eras but also powerful tools for awakening interest in the past, national identity and civic education. This action leverages these sites as active instruments for history, art and civics. By providing an authentic "outdoor classroom" for innovative teaching, this approach fosters an emotional connection to the heritage being studied. This fosters a deep, early-stage connection, ensuring a new generation understands, values and feels responsible for the preservation of its cultural heritage. The "Youth Ambassador" program makes students active participants in promoting their heritage, fulfilling the strategy's goal of inclusive, "hands-on" community engagement.

Responsible entity:

Regional Education Management (Stara Zagora) in the close partnership with the municipality of Kazanlak and a designated coordinator from the local school system.

The total costs would be in the region of

EUR 50,000.

RISK & RISK MITIGATION

Risk	Risk Mitigation
<p>The monument's complex and dissonant history is difficult to teach in a balanced, age-appropriate way.</p>	<p>Establish an expert working group (educators, historians, Buzludzha Project Foundation) to develop all educational resources, ensuring they are factual, non-ideological and focus on heritage, art and critical thinking. All materials developed under this program should be reviewed and validated by the responsible public institutions (such as the Regional Education Management and Ministry of Education) before their official use in schools.</p>
<p>Limited teacher preparedness. Teachers may feel unsure how to handle the monument's complex history or lack the resources/time to integrate it effectively in a flexible, innovative way</p>	<p>Provide voluntary teacher training workshops that demonstrate how to use the 'Educator's Toolkit' and easy-to-use online resources to ensure teachers feel confident and supported in facilitating these new types of activities (e.g., outdoor lessons, debates, digital projects).</p>

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

Form Education Working Group:

Formalize the partnership between the Regional Education Management and all key stakeholders. **(2 months)**

Develop "Educator's Toolkit":

Create a set of approved, age-appropriate and flexible resources (lesson suggestions, activity guides, digital assets). This toolkit will include innovative, practical ideas such as guidelines for:

- Organising outdoor lessons in history or civics at the monument
- Running creative projects (e.g., photography contests, digital reconstructions)

- Creating educational trails around the monument (linked to history or ecology)
- Developing student-led media (documentaries, podcasts) featuring local stories
- Organising volunteer clean-up or environmental campaigns.
- Co-design accessible versions for children with disabilities. **(8 months)**

Launch Pilot Visit Program:

Secure funding for logistics and organise the first wave of subsidised school visits and outdoor lessons for a pilot group of local schools to test the toolkit and logistics. **(3 to 4 months)**

Develop "Youth Ambassador" Program:

In partnership with the Kazanlak tourism high school, recruit and train the first cohort of students. **(4 months)**

Launch Youth Info Stand:

The newly trained "Youth Ambassadors" run a pilot pop-up info stand in a key Kazanlak location (e.g., Tourist Information Center or museum) to provide information to peers and tourists. **(2 months)**

Full Program Rollout:

Based on feedback from the pilot, refine the toolkit and officially offer the resources and visit opportunities to all schools in the region. **(ongoing)**

Support Extracurricular Integration:

Actively promote the toolkit and resources to after-school clubs (e.g., history, photography, ecology, local studies) to explore Buzludzha's themes in greater depth. **(ongoing)**



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3.8 Train citizens to be Local Tour Guides

Short description:

Develop a program to train and certify local citizens (including youth from tourism schools and existing mountain guides) as guides for the Buzludzha complex. This initiative aims to engage the local community directly in regional tourism. The guides can be registered with the Kazanlak Tourist Information Center, providing a structured service for visitors, particularly international tourists, based on a model similar to "Sofia Free Tours" or other international examples where the local community is involved in a direct way in regional tourism and promotion of its cultural heritage.

Links to strategy:

This action directly involves the local community in the site's sustainable development, providing a sense of ownership and shared benefit. It is a key to fostering direct citizen involvement, enhancing their role and engagement in their local cultural heritage. By training locals to be guides, it gives them knowledge, which they would spread and makes them active partners in developing Buzludzha as a vibrant cultural destination. This strategy directly enhances the visitor experience with authentic tours and builds local capacity to professionally manage the site's complex narrative for a growing international audience.

Stakeholders:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Kazanlak Tourist Information Center
- Kazanlak High School of Light Industry and Tourism
- Eagle's Nest Tourist Association
- Buzludzha Project Foundation
- Iskra Museum
- Local citizens/volunteers

Responsible entity:

Kazanlak Municipality and local coordinator e.g. the Tourist Information Center.

Finance & Ressources:

- **Initial citizen interest survey:** Low cost (online tools, promotion via municipal channels).
- **Training program development:** Expert fees for developing the training curriculum (history, narrative, safety, public speaking).
- **Training delivery:** Fees for trainers (historians, safety experts, professional guides).
- **Promotional materials:** Design and printing of brochures, digital marketing campaign.
- **Administration:** Staff time (from the Tourist Information Center or a dedicated coordinator) to manage the guide register, bookings and quality control.

The total costs would be in the region of

EUR 40,000

RISK & RISK MITIGATION

Risk	Risk Mitigation
Difficulty in developing accurate, balanced and engaging tour content given the dissonant history of Buzludzha.	Establish an expert working group (historians, Buzludzha Project Foundation, tourism experts) to develop and approve a core training curriculum and narrative guidelines.
Insufficient interest from the local community to become guides.	Conduct the proposed citizen survey early to gauge interest. Launch a targeted promotional campaign highlighting the benefits. Introduce financial benefit for trained guides.
Inconsistent tour quality or guides providing misinformation.	Implement a formal training and certification process. Conduct regular reviews and gather feedback from tourists.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

Establish Administrative Partnership:

Formalize the partnership between the Kazanlak Tourist Information Center (for coordination), Buzludzha Project Foundation (for content/promotion) and local tourism schools (for recruitment). **(2 months)**

Conduct Citizen Interest Survey:

Design and disseminate a survey via Kazanlak Municipality and Tourist Information Center channels to analyze potential interest from citizens. **(1 month)**

Develop Training Curriculum & Model:

Create the training program, including historical modules, narrative guidelines, safety protocols and visitor engagement skills. Define the operational model (e.g., "Free Tour" voluntary model or paid service). **(5 months)**

Recruit & Train First Cohort:

Launch a recruitment campaign targeting local citizens, students from tourism schools and existing certified mountain guides. Conduct the first round of training and certification. **(3 to 4 months)**

Develop a Booking System:

Create the official register of certified local guides within the Kazanlak Tourist Information Center. Develop a clear digital booking/contact system for tourists. **(3 months)**

Launch Promotional Campaign:

Develop and launch a marketing campaign (online, print) to promote the new guide service. **(ongoing)**



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3.9 Produce a documentary film

Short description:

Develop and produce a high-quality, professional documentary film that serves as a powerful storytelling tool to promote understanding, appreciation and preservation of the Buzludzha Monument as a cultural heritage site. The film's narrative will be built around the personal stories and perspectives of two key groups: the local community in and around Kazanlak (capturing their memories and points of view) and the diverse international visitors who travel to the monument (e.g., architects, artists, historians, film-makers, urban explorers, cultural tourists). A digital platform will host interview clips, short profiles and behind-the-scenes content from the film's creation.

Responsible entity:

Kazanlak Municipality in partnership with Buzludzha Project Foundation

Finance & Resources:

- Project Coordination:** Staff from the municipality, Buzludzha Project Foundation and local partners to manage the project, organize workshops and coordinate with the film team.
- Seed Funding (Development):** An initial budget to hire a professional filmmaker or team to run the community workshops, develop the story plan (treatment) and create the short demo clip for fundraising.
- Production Costs:** The main budget for the professional film team to cover their fees, camera and sound equipment rental and all travel (local and international) during filming.
- Post-Production Costs:** Fees for the professional editing of the film, including sound mixing, color correction and creating the final subtitles in Bulgarian, English and other key languages.
- Distribution & Repurposing Promotion:** Costs for submitting the film to festivals, running a social media campaign to promote the clips and resources for the local premiere event in Kazanlak. This also includes any web development needed to create the digital platform for stories dissemination.

The total costs could vary significantly, between
depending on the quality and the campaigns connected to the collecting of stories and promotion of results.

Links to strategy:

This action contributes directly to Strategic Objective 3: citizens' involvement by engaging the local community as active participants in shaping and sharing Buzludzha's story. Through personal narratives and collaboration between local citizens and international visitors, the film strengthens understanding, pride and a sense of ownership. By giving voice to diverse perspectives, it builds emotional connection and motivates citizens to value, promote and take part in the monument's preservation and sustainable development.

Stakeholders:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Buzludzha Project Foundation
- Bulgarian National Television (BNT) or other broadcasters
- Potential co-producers (e.g. ARTE, international film funds)
- Local community members and international experts/visitors featured in the film.

**EUR 50,000 and
EUR 250,000**

RISK & RISK MITIGATION

Risk	Risk Mitigation
Insufficient funding to achieve high, international broadcast-quality production values.	Develop a tiered budget. Actively pursue co-production agreements with broadcasters (e.g., BNT, ARTE) and apply for national and international film/cultural grants (e.g., Creative Europe Media).
The film is completed but fails to reach its intended audiences.	Develop the dissemination strategy (see Activities) before production is complete. Engage a distribution expert early in the process.
Difficulty securing authentic participation from the local community.	Leverage the existing networks of the Kazanlak Municipality and local community groups to build trust. Ensure the production team includes members with experience in community-based documentary filmmaking.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

Form a Project Group & Plan:

Bring together key stakeholders for initial planning and research. **(3 months)**

Find a Film Partner & Develop the Story:

Select a professional video production team or filmmaker. Work with them to hold community workshops to gather stories from locals and internationals. Create a clear plan (treatment/script) for the film. **(6 months)**

Secure Main Funding:

Use the film plan and a short demo clip to apply for cultural grants and find sponsors to fund the full production. **(12 months)**

Film the Documentary:

Conduct interviews and film the monument, the local area and visitors over several months to capture different perspectives and seasons. **(12 months)**

Post-production:

Assemble the footage, interviews and music into the final documentary. Add professional subtitles in Bulgarian and English. **(6 months)**

Develop Dissemination & Repurposing Plan:

Finalize the comprehensive strategy for release and content use **(parallel to post-production)**

Host Local Premiere:

Hold a special first showing in Kazanlak for the local community to thank them for their participation and celebrate their contribution. **(1 month)**

Dissemination strategy (Ongoing)

- Submit the film to cultural and documentary festivals.
- Secure deals with national (BNT) and international broadcasters or streaming platforms.

Repurposing Strategy (Ongoing):

- **Public Digital Platform:** Create a digital platform, hosting standalone interview clips, short profiles and behind-the-scenes content from the film's creation.
- **Social Media Campaign:** Re-edit documentary footage into short, powerful, shareable clips (1-3 minutes) for social media (Instagram, YouTube, Facebook), each focused on a specific theme (e.g., "A Local's Memory," "An Architect's View").
- **On-Site Exhibition:** Create a short, "loopable" version of the film to be played in the future visitor centre, at the monument or at the Kazanlak Tourist Information Center.
- **Advocacy Tool:** Develop a five-minute version specifically for fundraising and stakeholder meetings.



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3.10 Develop a sustainable citizens involvement mechanism

Short description:

Building on the successful collaborative model of the URBACT Local Group (ULG), this action will transition the project-based group into a sustainable, specialized advisory body focused on involving citizens and other key stakeholders in the process of Buzludzha preservation and development. The goal is to preserve the established structure during the IAP and further develop the local group to serve as the primary community, a co-creation and public consultation instrument for the vision and the plan's actions, ensuring diverse perspectives are continuously integrated. It will work in close coordination with the Kazanlak municipality's Citizens' Advisory Council, and other relevant citizens' organizations in the region. To ensure members remain motivated and productive, the group will operate on a dynamic model of engagement, mixing formal advisory meetings with practical, hands-on workshops, thematic sub-groups for specific actions, and site visits.

Links to strategy:

This action is delivering the strategic objective of "Citizens' Involvement" on a permanent basis. It ensures the positive experience and participatory model of the ULG are not lost after the IAP ends. By sustaining this specialized group, the IAP creates the permanent infrastructure for expert community feedback on Buzludzha's complex development.

Stakeholders:

- Kazanlak Municipality
- Existing URBACT Local Group (ULG) members
- The permanent Citizens' Advisory Council of Kazanlak
- Regional Administration of Stara Zagora
- Buzludzha Project Foundation
- Local cultural institutions
- Local NGOs (in tourism, education, environment)
- Local business community
- Local schools and youth organisations

Responsible entity:

Kazanlak Municipality (providing formal recognition, coordination, and support), with management led by a dedicated Local Coordinator (to be funded).

Finance & Resources:

- **Local Coordinator:** The most critical resource is securing sustainable funding for a part-time local coordinator to manage the group's administration, communication and activities.
- **Operational Budget:** A modest annual budget to cover meeting logistics, facilitation, public consultation events and digital collaboration tools.
- **Grant-writing Resources:** Dedicated time from the coordinator to apply for new funding (e.g., CERV, Creative Europe) to finance the group's future projects and ensure its longevity.

The total costs could be around

EUR 20,000 annually

RISK & RISK MITIGATION

Risk	Risk Mitigation
Loss of momentum or declining participation over time.	Maintain engagement through rotating leadership roles, capacity-building sessions, recognition of member contributions and periodic public showcases of achievements.
The group's advice is not taken, and it has no real influence.	Develop formal Terms of Reference, endorsed by the municipality, that outline the group's specific advisory mandate and its formal link to other IAP actions and the long-term vision for Buzludzha.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

Evaluate & Map:

Conduct a final evaluation of the IAP's ULG to identify strengths and weaknesses. Map the stakeholder landscape to identify any gaps in the current composition. **(2 months)**

Draft Formal Terms of Reference (ToR):

Create a formal document outlining the specialized group's mission, its specific focus on Buzludzha, its structure and functioning. **(3 months)**

Develop Sustainability & Funding Plan:

Actively research and apply for new funding (e.g., CERV, national programmes) to secure a budget for the local coordinator. **(ongoing, start month 1)**

Develop an Engagement & Communication Plan:

Design an annual work plan that outlines a clear and varied calendar of activities. This will include:

- Quarterly "Formal Advisory Meetings" to review progress and provide official recommendations.
- Bi-annual "Thematic Workshops" focused on specific IAP actions (e.g., a workshop on the documentary, a workshop on tourism products) and other relevant topics (specific topics (e.g., heritage reuse, tourism innovation, education).
- Annual "Site Visit & Strategy Day" at Buzludzha to maintain direct connection to the monument.
- Implementation of a digital collaboration platform (e.g., Slack, Trello or a shared drive) to ensure continuous communication, information sharing and progress tracking between meetings.
- Public Communication Actions: Annual report, media briefings and open community sessions.

Expand & Consolidate Membership:

Launch a targeted campaign to fill identified gaps in the ULG, ensuring its composition includes key beneficiaries of the IAP actions and new expert stakeholders. **(2 months)**

Establish Formal Coordination:

Initiate the first joint meeting with the Citizens' Advisory Council to establish collaborative work dynamics. **(1 month)**



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4. Implementation framework

The IAP's successful implementation depends on a clear framework for governance, sustained community engagement, rigorous monitoring, timeline, stakeholder engagement and funding strategy. This section outlines the framework that will ensure these elements work together effectively.

4.1 Governance framework and stakeholder engagement

The IAP's implementation will be guided by **the central coordination between the Kazanlak Municipality and the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora**. This partnership is essential. The Municipality ensures local integration, administrative support and alignment with municipal strategies, while the Regional Administration, as the institution responsible for the monument's management, provides the formal authority and alignment for all on-site and strategic planning actions.

This core coordination will be **actively supported by Buzludzha Project Foundation** as the key expert partner and civil society driver, providing technical knowledge, co-managing specific actions and leading community engagement initiatives.

This entire governance framework will be informed by the ongoing consultation of the local group. As detailed in Action 10, the ULG group will transition from a project-based group into a permanent, specialized advisory body, ensuring the participatory approach remains central to the plan's implementation. Its primary role will be to provide expert community feedback, monitor the IAP's progress and serve as the main platform for co-creation and public consultation on future actions. To ensure this sustainability, regular meetings will continue throughout the implementation phase. Furthermore, the group's scope and membership will be dynamically expanded as needed to include new, relevant stakeholders (e.g., representatives from youth organizations, the local business community or neighboring municipalities like Gabrovo) to ensure all voices are represented as the actions evolve.

This model ensures that responsibility is shared, blending municipal and regional coordination with expert and community involvement.

4.2 Costs and funding strategy

The total costs of implementing all 10 actions of the plan are about EUR 800,000. The IAP's funding strategy is diversified so that it mobilizes a full range of available sources, rather than relying on a single grant:

- **Alignment with major EU Programmes (high costs):** Actively targeting large-scale grants (such as the next iteration of the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), Creative Europe or environmental funds) to finance high-cost, high-impact actions like the conservation management plan for complex (Action 3), the visitors' access plan (Action 4) and the documentary film (Action 9).
- **Public and Administrative Resources (internal costs):** Leveraging the resources and available human capacity of the Kazanlak Municipality and partner institutions (e.g., the Regional Education Management and Tourist Information Centre) to deliver foundational actions with low financial cost, such as including Buzludzha in local and national strategic plans (Action 2).
- **National and Local Funding (low costs):** Pursuing national funds, municipal budgets and private local sources (e.g., corporate sponsorships, private donations) to support operational and community-facing actions like heritage protection and recognition (Action 1), inclusion in local events and tourist materials (Action 6), the schools program (Action 7) and the Citizens Involvement mechanism (Action 10).
- **Self-Funding Models:** Designing specific actions, such as training individuals to be local tour guides (Action 8) and the merchandise/services component of the info centre (Action 5), to become partially or fully self-sustaining over time.

4.3 Timeline

The implementation of the IAP is envisioned over a multi-year period (approx. 2026-2029+), with many actions running in parallel. The plan is a living document, but the initial timeframe is structured to build foundational success. Short-term actions (like establishing the ULG framework and developing the info package) will support long-term, complex processes (like achieving UNESCO listing and completing the documentary).

The timeline below provides a high-level overview of the 10 core actions

TIMELINE LEGEND

 Start: funding, administrative framework, planning	 Active: implementation
 Sustain: ongoing operations, maintenance	 Completed: goal achieved

Action (Full Title)	2026 (Year 1)	2027 (Year 2)	2028 (Year 3)	2029+ (Ongoing)
1. Enhance heritage protection and recognition	 Start	 Active	 Active	 Sustain
2. Include in strategic plans	 Start	 Active	 Sustain	 Sustain
3. Develop a conservation management plan for the complex	 Start	 Active	 Completed	 Completed
4. Develop a visitors' access plan	 Start	 Active	 Active	 Completed
5. Establish a Buzludzha information and archive centre	 Start	 Active	 Sustain	 Sustain
6. Include in local events and tourist materials	 Start	 Active	 Sustain	 Sustain
7. Include in school educational programs	 Start	 Active	 Sustain	 Sustain
8. Train citizens to be local tour guides	 Start	 Active	 Sustain	 Sustain
9. Produce a documentary film	 Start	 Active	 Completed	 Completed
10. Develop a sustainable citizens involvement mechanism	 Active	 Sustain	 Sustain	 Sustain

All 10 actions could be developed independently from each other. However, all actions are interrelated. The implementation of Action 3 (conservation management plan for the complex) informs the application process for Action 1 (heritage protection) and the visitor experience development in Action 4 (visitors' access plan).

If Action 5 (Buzludzha Information and Archive Centre) is implemented, it could take the leading role for some of the other actions - Action 6 (inclusion in local events and tourist materials), Action 8 (training citizens to be local tour guides) and Action 10 (sustainable citizens involvement mechanism).

Therefore, if all actions cannot be started in the same year, it would be recommended to start with the conservation management plan for the complex and the Buzludzha information and archive centre.

4.4 Risk assessment

While individual actions have specific risks (detailed in Section 3), the overall success of the IAP faces several key challenges. The table below summarises the primary risks and the integrated mitigation strategies designed to address them.

PRIMARY RISK CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	OVERALL MITIGATION STRATEGY
Political & Administrative	Delays in national-level decisions (heritage status); lack of vision or administrative conflicts; plan rejection by ministries.	Early & Proactive Communication: Establish joint working groups with all key authorities (Kazanlak, RA Stara Zagora, Ministries) from day one to build consensus and co-create outputs (e.g., for Actions 2 and 3).
Financial & Funding	Failure to secure funding for high-cost actions (CMP, documentary) or long-term operational costs (info centre, ULG coordinator).	Diversified Funding: Avoid reliance on a single source. Pursue EU, national, municipal and private funds in parallel. Develop tiered budgets and self-funding models.

PRIMARY RISK CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	OVERALL MITIGATION STRATEGY
Community & Engagement	Insufficient interest from the local community (for guides, film); public sensitivity or political polarisation (schools, dissonant history).	Co-creation & Transparency: Use the ULG (Action 10) as a transparent forum. Implement early surveys (Action 8) to build trust. Offer multiple points of view and invite dialogue (Actions 7, 8).
Content & Quality	Risk of providing inaccurate, unbalanced or poor-quality information (tours, school materials) due to the complex history.	Expert Working Groups: Establish a formal expert group (historians, Buzludzha Project Foundation, educators) to develop and approve all public-facing curricula and narrative guidelines (Actions 7, 8).
Legal & Logistical	Implementation of physical elements (signs, trails) is blocked by unclear legal/zoning regimes around the monument.	Phased & Preparatory Approach: Mandate that Action 4 (Visitor Access Plan) begins with a comprehensive legal & territorial analysis before any other planning, to not risk all future physical interventions.



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4.5 Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and reporting will be a shared and transparent process, managed collaboratively by all key partners. The "responsible entity" designated for each action (in Section 3) will be primarily responsible for tracking its own progress and performance against the defined targets. These action leaders will provide regular progress updates to a central coordinator (e.g. within Kazanlak Municipality or the local group), who will manage the administrative collection and compilation of this data.

Progress will be tracked against the specific, measurable targets, outlined below:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: STRATEGIC PLANNING	
ACTION	KEY MEASURABLE TARGETS
1. Enhance heritage protection and recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Submitted proposal letter for national "heritage ensemble" listingSubmitted written application for ATRIUM Cultural Route membershipSubmitted European Heritage Label application to the National Coordinator.Submitted nomination for the UNESCO World Heritage "Tentative List".
2. Include in strategic plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Buzludzha included as a priority in the Kazanlak Integrated Development Plan 2028-2034.Buzludzha included in the annual programme for the development of tourism in Kazanlak Municipality" 2027.
3. Develop a conservation management plan for the complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funding for the CMP secured.Database of all gathered evidence (documents, analysis) created.Final CMP (including significance assessment, condition assessment, policies and sustainable tourism plan) completed and submitted.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

ACTION	KEY MEASURABLE TARGETS
4. Develop a visitors' access plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Legal & territorial analysis" completed. • "Visitor study" (surveys, data analysis) completed. • "Integrated Access Plan" (including signage concept and transport feasibility study) drafted. • "Visit Kazanlak" portal and all digital tourist information updated. • Pilot transport service (e.g., weekend shuttle) launched and evaluated.
5. Establish a Buzludzha information and archive centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical location for the centre secured. • Legal rights for archive collection and storage clarified with RA Stara Zagora. • Systematic, accessible database for the digital archive launched. • One major community activity/event organized (annual).
6. Include in local events and tourist materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Unified information package" (annual brochure) designed, printed and distributed to cultural institutions. • Buzludzha integrated into the Rose Festival • Audit of all existing tourist maps and websites completed and content updated. • Pilot seasonal event (e.g., kite festival) launched. • Annual open call for citizen participation in OPEN BUZLUDZHA festival established.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT

ACTION	KEY MEASURABLE TARGETS
7. Include in school educational programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Educators' toolkit" (with flexible resources for outdoor lessons, creative projects, etc.) developed and approved by the expert group. • Three schools participating in the pilot visit/lesson program. • 10 "Youth Ambassadors" (from tourism school) trained and certified. • Pilot "Youth Info Stand" launched in Kazanlak.
8. Train citizens to be local tour guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Citizen interest survey" completed and results analyzed. • Formal "training curriculum" (including history, safety, narrative) developed and approved by the expert group. • 15 citizens in the first cohort trained and certified. • Official register of certified local guides established and promoted.
9. Produce a documentary film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production funding secured. • "Dissemination and repurposing plan" finalised (before film completion). • Local premiere held in Kazanlak for the community. • Public Digital Platform (hosting story clips) launched. • Festival submissions and/or broadcast agreements secured.
10. Develop a sustainable citizens involvement mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal "Terms of Reference" (ToR) for the advisory group drafted and adopted. • Sustainability and funding plan (for coordinator) developed and applications submitted. • "Engagement and communication plan" (annual work plan) established. • At least 10 active participants involved • Two formal advisory meetings and thematic workshops held (per year).



Conclusion

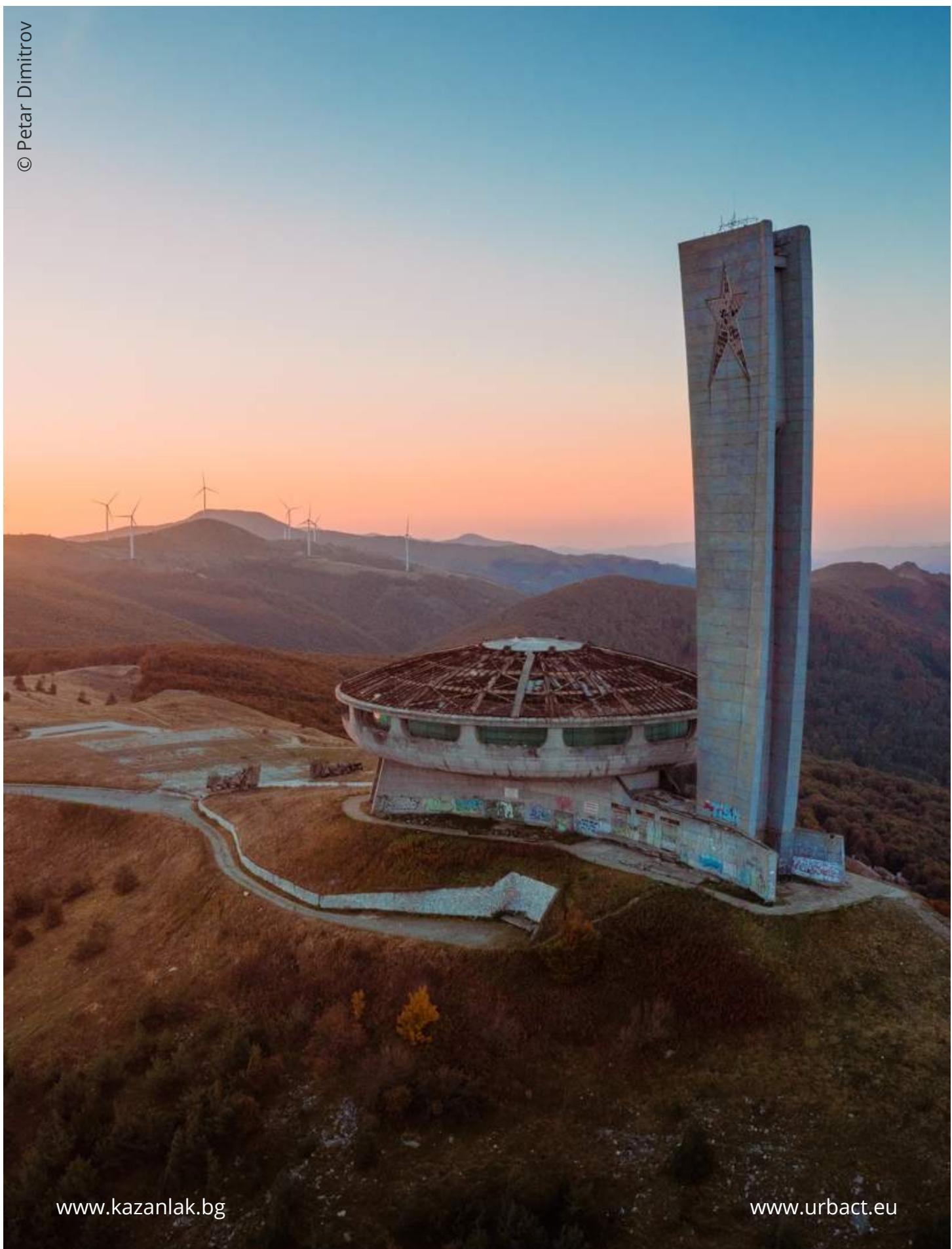
This IAP represents a strategic, long-term vision for sustainable development for Buzludzha Monument. It provides the first comprehensive framework designed to navigate the monument's profound complexities and transform it into "a global cultural destination - a place for sustainable tourism, education and art."

To realise this vision, the 10 actions detailed in this plan are not isolated; they form an interconnected and logical sequence. The plan begins by securing the foundational Strategic Planning framework (Actions 1-3), which in turn enables the development of practical Tourism Development infrastructure (Actions 4-6). Finally, and most critically, the plan is anchored by Citizens' Involvement (Actions 7-10), ensuring the local community is not just an audience but an active co-creator of the monument's future. An important lesson from the URBACT planning process is that collaboration is not just a goal, but a viable method for achieving high results. The monument's complex ownership, dissonant history and physical challenges cannot be solved by any single entity. This IAP includes a multi-level governance model, uniting municipal, regional and national authorities with the expertise of civil society.

This collaborative method is essential, as the IAP is built upon a clear assessment of the significant integration challenges (detailed in Section 1.7) that must be overcome. In response, the plan's implementation is defined by a comprehensive framework (Section 4). This framework is not an afterthought; it is the essential mechanism designed to manage these challenges, providing the required collaborative governance model, the diversified funding strategy, the proactive risk assessment, and the detailed monitoring and reporting plan. This structure ensures the IAP is a practical, resilient, and accountable roadmap for action, capable of navigating the complexities of the monument's long-term transformation.

With this practical framework in place, the main expectation for the IAP's implementation is to build a sustainable development, tourism and community framework around the monument. Its success will be measured not only in completed actions and monitoring targets, but in a tangible shift in public perception about Buzludzha monument: from an abandoned, contested monument to a shared, world-class cultural asset and a vital source of local pride, community engagement, education, and economic opportunity.

This IAP provides a comprehensive system that integrates the Buzludzha Monument into the relevant sectors of local policy - from tourism and education to economic development and citizen engagement. Ultimately, this plan lays the groundwork for transforming Buzludzha from a site of neglect into a shared space of value, dialogue and sustainable growth, ensuring that its preservation contributes meaningfully to the region's cultural and social future.



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