

INVESTMENT PLAN

FOR THE HYDRO-CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SOMBOR, WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL

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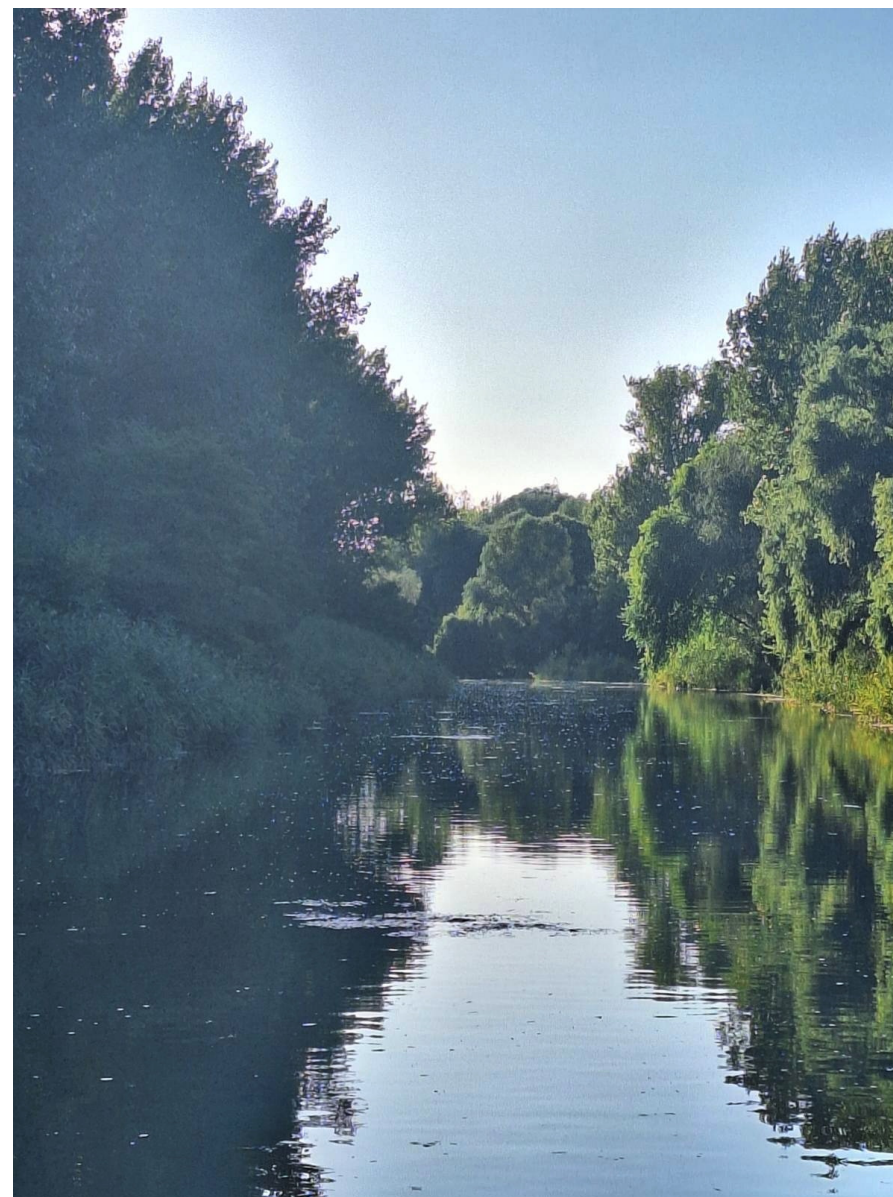
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Front page: Detail from the Great Bačka Canal near Sombor
(author: B. Antić)

Figure 1 (right): Lush greenery along the Great Bačka Canal near the urban area of Sombor (author: B. Antić)



PREFACE

The Investment Plan for the Hydro-Cultural Heritage of Sombor, with a Special Focus on the Great Bačka Canal, was prepared during 2025 and 2026 for the purposes of the international project **HYDRO-HERITAGE CITIES** within the EU INTEREG URBACT European innovative transfer networks. It is the main contribution of the city team working jointly with local and regional stakeholders in identifying key **opportunities and challenges** in the territorial and urban development of the canal and its surroundings in the city area, as well as finding the **main ideas, planning measures and solutions** through which this development would be accelerated and implemented in an integral and sustainable manner.

In this process, from the current assessment to finding the main solutions and methods of their implementation, it was very important to **change the 'traditional' local perception** of the Great Bačka Canal as primarily an economic structure, an infrastructure corridor for traffic and water service of the nearby industry and agriculture. Accordingly, special emphasis was placed on the poorly recognised **social, cultural, natural and ecological significance** of the canal and the opportunities that support its development in this regard. This is not only important for the City of Sombor, but more broadly, for the area of a large part of northern Serbia (Vojvodina), where the canal network forms the backbone of water potential at the regional level. In this sense, the hope was expressed that this urban study would be one of the steps in the **social, cultural and ecological promotion** of the canal at regional level.

Finally, a special gratitude to the representatives, experts and citizens of the City of Sombor and beyond for their cooperation and support during the creation of the document.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Investment plan for the hydro-cultural heritage of Sombor, with a special focus on the Great Bačka Canal (hereinafter: the Plan) is, by its nature, a strategic **policy document** for guiding the development of the focus section of the Great Bačka Canal in the Sombor area (the official name of this section is the Vrbas-Bezdan Canal). This canal is a part of much broader system of canals in northern Serbia, officially the Province of Vojvodina, officially known as the “Danube-Tisa-Danube” Hydro-system (DTD).

The plan follows a typical structure of a **strategic document**, i.e., contains a detailed analysis, observation, and assessment of the key current conditions of the existing state, such as natural and human-made features, the conclusions of urban participation with stakeholders and citizens. All of this is a basis for the strategic concept with an explanation of the planning measures and the method of their implementation.

Thematically speaking, the Plan specifically deals with **urban elements** in the focus area, where it considers them integrally, from several professional aspects: territorial, functional, social, cultural, economic, ecological, and promotional. In addition, the purpose of preparing an investment plan is to support urban planning in Sombor and other local development policies that have an urban character.

In this context, the plan translates the **strategic vision** for the hydro-cultural heritage of Sombor with a special focus on the Great Bačka Canal into a coherent framework of priority investments, planning measures and implementation arrangements. It connects development objectives with concrete actions, providing a basis for the coordinated mobilisation of financial resources and cooperation among the relevant public institutions, local stakeholders and other development actors.

The plan is based on the **premise** that integrated investments in the hydro-cultural heritage of the Great Bačka Canal can simultaneously improve environmental quality, strengthen local identity, enhance public use of the canal corridor and support sustainable socio-economic development in the wider Sombor area.

1.1. RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF INVESTMENT PLAN

The **immediate reason** for the preparation of this Plan for hydro-cultural heritage is related to the obligations of the City of Sombor as partner city in the “HYDRO-HERITAGE CITIES” (2024-2026) project network of the EU INTERREG URBACT programme – sub-programme of European innovative transfer network. However, there are other, **local-related reasons** for doing the Plan. Among them, it is important to single out the fact that the Great Bačka Canal in Sombor area, as well as the entire DTD Hydro-system, has become increasingly attractive in recent years for several reasons:

- The recent **reindustrialisation** of Serbia, along with the constant increase in transportation price, has contributed to the reappraisal of the potential of canals for **water transport**, the cheapest form of transporting goods for industrial needs;
- **Climate change** has already turned into a global process. Therefore, the necessity to **irrigate** large agricultural areas in Vojvodina from the canal network is becoming more frequent, which creates new conditions regarding the maintenance of the water level in the canals;
- **Cultural heritage** has also become an increasingly important in recent decades for local promotion and the strengthening of local identity, but also for strengthening local socio-economic development through, among other things, (cultural) tourism and creative industries. **Industrial heritage** occupies a special place there. In a broader sense, it includes heritage created due to other economic activities, such as hydro-cultural heritage: historic canals, ports, aqueducts, locks, pumping stations, pumps, etc.

- On the other side, the intensive use of canals in Vojvodina for economic purposes and for sewage drainage led to the fact that many of them are **highly polluted** today. With rising environmental protection awareness, canals are more often mentioned as **priority locations** for ecological and other technical measures;
- As a large number of settlements in Vojvodina do not have natural water bodies in their immediate vicinity, for many of them canals are the only easily accessible contact with larger water. Thus, over the decades, they have become the segment of **local identity** and related local communities recognise them as “something of their own”. However, although there are attempts to capitalise on this to revitalise, renovate, and promote the parts settlements next to the canal, this is still in its beginning phase for many of the reasons already explained. Part of that is based on the still-ingrained perception of canals as exclusively economic hydro-facilities among many of the local population.

The abovementioned reasons can be applied to the canal network in the area of Sombor only with **certain peculiarities**. First, the entire DTD hydro-system in Vojvodina begins in the territory of the City, near the settlement of Bezdan. Second, this is where the canal network separates from the **Danube** as a large river of European importance, which is also a very important waterway and a booming cultural-tourist route. This gives an extraordinary opportunity to extend the given opportunities from the Danube to the nearby canals around Sombor. The third peculiarity is that the DTD system in this upper section near Sombor is not polluted, as is the case with the sections downstream, because there are no serious pollutants from this first section between Bezdan and Sombor. That is why it has great natural potential¹.

Accordingly, there is a **necessity to create a strategic document** that would properly process, point out, and explain the development possibilities of the Great Bačka Canal in the area of Sombor and propose planning measures to identify, use, and implement the given possibilities.

1.2. SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL SCOPE OF THE PLAN

The **spatial scope** of the Plan is a part of the area of the City of Sombor as a local self-government unit in Serbia that is located in the **vicinity of the Great Bačka Canal** as the main a spatial focus. It comes from its upper point, which is the canal lock at Bezdan, where the canal separates from the Danube, to its lower point in the City area, at the canal confluence in Mali Stapar. The length of this section is approximately **46 kilometres**. On this section, the Great Bačka Canal passes through five cadastral municipalities under the administration of the City of Sombor, given downstream: Bezdan, Bački Monoštor, Sombor 1 (city), Sombor 2 (rural surroundings) and Stapar (**Fig. 2**). The scope of the study thus coincides with the total area of these municipalities and amounts to **537.86 km²**.

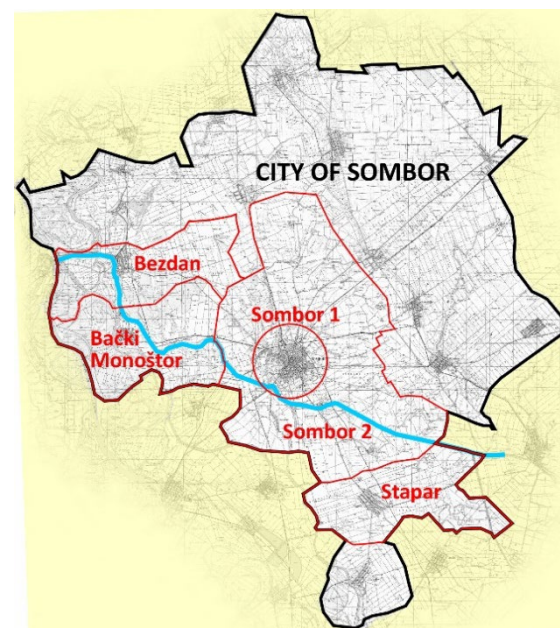


Figure 2: The spatial scope of the Plan along the Great Bačka Canal (blue) through five cadastral municipalities (red) of the City of Sombor (author: B. Antičić).

Finally, regardless of the spatial scope of the Plan, data and localities located outside this area will occasionally be taken into account for the consideration of the factors influencing the urban development of the canal area. For example, the users of the area are from the entire Sombor region. However, this will be clearly emphasised in the given places.

The **timeframe** of the Plan is in line with the usual duration of strategic documents of local importance. They are usually prepared for a maximum of seven years from their enactment, which is also adopted for this document – **2026-2033**. During the last operative year of the Plan, i.e., in 2032, it is necessary to review the preparation of a similar document of the next generation. In addition, the **review** of planned measures and implementation rules is carried out after the third operational year of the Plan, i.e. 2029.

1.3. CANAL INFRASTRUCTURE AS HYDRO-CULTURAL HERITAGE

Law on Waters² recognises several types of water infrastructure, which it defines as “building and other facilities, which together with the devices belonging to them form a technical or technological unit, and serve to carry out water activities” (Article 13). The law further defines several types of water structures. Some of them are important for this plan – those that are recognised by the local community as part of the **local identity** or have the potential to become so are significant:

- 1) Water buildings for regulating watercourses:
 - Canals as a type of artificial/human-made watercourses;
 - Embankments in terms of the possible use permitted on water land;
- 2) Water buildings for flood protection and drainage:
 - Dams;
 - Protective belt with forest and protective greenery (protective forests) in flood-sensitive area;

- Pumping stations;
- Service roads in protected area for flood protection;

3) Water buildings for navigation:

- Locks for ships and boats.



Figure 3: A bridge and old dam above the Great Bačka Canal (author: D. Siljanović Kozoderović).

Additionally, the canal network and its surroundings also contain other infrastructure, such as **bridges** (road, railway, pedestrian, combined), as well as other structures that use the potential/proximity of water, such as hospitality facilities, buildings for nautical transport and tourism (piers, moorings), structures for water sports, holiday homes, etc.

The focal element of this Plan is the **canal** and the buildings on it or along its course (Fig. 3). The importance of canals is that they are both watercourses and large engineering structures³. Canals are built for the same reasons as settlements – for the survival of residents (food and water supply – irrigation,

drainage), traffic connections and safety (moats around historic sites, drainage to prevent diseases). Canal infrastructure consists of canals themselves, locks, dams, pumping stations, spillways, etc. The **basic division** of canals is between the so-called “real canals”, which connect natural waterways that were not originally connected, and “navigation canals”, which are created by regulating and rearranging existing watercourses which were not suitable for navigation or follow them, so navigation takes place on the canals. Both types of canals can be found in Vojvodina⁴.

On Sombor section of the Great Bačka Canal, all the aforementioned water and other buildings can be seen; more of them seen in many places (Fig. 3). At the same time, some of the buildings are under state protection as cultural heritage, i.e., **hydro-technical heritage**. Moreover, there are also buildings that have since lost their original function and are usually in poor physical state. This is the case with the old pumping station in the southwest of Sombor. Such facilities have the potential to be reused for other purposes; for example, for the needs of the local community.



Figure 4: The route of the Franz Canal, that is, the Great Bačka Canal according to the project of József and Gabor Kiss from 1792 (source: www.ravnoplov.rs/ / Milan Stepanović).

The **Great Bačka Canal** itself is considered hydro-technical heritage for Serbia. In many respects, it is the forerunner of the present-day DTD hydro-system, as the largest of its kind on the territory of Serbia, as well as in the Pannonian Plain. The Canal, originally called **Franz Canal** after Habsburg Emperor Francis II, was officially completed in 1802, after a decade of digging⁵. However, the first ideas to connect the rivers Danube and Tisa with a canal existed since the mid-18th century due to the necessity to drain numerous ponds and swamps in the central part of Bačka Region. That is why government engineer József Kiss proposed a project to build a canal along this route. Later, he and his brother Gabor Kiss became the managers of the canal construction (Fig. 4).

Immediately after its opening, the Great Bačka canal enabled the drainage of ponds and swamps. However, it is more significant that it became an **important transport route** of that era, when other transport modes were not developed. Hence, the new canal also encouraged significant cargo transportation, even 70-80 thousand tons per year, mostly grain, livestock and construction material. Thus, it indirectly influenced the rapid development of settlements along its direction. In the case of Sombor, there were also recommendations to dig another canal from the Great Bačka Canal to the city centre, but this was never materialised. As the Danube changed its course in the middle of the 19th century, the canal branch was built from the Danube to Bački Monoštor, with the first concrete lock in Europe. This was built by the project of the imperial engineer Johann Mihalik in 1855-1856 (Fig. 5). The project of Beždan lock was also the first example of underwater concreting in the world.

The ‘status’ of then Franz Canal of a prime transportation corridor **declined somewhat with the construction of the railway** at the end of the 19th century, although it is still the cheapest way to transport large quantities of goods. In 1870, the canal was given a concession for 75 years to the London joint-stock company "Wythes & Longridge". The importance of this concession can be seen in the fact that, even in the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia, it was the

largest investment of English capital in the country. This concession expired in 1945, so the canal was nationalised in the new circumstances of socialist Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the canal was **renovated** (“modernised”) in the 1870s, under the leadership of Istvan Tir, who was also the builder of the Corinth Canal in Greece and a close friend and collaborator of the famous builder of the Suez Canal, Ferdinand de Lesseps. Extensive canal deepening works were carried out, and a new water-supply canal was built.



Figure 5: An old picture (from 1904) of the lock in Bezdan as the first example of underwater concreting in the whole world (source: www.ravnoplov.rs / Milan Stepanović).

In the interwar period, **industry** sprung up along the Great Bačka Canal: sugar factories in Sivac, Crvenka and Vrbas, stuff factory in Kula, hemp factories and mills. Water from the canal was used to irrigate large areas of arable land, as well as to drain water from the surrounding areas.

After the great floods of the Danube in 1956, the canal was deepened between Bezdan and Sombor. However, its **importance greatly decreased** after the

World War II due to the development of other transportation infrastructure, especially the road network. At this time, the current system of canals on the territory of Vojvodina, the **Danube-Tisa-Danube Hydro-system (DTD System)** was completed⁶ (**Fig. 6**). The construction of the newest canals began in 1947, when engineer Nikola Mirkov issued a permit to start works. The project was finally completed in 1957, and finally finalised by 1977, with the commissioning of a new dam on the Tisa River.

The total length of the canal network of the DTD System is **960 km**, so it is the longest canal system not only in Serbia, but also in this part of Europe. Over 600 km of the network is navigable in Bačka and Banat of the given length.

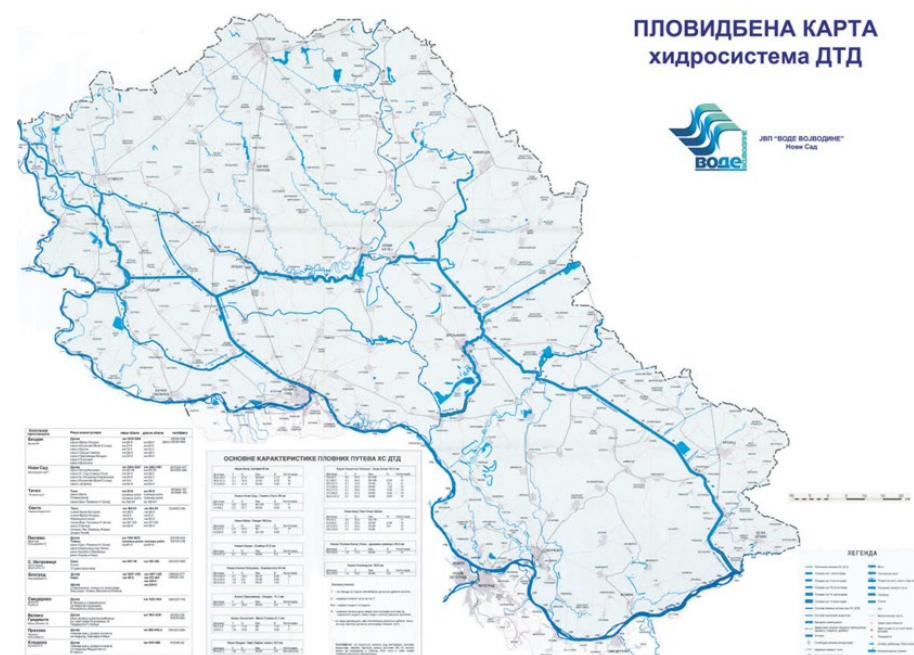


Figure 6: Navigable canals of the Danube-Tisa-Danube Hydro-system in the territory of Vojvodina (source: JP Vode Vojvodine / Vojvodina Waters PE).

The DTD is also significant because it drains about 50% of surface of Vojvodina. Irrigation possibilities are also great – about 25% of the surface of the province. There are as many as 80 settlements in Vojvodina on the banks of the Great Bačka canal. In addition to the canals themselves, the DTD System consists of 24 regulatory dams, 5 safety dams, 16 locks for ships and boats, 6 large pumping stations, 86 bridges, embankments with ramps, etc.

It must be underlined that mass industrialisation during the socialist period in the second half of the 20th century had an impact on the **significant water pollution** of the Great Bačka Canal. This is still present today. Such a big environmental problem for Serbia and Vojvodina and the intentions to solve it have probably contributed to awakening a wider interest in the canal itself, its history and heritage. This is crucial for settlements located along the canal, where it has become part of the **local identity**. Due all these reasons, several plans have been created for the (re)development of the DTD System.

1.4. METHODOLOGY FOR PREPARING THE INVESTMENT PLAN

The preparation of the investment plan followed an integrated and participatory planning approach, combining expert analysis, stakeholder engagement and the review of relevant strategic, planning and regulatory documents. The methodology was designed to ensure that the proposed planning measures and investment priorities respond both to the specific characteristics of the canal area and to the broader strategic objectives defined at the national, provincial and local levels.

The preparation process consisted of several **interconnected stages**. It began with the review of the existing policy, planning and strategic framework, followed by an analysis of the current conditions and development potentials of the canal corridor. Particular attention was given to the natural, cultural, historical, environmental and functional characteristics of the area, as well as to the existing canal infrastructure and its role in the spatial development of the City of Sombor.

In parallel with the analytical work, a **participatory** involving municipal bodies, public utility companies, civil society organisations, local experts, businesses and citizens was carried out through the URBACT Local Group. The results of this process were integrated into the preparation of the vision, objectives, planning measures and implementation priorities of the Plan.

The **final stage** consisted of the definition of strategic priorities and implementation arrangements, together with a monitoring and evaluation framework intended to support the implementation of the plan throughout its programming period.

The planning measures proposed by the Investment Plan were **prioritised** according to their (1) implementation feasibility and (2) potential to generate long-term environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits. The final priorities were defined through a combination of expert assessment and consultations with members of the URBACT Local Group (ULG) and the wider local community.

1.5. GUIDELINES FROM HIGHER POLICY DOCUMENTS

Seven planning and strategic documents of national, regional/provincial and local/city order were taken into account for the guiding extracts for the Plan. The documents for which extracts were made are:

- 1) Regional Spatial Plan for the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina 2021-2035 (draft version – 2022);
- 2) 2034 Water Management Strategy for the Territory of the Republic of Serbia (2017);
- 3) Strategy of the Development of the Water Transport of the Republic of Serbia 2015-2025;
- 4) Long-term Plan of the Business Strategy and Development of “Vode Vojvodine / Vojvodina Waters” PWE 2017-2026;

- 5) Spatial Plan of the City of Sombor (2014);
- 6) General Urban Plan of Sombor (2007);
- 7) Development Plan of the City of Sombor 2022-2028.

Additionally, several other documents and the documents of a lower order, e.g., plans of detailed regulation and urban and architectural design projects, were taken into account, but their elements are “embedded” in the current assessment and planning measures. These lower-order documents are: (1) Strategy of Water Transport Development of the Republic of Serbia 2015-2025, (2) Strategy of Tourism Development of the Republic of Serbia 2026-2030, (3) Plan of General Regulation of Bezdan, (4) Plan of General Regulation of Bački Monoštor, (5) Plan of Detailed Regulation of Marina in Bezdan, (6) Programme of Tourism Development of the City of Sombor 2017-2025, and (7) Urban Design Project for Marina in Sombor.

Additionally, several other documents were taken into account, but their elements are incorporated in the current assessment and planning measures. These documents are: (1) Strategy of Water Transport Development of the Republic of Serbia 2015-2025, (2) Strategy of Tourism Development of the Republic of Serbia 2026-2030, (3) Plan of General Regulation of Bezdan, (4) Plan of General Regulation of Bački Monoštor, (5) Plan of Detailed Regulation of Marina in Bezdan, (6) Programme of Tourism Development of the City of Sombor 2017-2025, and (7) Urban Design Project for Marina in Sombor.

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REGIONAL SPATIAL PLAN FOR THE AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF VOJVODINA 2021-2035 has been completed to the phase of a draft plan. In the text of this plan, the potential of the DTD Hydro-system is mostly seen through the possibilities of using them as waterways, because this transport mode is the most economical. In addition to this, the following potentials are mentioned for the DTD: for drainage, irrigation, technical water for industry

and fish ponds, waste water removal, but also for tourism, sports and recreation. Excessive pollution of canal water stands out as a problem. It should also be noted that the canals are not viewed in terms of community development or the promotion of their cultural and heritage significance. Furthermore, the plan envisages the development of nautical tourism in the most attractive places of the DTD System – from marinas to moorings. Then, the development of national cycling paths along the most important canals in the province is planned. For the observed section of the Great Bačka Canal within the City of Sombor, the planned development of tourism in the protected Upper Danube Region near Bezdan is also highlighted.

The referral map 2.2 is for the planned development of transport and water management infrastructure. Here, the plan is more specific regarding the focus section of the Great Bačka Canal near Sombor. First of all, a reception facility for nautical tourism is planned near the Bezdan lock. The existing facilities are retained: two locks near Bezdan and Sombor (Tromeđa Locality), three pumping stations near Bezdan, Sombor and downstream from Sombor, and a dam between Bezdan and Bački Monoštor, as well as a dam with a lock near Mali Starap, on the border between the City of Sombor and Kula Municipality. A new port of a local importance is planned on the canal near the urban area of Sombor.

2034 WATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE TERRITORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA (National Gazette No 3/2017) is a “long-term plan for the maintenance and development of the water regime in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, in one or more water zones or a part of the water zone”. In essence, the strategy defines the co-called ‘Waters of the First Order’, among which are the main waterways of the DTD Hydro-system, including the Great Bačka Canal. The strategy also identifies the problem of the excessive pollution of the DTD canals. The strategic measures emphasise the approach to maintain the multi-purpose use of the DTD System, but also add that efforts must be intensified to make better use of this, which currently “satisfies primarily the function of drainage, and to a lesser extent irrigation”. The given strategy in

the proposed measures does not go into details, especially for the area of Sombor under this Plan.

STRATEGY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WATER TRANSPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA 2015-2025 (National Gazette No 3/2015 & 66/2020) is a document that is also thematically narrowed down to one topic – water transport. Although this strategy expired in 2025, a new one has not been adopted yet; thus, the strategy was taken into account. From the very beginning, the DTD System was counted among the key waterways in the country, which are, accordingly, important for inclusion in EU projects and further strategic planning. The importance of the restoration of the first lock on the Great Bačka Canal near Bezdan (which was done in 2020), as well as the overhaul shipyard near the same settlement, was emphasised. The DTD system is prominent in the development of nautical tourism by the strategy. Of the specific measures related to the Sombor section of the Great Bačka Canal, it is important to highlight the following measures: (1) the remediation of polluted sediment on critical sectors of the DTD from Bezdan to Vrbas (which is currently in progress) and (2) the design and construction of a marina in the area of the City of Sombor, although the exact location has not been determined in the strategy.

LONG-TERM PLAN OF THE BUSINESS STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT OF “VODE VOJVODINE / VOJVODINA WATERS” PWE 2017-2026 is a document that determines the strategic directions for the development of water-resource management and water facilities in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. According to this plan, DTD Hydro-system belongs to the key water facilities on this territory, including its entire infrastructure (dams, locks, pumping stations, etc.). Among the planned activities are those already mentioned, which relate to the modernisation of waterways, irrigation and drainage of land, improvement of water quality, etc. Among other things, the improvement of the management of natural and other resources was underpinned, but this was not elaborated further. For specific places in Sombor area, it is worth mentioning the following measures: (1) the

restoration of the Vrbas-Bezdan Canal to a capacity of 35 m³/s; (2) the restoration of the existing pumping station “Bezdan II” to 15 m³/s and construction of a new station with a capacity of 20 m³/s; (3) the rehabilitation of the Vrbas-Bezdan Canal; and (4) the afforestation (and recultivation) of the land under the landfills adjacent to the canal near Sombor.

CONCLUSION: The four analysed strategic documents of national and provincial significance are not sufficiently focused on the main topic of this Plan, which is the identification of potential and the proposal of planning measures for the social, cultural and ecological development of the Great Bačka Canal in the territory of the City of Sombor. Although none of these documents prohibits these measures and related activities, they also do not sufficiently highlight the development possibilities in this sense. Topics linked to the improvement of the quality of the canal water, tourism development, for marinas and piers, nautical and cycling tourism, are somewhat better elaborated.

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SPATIAL PLAN OF THE CITY OF SOMBOR (Official Gazette of the City of Sombor No. 5/2014) includes the entire territory of the City as a local self-government unit, i.e., central city and 15 rural settlements with surroundings.

In the development concept of **water transport**, one of the strategic goals is to connect the transport on the DTD Hydro-System with European transport system via the Danube. Based on the proposed classification of ports, the port in Sombor is included in the group of national ports that should be organisationally and operationally integrated with the logistics centre at the regional level. Nautical facilities in the city territory are planned on all DTD canals. It is also important to single out the restoration of the industrial rail from the Sombor rail station to the port with a smaller dock on the canal that will serve as a logistics centre with an intermodal terminal.

In the field of **water management**, the priority activity related to the canals of the DTD system is their revitalisation for drainage. This includes, inter alia, (1)

an increase in the water intake capacity on the Danube at the “Bezdan I” pumping station, (2) the construction of two subsystems: “Plazović” (partially built) and the “Telečka” subsystem, and (3) the dual-purpose or “drainage-irrigation” use. In addition, as part of the Serbia-Hungary cross-border programme, the restoration and revitalisation of the Baja Canal and Šebešfok Dam are prioritised for protection against floods on this canal, and the reconstruction of the canal is in line with plans to increase its tourist attractiveness in the field of nautical tourism. All of these measures indirectly influence the Great Bačka Canal.

In **nautical tourism**, the City of Sombor is designated as the “Danube Euro-Gate” of Serbia, where the Danube Waterway and the waterways of the DTD system provide very favourable conditions for its development. The most important step is the renovation of the Bezdan Lock, making the canal network navigable again (done in 2020), the building of the necessary nautical infrastructure (marina, docks, moorings), and tourist facilities (accommodation, supply, sanitary facilities, etc.). Part of the given nautical infrastructure and activities is also planned on the Great Bačka Canal, including the marina on the canal near Bezdan. Among the other facilities are planned: bird watching and photo-safari, organised rides on small tourist boats, running, cycling along the canal on the edge of the “Upper Danube” Natural reserve, excursion and recreational programmes.

The other types of tourism: In the case of cycling tourism, the further development of the EuroVelo 6 cycling path of international importance and the national cycling path along the main canals of the DTD system are planned. Arrangements should also be planned for the sports airstrip “Cora” located on the Sombor-Bački Monoštor road and along the right bank of the Great Bačka Canal. Regarding tourism, several localities along the Great Bačka Canal should be pointed out for further development: (1) tourist and recreational zone on the southwestern edge of Sombor along the left bank of the canal – 18.18 ha; (2) camp area at the “Tromeđa” Locality near Sombor, between the canals

Bezdan-Vrbas, Odžaci-Sombor and Mostonga – 2 ha; and (3) the marina near Bezdan, immediately west of the settlement.

In terms of **environmental protection**, the Mostonga watercourse and the navigable canals of the DTD system with the coastal strip and embankment are ecological corridors and, therefore, are intended for protection. As this system is very sensitive to pollution, it is necessary to arrange the inflow of stormwater into the canals through regulated outlets. It is also prohibited in the coastal zone of the canal with a width of min. 7 m in built-up area, i.e., 10 m in non-built-up area, build above-ground facilities (shafts, fences, etc.) and plant trees due to the permanent access for mechanisation for the maintenance of canals and other facilities.

THE GENERAL PLAN OF SOMBOR, i.e., the Plan for the general regulation of parts of the City of Sombor (Official Gazette of the Municipality/City of Sombor No 5/2007, 13/2019, 26/2020, 11/2021, 6/2022 & 15/2023) spatially includes the built-up area of the urban settlement of Sombor. The Great Bačka Canal runs along the southern border of the plan area and this space is important for several topics within the plan.

Transportation infrastructure: In the case of water transport, it is crucial to create planned conditions for the development of both freight and passenger traffic through the Bezdan-Vrbas canal through. Sombor has a smaller cargo dock in its industrial zone, which needs to be upgraded for larger cargo and a more efficient loading-unloading point with an improved dock facility. As for the pedestrian and bicycle network, a part of the urban pedestrian and cycling path system is planned along the canal, primarily for the purpose of recreation and tourism.

Environmental protection: It is important to mention the wastewater treatment plant, one of the first modern ones in the former Yugoslavia, from 1979. This plant is located on the Mostonga in the southern part of the city. It is planned to keep the existing complex on the surface of 12 ha and possibly expand the efficiency according to planning needs.

Spatial organisation of the settlement: The plan defines a framework and possibilities for construction along the banks of the canal in terms of recreational areas, service facilities, and holiday homes. The core of the 'leisure zone' on the canal is "Strand" bathing complex and "PIK" sport complex with sport ground, swimming pool and supplementary facilities. All of them had to be modernised and renovated. In the case of urban greenery, buffer-protective greenery should be created, inter alia, along the transport corridors along the banks of the Bezdan-Vrbaš Canal. The 'green belt' formed in this way must be adapted for sports, recreation and tourism, supported with the new species of tall trees, stratified greenery, which had to be protected and nurtured in order to improve them.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF THE CITY OF SOMBOR 2022-2028 (Official Gazette of the City of Sombor No 8/2022) is the most recent strategic document of the City of Sombor with a relatively short planning horizon of six years, i.e., until 2028. It covers the entire city territory. In the current assessment, the importance of numerous canals in the city was highlighted; the Great Bačka Canal is among them. Connection to the surroundings via canals is also among the advantages in the assessment. However, there is only one strategic measure that clearly refers to the development of canals in the City and their surroundings. This is part of the set of measures for environmental protection, where the regulation of the canal network, especially the Great Bačka Canal, is prescribed, in cooperation with provincial institutions. Indirectly, the theme of the channel is also given through the measure of digitalisation of tangible heritage, as a potential in the field of development of culture, community, heritage and ecology.

CONCLUSION: The three analysed local documents provide sufficient guidelines for assessing the potential of the Great Bačka Canal in the Sombor area. However, there is also a difference between spatial-policy documents – spatial plan and general urban plan – which are more specific and with much more spatially determined conditions and measures compared to the development plan. All the documents on a number of measures provide

enough flexibility for some of them to be developed in the future. In addition, the two spatial-policy documents already have additional rules for spatial organisation and construction. They are not given in this chapter due to their length, but they set clear conditions for future development along the canal.

1.6. METHODOLOGY FOR COOPERATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

As the Plan is developed based on the participation of the City of Sombor in URBACT as a European programme dedicated for promoting citizen participation of the in urban development, its methodology is based on **cooperation with the local community as a key actor** in in this matter. This approach is based on the understanding that sustainable revitalisation of hydro-heritage is not possible without the active involvement of those who live and work with that area and who will bear the long-term consequences of the decisions made.

The first reason for applying the participatory methodology is the need **to base the Plan on local knowledge**. The Great Bačka Canal is not only a spatial and infrastructural system, but a layered cultural, historical, ecological and social good, whose values, problems and potentials can only be fully understood through the experience of local people. Knowledge acquired through everyday use of space, economic activities, institutional practice and civil activism represent a necessary complement to expert analyses and local documents.

The second reason pertains to the fact that the Plan should be a response to the **real necessities and ideas** of local community who is directly affected by the development of this area. Instead of pre-set solutions, the process of its formation is aimed at identifying problems, opportunities and development directions that are recognised by local actors themselves – from institutions and organisations to the citizens of Sombor. In this way, a higher degree of relevance of the proposed measures and projects is ensured, as well as a higher probability of their later realisation.

The third reason for this approach is the need to **integrate various initiatives, ideas and projects** into a coherent development framework. By including the different sectors and levels of action, it is enabled the “synergy” possibilities of these projects, avoiding unrelated interventions and creating conditions for their mutual support, both in the planning and implementation phases.

In the process of creating this plan, local community was involved in **two complementary ways**. The first one is the establishment and inclusion in the process of the Plan of the key stakeholders. They form the URBACT local group (ULG), which consisted of the representatives of local self-government, key provincial and local institutions, non-governmental organisations and informal citizen associations, entrepreneurs, members of the scientific and academic community and artists⁷; the second way is the inclusion of the general public, that is, the citizens of Sombor interested in participating.

PARTICIPATION OF ULG STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PLAN CREATION: The local group participated in the whole process continuously, i.e., in all its phases – from the collection of initial data, through the determination of problems and goals, the recognition of values and potentials, to the formation of development directions and project proposals. In line with this, a constant feedback link is ensured between the team for the preparation of the Plan and stakeholders, as well as the possibility to check, supplement, and change data and development ideas during the entire process. In the period from October 2024 to December 2025, **six thematic workshops** were held that followed the various stages of the Plan:

1. **Workshop 22.10.2024:** This was an introductory workshop, which represented the starting point of joint work in the URBACT project. The goal was to familiarise stakeholders with the project and the plan as its major contribution. This meant to establish a common understanding of the framework, goals, and expected outcomes. In addition, for the first time, the current state of the Great Bačka Canal was reviewed. This workshop laid the foundation for further work on the preparation of the Plan.
2. **Workshop 26.03.2025:** This workshop was a follow-up to the introductory one, so it aimed at deepening the common understanding of the context and concept of the Plan that derives from the URBACT project, with a stronger focus on the analysis of the current state and the identification of key challenges, including their first mapping.
3. **Workshop 07.07.2025:** The third workshop was organised in the form of fieldwork and was held on a boat that sailed along the route of the Great Bačka Canal. This approach enabled a direct joint observation of the area that is the Plan subject. The aim of the workshop was for the ULG members of the local group to become familiar with the spatial characteristics and multi-layered values of the canal through direct experience. Thus, the workshop was methodologically set up as a combination of guided discussion and on-site mapping.
4. **Workshop, 11.12.2025:** The fourth workshop aimed at concretising and structuring project proposals for the revitalisation of the Great Bačka Canal and improving the quality of life of the residents of Sombor and nearby settlements. The workshop was designed as a synthesis, relying on all collected data, analysis, field insights and ideas from the e-questionnaire.
5. **Workshop, 21.04.2026:** This workshop was of a different nature because it was dedicated to presenting the study to the political representatives of the city. They were explained the entire process of creating the urban study through phases, with the emphasis on the proposed planning measures and their implementation.
6. **Workshop, 20.07.2026:** The fifth workshop represented the final and key participation phase with the ULG group. Accordingly, its topic was the review of the draft plan, with an emphasis on considering the priority measures for implementation. As the water level in the canal was at a minimum at this period due to drought, a significant part of the discussion at the workshop was also dedicated to climate change adaptation.



Figure 7: Awarded participants of the photo-contest next to the outdoor exhibition in the centre of Sombor (author: D. Siljanović Kozoderović).

After each workshop, notes showing the key findings (data, views, and ideas) were sent by email to all ULG members. The purpose was to inform those who did not participate in the work, as well as for to enable the addition or refinement of the collected data.

PARTICIPATION OF THE BROAD LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE PLAN CREATION:

The second way of involvement refers to the general public, i.e., the citizens of Sombor, whose role in the entire process was multiple. The inclusion of public was intended to inform about the preparation of the Plan as part of the URBACT project, as well as to convey the **concept of hydro-heritage** and the importance of observing, evaluating and protecting water-related economic and communal infrastructure as a cultural and development resource that should be included in policy documents and the daily life of the community. At the same time, this level of participation was aimed at conveying information about the Great Bačka Canal and its multiple values and potentials, as well as at mobilising citizens to support the plan preparation and the eventual implementation of its measures. Accordingly, **seven activities** were organised:

1. **Prize photo-contest and photo-exhibition** of the Great Bačka Canal. Both activities are designed as an open and accessible platform to popularise the area of the canal among the citizens of Sombor, but also as a participatory tool by which citizens are informed about the URBACT project and the Plan, whereas local photographers are mobilised to collect data on the values of the Great Bačka Canal. 347 photos from 99 authors were submitted to the photo-contest. The official opening of the open-air exhibition, in the pedestrian street in the centre of Sombor, was held on October 18, 2025. 31 photos selected by an expert jury were displayed of the exhibition, and prizes were awarded for the three best photos (Fig. 7). The exhibition lasted for next month and a half.
2. The next activity was a series of **lectures and the publication of “Sombor Hydro-Heritage through History for the Citizens of Sombor”**. The author of this publication (e-book) and the lectures for the URBACT project and for the purpose of creating the Plan was Milan Stepanović, local historian. He collected and prepared more than 20 historical stories thematically linked with the canal. The given e-publication will be available to the public at the end of the project, and it is also planned to be printed in the future.
3. **A survey with e-questionnaire for Sombor citizens.** The general public had the opportunity to participate in the preparation of the Study through a specially created e-questionnaire, in which citizens were invited to contribute to the collection of: (1) data important for understanding the Great Bačka Canal, (2) opinion on the problems the canal faces, (3) opinion on the potential for its development, and (4) ideas on desirable future development. 82 citizens of Sombor filled out the questionnaire.
4. **The project dissemination at national conferences** was done twice during the project duration. Actually, the project activities were disseminated in the form of professional works (“papers”) with supplementary oral presentations at national conferences “Urbanism and Sustainable Development” in 2025 and 2026. The first paper was about undertaken urban participation, while the second one was about the structure and logic of an investment plan as a strategic document for local level.



Figure 8: The first student workshop in Sombor Region on March 31, 2026: the student visit of historic Bezdan Gate Lock (author: D. Milovanović Rodić).

5. **The first student workshop** was organised on March 31, 2026. This one-day workshop was arranged with students from the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Architecture, who attended a special studio course with the topic of the planning and designing flagship projects along the Great Bačka Canal in Sombor Region. Students and teaching staff visited the most important locations along the canal in Sombor and Bezdan area (Fig. 8), with a focus on the sites of the largest social cultural, and eco- potential. After the workshop, students continued their work on developing flagship projects, which were presented to the local community during the main festival at the end of the project, in July 2026.
6. **Festival “Kanalisanje”** was the main event organised by the City of Sombor during the “Hydro-Heritage Cities” Project. It was held on the “Štrand” location on the Great Bačka Canal in southern Sombor on July 8, 2026. The name of the festival was symbolic – “kanalisanje” means “be focused on the main ideas” in Serbian language. This was a half-day festival with

several activities (Fig. 10): (1) a workshop for children to draw the canal assets (flora, fauna, etc.) led by a local architect and artist, Sanja Petrović, (2) the second exhibition of the best photos from the contest for the best postcard of the Great Bačka Canal; (3) a roundtable between students from the University of Belgrade and local community with the poster presentation of student works; (4) promotional boat rides on the canal, and (5) a small DJ party with side-participatory activities where participants (citizens) could vote for the most interesting projects proposed by the draft investment plan to be labelled as priorities. The festival was planned a small event, but it was eventually well visited by Somborians of different age.

7. The last event held was the “**Open Youth Class**”, held in Bezdan on July 17, 2026 (Fig. 9). As the Bezdan section of the canal is right next to the “Upper Danube” Nature Reserve, a special attention at the workshop was paid to recommendations for the development of the canal zone in accordance with environmental protection.



Figure 9: Open class for youth, held as the last activity of the project – July 17, 2026 in Bezdan (author: N. Ristić).

All explained activities underline that the methodology of the Plan is designed as a multi-layered participatory process in which the continuous work of the ULG Group and the open involvement of the general public complement each other. This highlights that the Plan is not only a professional document, but also a **communication, educational, and facilitating tool** based on local knowledge and needs, with the aim of contributing to the long-term revitalisation of the Great Bačka Canal as a hydro-cultural heritage and the common development resource of Sombor.

Figure 10: “Kanalisanje” Festival in Štrand in Sombor on July 8, 2026, with different activities: (a) children’s workshop to draw the canal assets; (b) a roundtable between students from the University of Belgrade and local community with the poster presentation of their works for the canal in Sombor; (c) participatory activities where citizens voted for priority projects in an investment plan; and (d) local children in a promotional boat rides on the Great Bačka Canal (authors: D. Milovanović Rodić, D. Siljanović Kozoderović and Z. Pupovac).



2. CURRENT ASSESSMENT

2.1. NATURAL CONDITIONS

Natural conditions include topography, climate, waters and flora and fauna.

The **topography** of the Plan area is **distinctly flat**, entirely in the Pannonian Plain. The altitude of the area is 80-85 meters above mean sea level in the largest part, while only in its northernmost part, it exceeds 90 meters. In the western part, up to the Danube, its inundation (flood) plain extends, today within the “Upper Danube (Region)” Special nature reserve. Further to the east, along the Great Bačka Canal, there are alluvial plains formed by river sediments. The land is swampy in the western part (Upper Danube), but in the central and eastern part of the area it is characterised by high quality – chernozem. It should be added that until the 18th century and the beginning of works on land reclamation, a much larger part of the area was swampy.

Climate is typical for the central part of the Pannonian Plain and is generally favourable for living and working. The Plan area is in the **temperate climate** zone, to which a significant part of continental Europe belongs. However, in recent years, the adverse impact of **climate changes** has been noticed more and more. This is especially evident during summertime, when high temperatures occur during the day and at night – the so-called “tropical days” with over 30 °C and “tropical nights” when the temperature does not fall below 20 °C. As these phenomena are more and more frequent and long-lasting, they significantly make it difficult to stay and move outdoors for a long time in the summer. This affects at the same time human health, but also the comfort of living and working in the open space and the ways of using it. Similarly, extreme climatic conditions occur more often in settlements, where the proportion of greenery is lower and the built-up area is higher – the “heat island” effect. Consequently, the planning measures must consider all this.



Figure 11: The Danube in Bezdan area, near the Museum of the Battle of Batin, where the channels of the DTD system separate from (source: TO Sombor).

Water is an important resource in the Plan area. However, natural watercourses almost do not exist today due to numerous interventions on them since the beginning of the Austrian organisation of the space of the present-day Vojvodina in the early 18th century.

Of the natural watercourses, the only important one is the **Danube** as a river of European importance (**Fig. 11**), which at the same time forms the western border of the Plan area. However, the course of the Danube was also significantly changed in this part in order to control it and prevent floods and cut previously numerous meanders. Despite that, between the main course of the river and the first row of settlements next to it (Kolūt, Bezdan, and Bački Monoštor) there is still a vast floodplain with numerous backwaters and oxbow lakes, which today are part of the “Upper Danube” Special Nature Reserve.

Other natural watercourses have been changed even more than the Danube. The former smaller rivers Mostonga and Plazović should be mentioned here.

Mostonga was a significant watercourse, about 90 km long. Within the Plan area, it flowed west of Sombor north-south. The course of Mostonga was radically changed (“canalised”) during the 18th century, with the construction of the Great Bačka Canal. After this, it completely lost its importance, while its course south of Sombor was used for the routing of the current Sombor-Odžaci Canal. Today, Mostonga is more of a canalised stream that flows along the western edge of the urban area of Sombor and is officially used for drainage, which dries up in times of drought.

Plazović (Hun. *Kígyós*) had a similar fate in its lower part, which is within the Plan area, on the stretch between Bezdan and Bački Monoštor. To the east of Monoštor, it pours out into the Great Bačka Canal, but it previously flowed into the Danube through the marshlands of the Upper Danube Nature reserve. During the past couple of centuries, Plazović was also completely canalised and today it looks more like a regulated stream.



Figure 12: The landscape along the Great Bačka Canal, as well as other DTD canals in Vojvodina, is mainly characterised by arable flat land (source: TO Sombor).

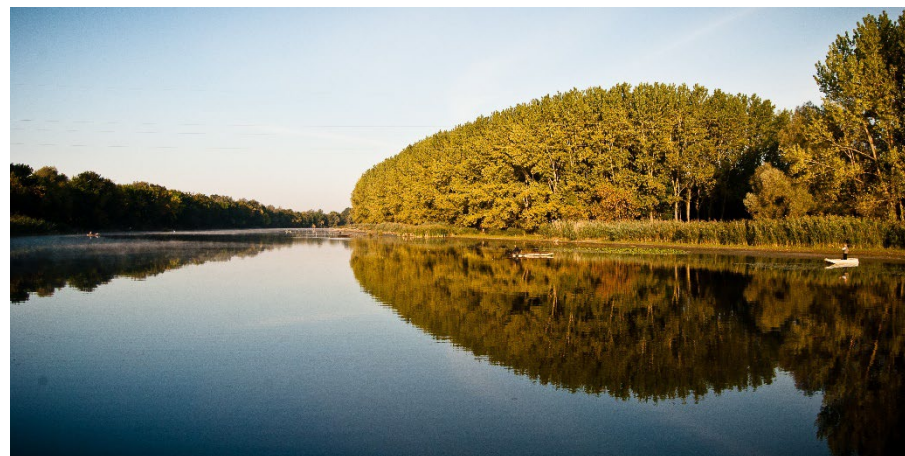


Figure 13: Floodplain forests in the Danube marshlands prevail in the “Upper Danube” Special nature reserve, a significant part of which belongs to the western segment of the Plan area (author: D. Siljanović Kozoderović).

Flora and fauna: Two distinct zones can be distinguished. The larger zone in the central and eastern third of the Plan area is completely regulated by human activities for agriculture today. These are mainly arable land (Fig. 12) and, to a lesser extent, orchards, vineyards, meadows and artificially formed forest plantations.

A smaller, but naturally more valuable zone in terms of flora and fauna is in the **floodplain of the Danube** in the extreme western third of the Plan area. Today, it is protected heritage – the afore mentioned “**Upper Danube**” **Special nature reserve**⁸. The reserve has an area of 19,648 hectares, further divided into inner zones under three protection regimes. The reserve area is a set of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, where the largest area is occupied by the so-called **marshland floodplain forests** – natural forests of oaks, willows, and poplars (Fig. 13). In the past, there were many more of these forests along rivers in Vojvodina, so the importance of this reserve as preserved such area is highlighted. The “Upper Danube” Special nature reserve is also very important in terms of biodiversity, where it belongs to the richest areas in Vojvodina, with

over 1,000 plant species, 55 fish species, 11 amphibians, 9 reptiles, 230 birds and 51 mammal species.

Furthermore, the “Upper Danube” Reserve together with floodplains in Croatia (Kopački rit) and Hungary (Karapandža) forms a large natural territory under protection. This wider area is an integral part of the Mura-Drava-Danube **pentalateral biosphere reserve** since 2017. Also, the “Upper Danube” has been on the list of the Ramsar Convention as a natural wetland since 2007. Similarly, the “Upper Danube” was declared an internationally important bird area (IBA) in 1989, due to its exceptional natural values.

2.2. CULTURAL AND BUILT CONDITIONS

This chapter is about the general human-made conditions in the Plan area. As the Great Bačka Canal is the focus of this Plan, its buildings and localities deserve a special emphasis, so they are presented separately in the next chapter.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT: Although the area of Sombor was inhabited already in prehistoric times, it entered the civilisational era only in the early Middle Ages.

It is assumed that there was the medieval fortress-city of Bodrog in the area between the present-day Danube and the Bački Monoštor settlement. Therefore, this area was formerly called Bodrog, and the former county of the Kingdom of Hungary with its headquarters in Sombor was named as Bač-Bodrog Country⁹. Although the fortress-town in question was the centre of this area for most of the Middle Ages, there are no remains of Bodrog today. It is speculated that it was carried away by the Danube during the frequent changes in its course. At the beginning of the 14th century, in addition to Bodrog, the Monastery of St. Peter was also mentioned, from which Bački Monoštor developed today, including its name. At the same time, Bezdan appears as a settlement.

The diminished importance of Bodrog at the end of the Middle Ages is a consequence, inter alia, of the rise of Sombor as a settlement on more drained land in the Danube hinterland. It was first mentioned as Coborsentmihalj (Hun. *Coborszentmihaly*) in the late 15th century, when it was the seat of the manor. During the Ottoman reign over the southern Pannonian Plain in the 16th and 17th centuries, this settlement developed into a market town. In 1685, Sombor and its surroundings were taken over by the Habsburgs. Sombor reached its peak during the Habsburg Empire and, later, Austria-Hungary. As early as 1749, the city received the rights of a free royal city from the Austrian crown, as the first in the wider region¹⁰. Even then, Sombor was the seat of the extensive Bač-Bodrog Country with significant administration in the city. This indirectly led to the development of economy and culture in the city. Sombor had a special importance for the Serbian community in the Habsburg Empire, as the seat of the first teacher's school for Serbs (known as “Preparandija”), but the city also had significant communities of Hungarians, Germans, Roman Catholic Slavs (Bunjevacs, Šokacs, Croats) and Jews.

Similar to Sombor, **other settlements** within the Plan area acquired their present form and features during the Habsburg period. Bački Monoštor and Bezdan are being densified and remodelled at this time. This is particularly visible in the highly regular street matrix of Bački Monoštor, while Bezdan is an example how a settlement can be shaped by the route of the Great Bačka Canal and other watercourses in the area. Due to its good location, Bezdan obtained the features of a small market town with early elements of industrialisation and trade on the nearby Danube and Great Bačka Canal in the late 19th century (Fig. 14). Stapar was created by the planned displacement of local Serbian population from the today non-existent settlements of Bokčenić and Vranješevu in the mid- 18th century. Similar to Bački Monoštor, Stapar also received a regular, orthogonal matrix during this time.

At the end of the World War I in 1918, the **state border** between newly established Hungary and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later

Yugoslavia, was drawn north of Sombor. This has negatively contributed to this area starting to stagnate. The unenviable position on the edge of the country was additionally strengthened by the transfer of the regional seat from Sombor to Novi Sad as the seat of the new Danube Region in Yugoslavia.



Figure 14: The damask weaving manufacture in Bezdan from the 19th century is cultural heritage which emerged as a result of the development of water traffic on the Danube and the Great Bačka Canal. It is under the 'double' state protection today – both as tangible and intangible cultural heritage (author: D. Siljanović Kozoderović).

The city of Sombor recorded somewhat greater development in the postwar decades, during **socialist Yugoslavia**, when rapid industrialisation led to the demographic growth of the city. Nevertheless, this growth was far slower than that of other cities of similar size in Yugoslavia, and it was largely at the expense of the “rural exodus” of its surroundings. Actually, all rural settlements in the Plan area began to decline at this time. With the post-socialist transition and the Yugoslav crisis in the 1990s, difficulties in economic restructuring began, which to this day adversely affect the development of Sombor and its surroundings.

POPULATION: Difficulties in local economy have been reflected very well in demographic trends since 2000. Table 1 shows the movement of the number of inhabitants by settlement within the Plan area at the last three censuses:

Table 1: The change of the number of inhabitants by settlement according to national censuses 2002-2022 and the average age of population in 2022.

Settlement	Census 2002.	Census 2011.	Census 2022.	Change 2002-2022.	Average age 2022
Sombor	51,471	47,623	41,814	-18.8%	48.11
Bački Monoštor	3,920	3,485	2,647	-32.5%	45.94
Bezdan	5,263	4,623	3,269	-37.9%	45.29
Stapar	3,720	3,282	2,815	-24.3%	43.61

The presented statistical data clearly indicates the trends of a **large and rapid depopulation** in all settlements in the last twenty years. It is mainly the result of the emigration of young people. Data for the average population age confirms this observation. What is even more worrying is that the speed of depopulation increased in the last intercensal period (2011-2022) compared to the previous one (2002-2011). An additional problem is that more and more highly educated people move to bigger cities (Novi Sad, Belgrade), so Sombor loses a contingent of the population that is crucial for modern development, based on sophistication, innovations and technological achievements. Nevertheless, the number of inhabitants per settlement is still sufficient for the functioning of basic public services and the tertiary sector (retail, services, etc.). This gives hope that living conditions in these settlements can be maintained and improved in the future regardless of depopulation.

The table also indicates that the speed of depopulation is related to the **ethnic characteristics** of the settlement. In Bački Monoštor, the majority are Croats from the Šokac ethnic group, with significant minorities of Roma, Serbs and Hungarians, while Bezdan is an ethnically mixed settlement – Hungarians,

Serbs and Croats-Šokacs. Sombor has a Serbian majority, but there are also communities of all the minorities present in this region (Hungarians, Croats, Bunjevacs, Šokacs, Roma, etc.). It is interesting to note that there is a relatively large community of Danubian Germans in Sombor (almost 300 members in 2022), so that was the precondition for the German minority self-government for Serbia to be located in the city. Finally, Stapar is a Serbian settlement. It is obvious that the national minorities have a faster decline in the Sombor Region than the Serbs, which can be marked as bad considering the cultural and social richness that comes from a multi-ethnic environment such as in Sombor.



Figure 15: Štrand is a specialised city centre for leisure – sports, recreation and hospitality – located on the Great Bačka Canal, in the southwestern edge of Sombor (author: B. Antonić).

SETTLEMENTS: The historical overview has already given indications of the genesis of the settlements. This paragraph is about their **physical and functional relations to nearby watercourses**, with an emphasis on the Great

Bačka Canal. While Sombor and Bezdan have in their matrix elements of adaptation to the surrounding watercourses (including the canal), until then Stapar and Bački Monoštor have relatively regular matrices of streets and urban blocks of strict orthogonal shape.

The urban area of **Sombor** is star-shaped since the city had no major physical obstacles in its expansion, and the Great Bačka Canal is located three kilometres southwest of the old core of the city. It forms the southwestern edge today of the city, along a road to Apatin Town. The former course of the Mostonga was also no obstacle in its recent westward expansion. In the last couple of decades, “Štrand”, a specialised city centre for leisure – sports, recreation and hospitality – was formed at the place where the Apatin road crosses the Great Bačka Canal (Fig. 15). The second important zone along the canal is a vacation zone with holiday homes in Tromeđa Locality, at the southern end of the urban area. Great Bačka Canal joins the Odžaci-Sombor Canal here. Tromeđa Locality is also interesting as a potential picnic area.

Among all the included settlements, **Bezdan** has the most direct relationship with the Great Bačka Canal, since the centre and greater part of the settlement bends on the canal itself. As it is aforementioned, it is obvious that the settlement matrix follows the Great Bačka Canal, as well as other smaller watercourses in the area, causing a much lower degree of urban regularity than the surrounding settlements. And centre of Bezdan is eccentrically placed along the canal in the western part of the settlement. Furthermore, the largest number of non-residential facilities in Bezdan is along the canal – the old shipyard, hospitality and sport facilities, etc (Fig. 16).

Aside of the explained similarly arranged matrix of rectangular settlement blocks with regulated wide streets, **Bački Monoštor and Stapar**, are also similar in that they are somewhat further from the Great Bačka Canal, which they ‘touch’ by their surrounding territories. However, Bački Monoštor is on the Bezdan-Prigrevica Canal on its west side; a vacation zone there has been formed in recent years. North of the settlement, there is a shipyard on the

Great Bačka Canal. In contrast, Stapar, is further away from any canal – a couple of kilometres each from the Great Bačka Canal and from the Sombor-Odžaci Canal. Accordingly, these canals have not had a significant impact on their physical structure and spatial development.

In addition to the main settlements, there are numerous **independent farms**, locally known as *Salašs* (sing. *Salaš*) in the surroundings of Sombor. Their fusion at several locations around the city has caused a specific type of hamlets, known as **Salaš settlements**. The hamlets that are on the main road routes or are close to the city are relatively developed. Then, some hamlets are close to the Great Bačka Canal; Bukovac (southwest of the city), Čičovi (south), Lugovo and Žarkovac (southeast). Bukovac has recently been included in the city built-up area, and in addition. The hamlet is close to the already mentioned leisure zone in the southwest of Sombor, so this development is slowly spreading in this direction as well – holiday homes and hospitality facilities. Lugovo, located on the Sombor-Odžaci road, has more new buildings due to its favourable location and acts as a suburb.



Figure 16: Kayaking in Bezdan, which is the best connected to the Great Bačka Canal of all the settlements in the Sombor Region (author: D. Milovanović Rodić).

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES: Canals in Vojvodina were first built to help the development of **agriculture** (drainage). Later, **industry** joined it, especially in larger settlements. All this can be seen in the Plan area. The industrial zone of Sombor is located south of the city, towards the Great Bačka Canal, although only a small part of it is directly next to it. There are shipyards along the canal in Bezdan and Bački Monoštor. The Bezdan shipyard is inactive, so it can rather be described as a brownfield. In the rest part of the cadastral municipalities, agriculture mostly predominates, mainly arable land.

In the “Upper Danube” Reserve in the extreme west of the area, the land is mostly under forests, so **forestry and hunting** prevail there. In recent decades, **tourism and hospitality** sectors have been developing more and more in this part. Weekend, rural, eco- and cultural tourism are more and more present. Bački Monoštor is considered a “pioneer” in this sector. This development can be seen from near Bezdan and the southwestern part of Sombor, at the mentioned Štrand Locality where the canal crosses the Apatin road.

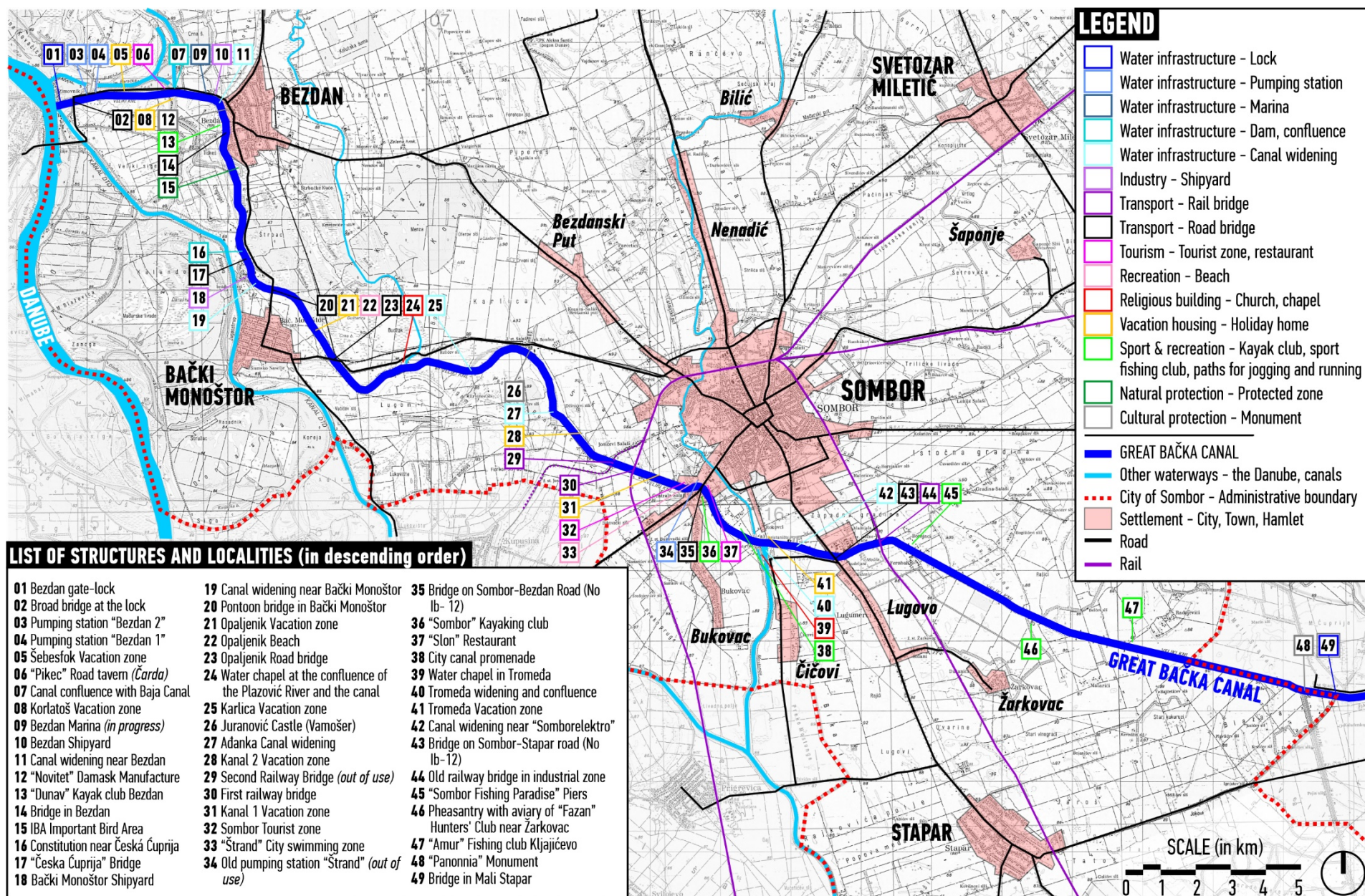
2.3. EXISTING FACILITIES AND LOCATIONS ALONG THE CANAL

On the length of 46 kilometres of the Great Bačka Canal in the area of the City of Sombor, **49 important buildings and localities** have been identified (**Fig. 17**).

Although five cadastral municipalities with settlements have access to the Great Bačka Canal in the Plan area, **just three settlements** essentially use their access to the canal: Bezdan, Bački Monoštor, and Sombor. Of these, only Bezdan has its centre directly on the canal, while the other two settlements touch the canal area with their peripheries.

Figure 17 (next page): The spatial distribution of significant buildings and localities on or along the Great Bačka Canal in the territory of the City of Sombor (authors: D. Siljanović Kozoderović, Z. Pupovac and B. Antonić).

INVESTMENT PLAN FOR THE HYDRO-CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SOMBOR, WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL



In addition, **three Salaš settlements** – Čičovi, Lugovo and Žarkovac – all located south of Sombor, are also near the Great Bačka canal. Finally, in recent decades, **several vacation zones** with holiday homes have been formed along the canal, some of which are extensions of the mentioned settlements, and some of which are completely independent. The most noticeable elements in these zones are fishing boats and small piers (Fig. 18).



Figure 18: Fishing boats and small piers are the most noticeable elements along the canal in Sombor Region (author: B. Antičić).

There is **no uniform distribution** of identified significant buildings and localities along the Great Bačka Canal along the analysed section. The fewest observed examples are in the section downstream from Sombor toward Mali Stapar – only four of them on approximately one third of the analysed length. Conversely, the highest concentration of buildings and localities is at the point of intersection or parallel extension of roads for motor traffic with the canal near the three previously mentioned settlements, which underlines the **importance of accessibility**. Thus, a large concentration of content can be observed near Sombor (15), between Bezdan and the bridge on the Danube

(15) and northeast of Bački Monoštor (8). In the case of **sports and recreation** facilities, the spatial uniformity along the canal is best observed. They are often connected to the approach from the nearest settlements, so these facilities are relatively equally present on all sections.

As expected, the most numerous are **hydro-structures** – 16 of them are on the list. The density of such structures is the highest in the western extreme of the canal network, which is between the Danube and Bezdan. This is at beginning of the Great Bačka Canal, but also the beginning of the Bezdan-Prigrevica Canal. Furthermore, there is a **large number of bridges** for road and railway transport, especially on the section next to the city of Sombor.

It should be emphasised again the existence of several **vacation zones** with holiday homes created along the canal in the past decades. This indirectly speaks of the already formed social importance of the canal for local population, as a leisure zone. There are six such zones: Šebešfok and Korlatoš near Bezdan, Opaljenik near Bački Monoštor, Kanal 1, Kanal 2 and Tromeda near Sombor. It is also worth to note that all these weekend settlements are in areas with a **forested parts** along the canal.

Finally, **tourism and hospitality zones** along the Great Bačka Canal should be repeated as this sector has recently developed rapidly both in terms of the number of contents and their quality. There are two such: between Bezdan and the Danube and southwest of Sombor.

2.4. ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT STATE

The assessment of the current state in the Plan area in Sombor was given through a **SWOT analysis**. It rests on four sets of positive and negative components, depending on whether they are of a local character, so they can be dealt with, or they come from external influence, so they must be adjusted at the local level. The four components are: Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O), and Threats (T).

Table 2: SWOT analysis of the current state on the Plan area in Sombor.

STRENGTHS (S)	WEAKNESSES (W)	OPPORTUNITIES (O)	THREATS (T)
10. The canal as an essential part of the heritage and identity of Sombor and its surroundings. 11. The local population recognises the importance of the canal as a place of community. 12. The significant use of the canal as a place for leisure, especially the sections near Bezdan to Sombor. 13. Preserved and well-organised intangible heritage about the canal: historical stories, legends and traditions. 14. Active development of tourism and hospitality sectors in recent years. 15. Planned marina in Bezdan as development potential for tourism. 16. Local policy documents provide the basis for the faster and sustainable development of the canal in the future. 17. A large concentration of buildings and localities along the Sombor section of the canal as places suitable for new development. 18. Sombor, Bački Monoštor and Bezdan have direct access to the canal. 19. The section of the canal from Bezdan to Sombor as the best ecologically preserved of all – “ecological corridor”.	20. The multipurpose character of the canal leads to numerous spatial conflicts. 21. Canal maintenance measures (smoothing, the arrangement of inspection paths) are often in conflict with other types of canal use. 22. The section from Sombor to Mali Stapar is currently without many significant spatial attractions. 23. Vacation zones along certain sections of the canal prevent access to it and the development of other facilities (sport and recreation). 24. Environmental problems along the canal, such as illegal dumping, have not been fully resolved. 25. The lack of technical infrastructure for the greater use of the canal by citizens and visitors: paths, lighting, accesses, etc. 26. A need for a clear tourist strategy for the canal section in Sombor. 27. The absence of specific places along the canal for cultural, educational and promotional activities. 28. Citizens still do not see primarily the canal as significant social and cultural “capital”.	30. The proximity of the Danube as a major waterway and tourist route as an incentive for the development of activities on the canal. 31. The state approved the construction of a new tourist pier on the Danube near Bezdan, very close to the beginning of the canal. 32. The planned development of water transport on the canal limits intensive cargo transport on the ecologically and culturally valuable Bezdan-Sombor section. 33. Important hydro-heritage of national importance on the canal, such as Bezdan lock or the complex in Mali Stapar, recently restored and under state protection. 34. “Vode Vojvodine / Vojvodina Waters” PWE as responsible for the canal shows understanding for the promotion of the cultural-heritage values of the canal. 35. In ecological sense, the particularly valuable part at the beginning of the canal is under national protection – the “Upper Danube” Special nature reserve. 36. The City of Sombor has been recently involved in many regional and international projects that recognise the canal as a potential.	40. Management of many resources of the canal and its environment is at the national and provincial levels, which hinders the implementation of planning measures. 41. Certain hydro-structures disrupt the development of the canal – outdated equipment, small dimensions, etc. 42. The spread of invasive species with negative impact on the channel. 43. Climate changes influence the character of canal use – from drainage to irrigation. 44. Certain hydro-structures, despite their historical value, are not under state protection and are in poor condition, e.g., the old pumping station in Sombor. 45. Demographic trends in all analysed settlements along the canal are negative: population decline, aging, etc. 46. The peripheral position of Sombor in the spatial system of the Republic of Serbia. 47. General pressure to use the canal more and more for irrigation. 48. Environmental problems, especially canal water pollution, cannot be resolved without higher levels.

3. CONCEPT OF THE PLAN

3.1. VISION

The assessment of current state indicates that **significant challenges** remain in discovering and unlocking development potentials of the Great Bačka Canal and its surroundings in the Sombor area. The canal and its surroundings had to be recognised as a common heritage and public good. There has not been enough progress here so far, although the environment has great potential (Fig. 19).

This section presents the **vision** of the Investment plan, which serves as the foundation for defining its strategic goals and planning measures. All of these steps in planning the canal space – the vision, goals, and measures – are developed with the ULG members and the citizens of Sombor through urban participation. In line with this, they evolved through a gradual process of collaboration, dialogue and joint learning – a process of “research and creative navigation” along the Great Bačka Canal.

VISION

MAY THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL BECOME PART OF SOMBOR LIFE!

The vision of this plan is to reintegrate the Great Bačka Canal and its surroundings into the everyday life of the City of Sombor by recognising them as a **common cultural heritage and a valuable public asset**.

Building upon its traditional economic role, the canal evolves into a multifunctional space that supports **social interaction, cultural activities, environmental protection, recreation and sustainable local development**. Such transformation provides all future users of the canal an **accessible, comfortable, healthy and safe environment that** strengthens local identity and enhances the quality of life for present and future generations.



Figure 19: One ambience of the Great Bačka Canal in the vicinity of Sombor (author: D. Siljanović Kozoderović).

In line with the set vision, the **main values** represented by this plan can also be observed. Six such values are distinguished:

- Accessibility,
- Convenience,
- Healthy environment,
- Security,
- Environmental sustainability, and
- Social inclusion.

3.2. GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL GOALS

GENERAL GOALS: The vision also leads to general goals, which must reflect the long-term development of the canal area in Sombor and its surroundings. Their role is to set the direction in which the measures proposed in this plan will later develop. The general goals of the development of the Great Bačka Canal in Sombor are:

- 1) To support the character of the canal as a **public good** through strategic measures, which as such should always be accessible to everyone;
- 2) To improve the ambiance of the canal and its surroundings so that they are **pleasant for the local community**, but also for external visitors;
- 3) To use in future development the elements of the canal that bear the characteristics of cultural heritage, and especially **industrial heritage**, while respecting their perceived monumental values;
- 4) To respect and sustainably promote the **natural environment** of the canal area in its future development;
- 5) To enable synergy in the development of the canal between **different aspects of its use**, and in particular between the traditional economic purpose of the canal and other aspects related to society and nature;
- 6) To establish **spatial balance** in the development of all parts of the canal in the Sombor area, while recognising their specificities and respecting local urban and spatial identity;
- 7) To **harmonise the development** of the canal through development measures and in relation to other major **development poles** in the Sombor area, such as the Danube part or the city itself.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES: They are more specific than the previous ones and represent the link between the general goals and the final elaboration in the form of planning measures. For the sake of clarity, the specific objectives are divided into four areas of future development of the Great Bačka Canal:

Social development:

- 1) To improve the **outdoor and indoor spaces** along the canal so that they become gathering places for the local community;
- 2) To connect the canal as much as possible to the **environment**, i.e., make it **spatially accessible**, especially where it passes through settlements;
- 3) To develop the **sustainable modes of transport and movement** along the entire Sombor section of the canal;
- 4) To promote **healthy lifestyles**, as well as activities and spaces based on them through the development of the canal;
- 5) To support all forms of **training and education** of the local community to recognise and preserve the values of the canal;

Cultural development:

- 6) To create the **vibrant cultural hotspots** along the canals that reflect local identity;
- 7) To renovate and revitalise **historic sites** and sites that are part of the local cultural and industrial **heritage**;
- 8) To lay the foundation for the **digitalisation and online promotion** of cultural, heritage and natural elements of the canal and its surroundings;
- 9) To link the promotion of canal-related culture with the development of **cultural tourism** along it;

Ecological development:

- 10) To respect areas along the canal that are already recognised and/or protected as **natural assets**;
- 11) To design activities on and along the canal that sustainably use, respect and promote local **nature**;

Integrated development with local economy:

- 12) To improve the **tourist offer** on and along the canal so that it is focused on its identity and sustainable use;
- 13) When developing primarily business zones and facilities along the canal, to arrange solutions of **harmonised use** for other purposes as well.

3.3. MAIN FOCUSES OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The given title refers to the **spatial organisation** of the planning area. The intention is to, in addition to the development of individual places and entities along the Great Bačka Canal, simultaneously network them and not lose their already recognised identity. This is achieved by respecting three principles:

- 1) To enable the most **even spatial development** of the given area;
- 2) To clearly identify the **focal points of urban development** in relation to settlements;
- 3) To clearly set the aforementioned development focuses both in terms of **hierarchy** and **specialisation**.

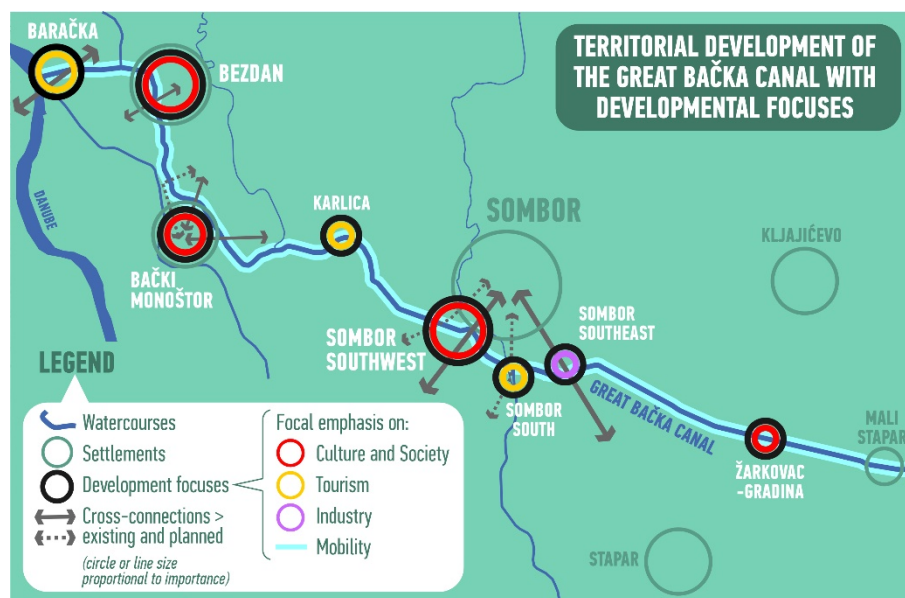


Figure 20: The Spatial development of the Great Bačka Canal in the area of Sombor with development focuses (Author: B. Antičić).

First, the map (Fig. 20) shows that the planned spatial organisation must first work on “**strengthening the empty sections**” of the Great Bačka Canal, i.e.,

sections where today there is not much content that would attract visitors, especially those who are external ones. Here, the localities of **Karlica** and **Gradina-Žarkovac** are particularly meant. In other sections, such places already exist and should be further developed in the first place.

Second, in the **hierarchy of the planned development centres**, a relation should be established between the size of the settlements next to which they are located and, again, creating a balance along the movement along the canal. In accordance with this, the most important development focal points are those in the **southwest of Sombor**, as the largest settlement in the area, and **Bezdan**, where the focal point coincides with the settlement.

Thirdly, it is desirable to strategically encourage the moderate **specialisation of development focal points**, where three possible development axes have been observed: (1) culture and society, (2) tourism, (3) industry, while (4) mobility as the fourth develops linearly, along the canal itself. In this way, the greater development dynamics of the Great Bačka Canal is indirectly encouraged, which, as the main connection between focal points, becomes a sort of “**mobility corridor**”. Similar to the previous one, the specialisation of these points is planned in such a way that their diversity is preserved along the canal. In the end, it should be said that the specialisation of each focal point does not mean its functional uniformity, but only the prevalent axis in the developmental sense that allows all other related activities and contents.

4. PLANNING MEASURES

This chapter is essential as it explains the key reason why the City of Sombor has joined both the URBACT EU Programme and “Hydro-Heritage Cities” Network project – to embrace planning measures that are critical to initiate, implement, and maintain the **social, cultural, ecological and integrated development** of the Great Bačka Canal in the city area, aside of its traditional role of an economic corridor. Only in this way the canal can become a **real part of Sombor life!**

The measures proposed by the investment plan of Sombor are in line with the afore explained plan vision and the main goals. Therefore, the measures are structured according **four thematic areas** which correspond to specific objectives: (1) social development, (2) cultural development, (3) ecological development, and (4) integrated development with (local) economy (**Fig. 21**). All proposed measures in the plan passed through several rounds of audit and evaluation, where some were merged and/or better defined.

The enlisted measures in the plan (**Fig. 22**) are further divided between “hard” and “soft” measures. Such a dichotomy reflects the intensive urban participation process in the project. A linking element between these two types of measures is, expectedly, the Great Bačka Canal. The **integrated and gradual implementation** of both of them is a prerequisite to enable the sustainable territorial development of the Sombor area along the canal.

Hard measures imply tangible, i.e., physical infrastructure and they are connected with easily quantifiable data. They are mainly extracted from the relevant regional and local policy documents (“flagship projects”), as well as from stakeholders coming from the city administration.

In contrast to them, **soft measures** refer to intangible local infrastructure, i.e., they are focused on working on qualitative elements like sentiment and attitudes through education, organisation, guidance, and promotion. This set of measures was mainly obtained in cooperation with stakeholders who are from nongovernmental and private sector, as well as from public institutions related to culture and heritage.

Figure 21: The summary table of the included measures in the investment plan of Sombor (Author: B. Antičić).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT	INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT WITH ECONOMY
1.01 / Cycling-pedestrian path along the Canal on inspection path along the canal 1.02 / Renewal of "Štrand" bathing facility in Sombor, plus inclusion of other visitor activities 1.03 / Renewal and modernisation of "PIK" sport complex in Sombor 1.04 / Picnic area on a field close to "Štrand" in Sombor with intermodal transport option - land-canal transfer 1.05 / Reuse of the "Second" (rail) Bridge in Sombor for a new cycling-pedestrian trail 1.06 / Kayaking centre in Bezdan with outdoor and indoor facilities 1.07 / New pontoon beach in Opaljenik Locality near Bački Monoštor	2.01 / A museum of the DTD Hydro-system in old pumping station in Sombor with communal functions 2.02 / Viewpoint platform on the Bezdan lock at the nearby Danube shore 2.03 / Tourist access and promotion of two water chapels near the canal - Rome catholic chapel in Karlica near Bački Monoštor and Orthodox chapel in Bukovac near Sombor 2.04 / Children and student camps with educational programmes about the canal and the DTD as cultural asset and heritage site 2.05 / Tourist cycling-pedestrian bridge in Tromeda Locality near the crossing between the canal and Mostonga	3.01 / Reforestation of the canal embankment outside protected areas 3.02 / Renewal of green leisure zone next to the canal in Sombor 3.03 / "Green" camp site at Tromeda Locality near Sombor, with reforestation 3.04 / "Reed park" between Štrbac and Bezdan with educational infrastructure 3.05 / Recultivation and reforestation of an illegal dump south of Bezdan 3.06 / New arboretum with education facility in Mostonga area in Sombor 3.07 / New hackberry forest park along Mostonga in the southern part of Sombor	4.01 / New marina with ancillary facilities in Bezdan 4.02 / The restoration of Shipyard in Bezdan with renewed previous ship building activities 4.03 / City cargo port in the industrial zone of Sombor 4.04 / New pumping station in Bezdan - "Bezdan 2" 4.05 / The reconstruction of "Češka ćuprija" bridge near Bački Monoštor into a new road bridge
1.11 / Photo-contest for the best photo of the canal with open-air exhibition 1.12 / Festivals about the canal at a location next to it 1.13 / Children and youth education about the cultural and ecological values of the canal and DTD 1.14 / Student workshops about the spatial potentials of the canal	2.11 / Tourist promotion of the Great Bačka Canal and thematic routes 2.12 / Digitalisation of intangible cultural heritage related to the canal, such as old stories, legends or myths > websites + QR codes + applications 2.13 / The research and mapping of the canal cultural landscapes - "Canalscapes"	3.11 / Sustainable reuse of the canal water for technical water - watering city greenery 3.12 / Eco-tourism on the canal: watching of flora and fauna 3.13 / Promotion of recreational fishery for already built moorings in Gradina Locality	4.11 / The renewal of reed manufacture in Bački Monoštor for traditional constructions, plus the new-modern ways of reed use

Hydro
Heritage
Cities

HARD MEASURES / Tangible infrastructure

SOFT MEASURES / Intangible infrastructure

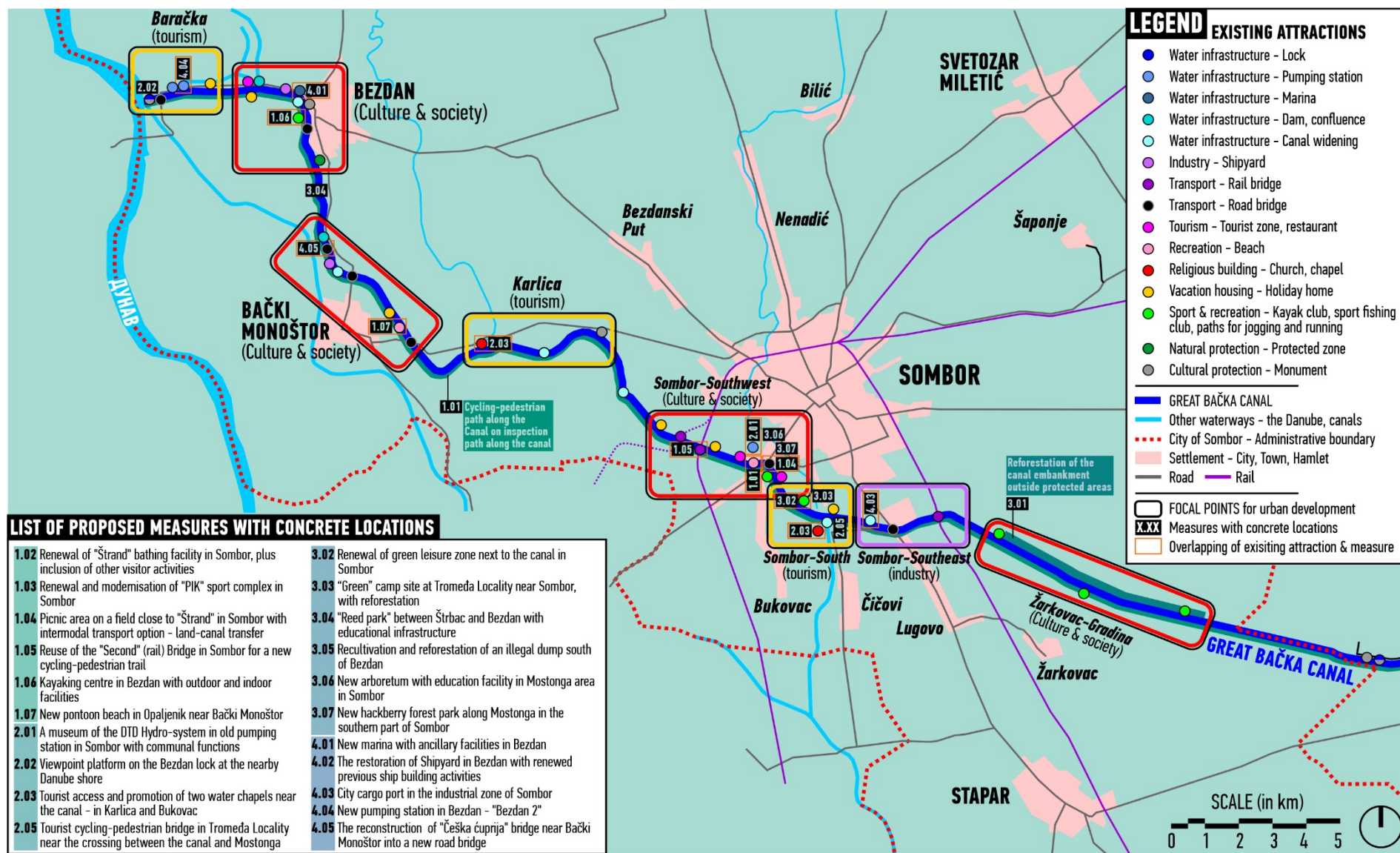


Figure 22: The spatial organisation of the included measures in the investment plan of Sombor, mainly clustered in focus-development zones (Author: B. Antičić).

4.1. MEASURES FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Measure No 1.01	Cycling-pedestrian path along the Canal on inspection path along the canal
Description A new cycling-pedestrian path along the Great Bačka Canal in the Sombor Section had to be 58-km long. It had will use an already existing inspection path of “Vojvodina Vode” PWR along the canal. The project for the asphalt path had to be user-friendly, i.e., to include socialisation and relaxation points and greenery for users’ comfort (planted trees). Moreover, the path had to be designed to connect it to other cycling and pedestrian networks.	
Proposal from	Local policy (Spatial Plan of the City of Sombor) + stakeholders (NGO)
Measure type	Hard measure – New physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G4 + G5 + G6 + G7
Duration	Long-term (5+ years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Detailed urban plan + Construction + Greenery + Equipment and furniture + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 5,000,000 (to be implemented in phases)
Relevant funding	Public funds: mainly national and international ones, partly local funds
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor, “Vojvodina Vode / Vojvodina Waters” PWE, national ministries and provincial secretariats for urbanism, water management, environment, regional development, “Prostor/Space” PCE Sombor, NGOs in cycling, walking, environment, INTERREG/IPA actors.

Measure No 1.02	Renewal of “Štrand” bathing facility in Sombor with inclusion of other visitor activities
Description “Štrand” bathing facility in Sombor is very active during summertime, but it requires significant refurbishment and modernisation. Aside of still bathing activities and water sports, the aim is to incorporate other supplementary leisure activities to activate “Štrand” during the whole year and whole day: pool for small children, sunbathing plateau, playgrounds for “small sports” (mini golf, table tennis, open-are gym, etc.), water sprinklers, hospitality facilities, accommodation, etc. Plus, it requires modernisation, such as internet hotspot, new greenery (green walls, green corridors, etc.).	
Proposal from	Local policy (General urban plan of Sombor) + stakeholders
Measure type	Hard measure – Reconstructed physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G7
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Urban design project + Reconstruction + Equipment and furniture + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 300,000 (can be implemented in phases)
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor, eventually international (INTEEREG)
Included stakeholders	The administrative units of the City of Sombor for sport, water management, urban development, etc., “Prostor/Space”, “Zelenilo/Greenery”, and “Čistoća/Cleaning” PCEs in Sombor, NGOs in environment.

Measure No 1.03	Renewal and modernisation of “PIK” sport complex in Sombor
Description “PIK” sport complex in Sombor is very active ground for recreational football, but the ground, indoor facilities, and parking require significant refurbishment and modernisation. In addition, new elements are necessary: stands, proper access from road, urban furniture for players and spectators, landscaped greenery, etc. Free space can be arranged for other collective sports (basketball or volleyball).	
Proposal from	Local policy (General urban plan of Sombor) + Project team
Measure type	Hard measure – Reconstructed physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G7
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Urban design project + Reconstruction + Equipment and furniture + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 100,000
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and regional – provincial secretariat for sport; eventually international (INTEEREG)
Included stakeholders	“Pik” football club, City of Sombor – administrative unit for sport, Provincial secretariat for sport, regional association for football in Sombor, NGOs in sport and youth, “Zelenilo/Greenery” and “Prostor/Space” PCEs Sombor

Measure No 1.04	Picnic area on a field close to “Štrand” in Sombor with intermodal transport option – land-canal transfer
Description Outdoor space between “Štrand” and a bridge across the canal on road to Apatin is approximately 1 hectare. Its bigger part is grassland. This should be generally preserved in this state, with an addition of picnic furniture (tables with benches, barbecue places, etc.), elements for youth (e.g., skating court) and a small dock for tourist boats. Tall old trees between the canal and the area should be preserved, while new ones should be planted on the other sides of the space.	
Proposal from	Project team
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical infrastructure, but without complex structures
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G4
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Urban design project + Pavement + Greenery + Equipment and furniture + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 30,000
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor, eventually international (INTEEREG)
Included stakeholders	The administrative units of the City of Sombor for greenery and open space, etc., “Prostor/Space”, “Zelenilo/Greenery”, and “Čistoća/ Cleaning” PCEs in Sombor, NGOs in social policy, environment, youth.

Measure No 1.05	Reuse of the “Second” (rail) Bridge in Sombor for a new cycling-pedestrian trail
Description The “Second” rail bridge in Sombor area is the westernmost point of its urban area. The bridge is currently abandoned and in a neglected state, but preserved construction. Therefore, it is ideal to be transformed into the first pedestrian-cycling bridge in Sombor Region. The bridge will be further linked with the pedestrian and cycling path along the Great Bačka Canal in Sombor section, which conditions the arrangement of appropriate access to the bridge from the path. A proposal is to merge the project of the bridge restoration and reuse with the construction of the part (measure no. 1.01); at least, at the idea and design phases.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders + project team
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – Reconstructed physical infrastructure, but without complex interventions
Targeted goals	G1 + G3 + G5
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	MEDIUM > Permissions and preconditions + Design project + New pavement + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 240,000
Relevant funding	National, international and local funds
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor, “Vojvodina Vode / Vojvodina Waters” PWE, provincial secretariats for urbanism, water management, “Prostor/Space” PCE Sombor, NGOs in cycling, walking, environment, INTERREG/IPA actors.

Measure No 1.06	Kayaking centre in Bezdan with outdoor and indoor facilities
Description Bezdan has a long and rich tradition in kayaking, with even Olympic gold medallists. A local kayaking club is located on the right side of the Great Bačka Canal, opposite to the town and, concretely, town park. Current facilities are adequate for the club needs. A new complex planned at the same site had to include technical facilities for kayaks (and other similar watercrafts, e.g., canoe, surf ski), club space, café, while it can be expanded with hostel and camping facilities. Outdoor space should be organised with arranged greenery, small plateau, and parking places.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from Bezdan
Measure type	Hard measure – New physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G5 + G6
Duration	Long-term (5+ years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Detailed urban plan + Construction + Greenery + Equipment and furniture + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 2,000,000
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and provincial secretariat for sport; eventually international (INTERREG)
Included stakeholders	Local kayak clubs, City of Sombor – administrative unit for sport, Provincial secretariat for sport, NGOs in sport and youth, “Zelenilo/Greenery” and “Prostor/Space” PCEs Sombor

Measure No 1.07	New pontoon beach in Opaljenik Locality near Bački Monoštor
Description Opaljenik Locality east of the Village of Bački Monoštor already functions as a local bathing and socialising place on the Great Bačka Canal, with a local inn (“čarda”) in background. Thus, this place only requires physical upgrading with a new pontoon beach, as the current “beach” on the canal embankment has no conditions for organised use. The new pontoon beach had to include an adequate access and regulated parking between it and nearby road.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from Bački Monoštor
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical infrastructure, but without complex interventions
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G6
Duration	Short-term (<2 years)
Complexity	MEDIUM > Permissions and preconditions + Transport and laying of structure + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 10,000
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor; private support from village companies
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for sport, open public space, etc., NGOs from Bački Monoštor, private hospitality and tourist entities from Bački Monoštor, “Vojvodina Vode / Vojvodina Waters” PWE

Measure No 1.11	Photo-contest for the best photo of the canal with open-air exhibition
Description This measure has been already implemented at local level as a pilot to promote the Great Bačka Canal in Sombor Region in social, ecological, and cultural aspects. The aim of this first such photo-contest, named as the “Best Postcard of the (Great Bačka) Canal in Sombor”, was to rise awareness of the canal as a place of culture, heritage, tradition, and social life. The success of this event, held in autumn 2025, proved that such events have its future and should be repeated with some customisations and innovative additions.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders (NGO) + project team
Measure type	Soft measure – Related to intangible local infrastructure
Targeted goals	G2 + G3 + G4 + G6
Duration	Very short-term (<6 months), but it can be “circular”
Complexity	LOW > Mainly organisation of the different steps in implementation + Promotion and communication
Cost estimation	EUR 4,000 per an event with an exhibition
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and local NGOs
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for culture and tourism, “Laza Kostić” culture centre in Sombor, local NGOs in photography (“photo-clubs”), tourism promotion and heritage promotion and protection, city tourist organisation,

Measure No 1.12	Festivals about the Great Bačka Canal at a location next to it
Description The City of Sombor is well known nationally for its rich culture, heritage and tradition. Thus, there are many annual festivals and similar events in the city and surroundings. However, there are no many festivals dedicated for the Great Bačka Canal and related area. The pilot festival of a small format was implemented at the end of the project, in July 2026. It showed that there are a plenty of topics which can be utilised to organise such an event – related to heritage, tradition, tourism, culture, youth, social life, sports and recreation, etc.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from culture and tourism + Project team
Measure type	Soft measure – Related to intangible local infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G5 + G6
Duration	Very short-term (<6 months), but it can be “circular”
Complexity	LOW > Mainly organisation of the different steps in implementation + Promotion and communication
Cost estimation	EUR 10,000 per an event
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and local NGOs
Included stakeholders	Tourist organisation of Sombor, City of Sombor – administrative units for culture, sport, and tourism, “Laza Kostić” culture centre in Sombor, local NGOs in culture, old crafts, tourism and heritage promotion, private hospitality sector

Measure No 1.13	Children and youth education about the cultural and ecological values of the canal and DTD system
Description The research conducted during the project confirmed that there is a plenty of data and a lot of local experience about the Great Bačka Canal and life around it. This knowledge deserves to be shared with and transmitted to local population and, especially, youngsters. The city organisations, as well as NGOs active in education are invited to carry education about the cultural and ecological values of the canal and the whole DTD system. This can be done indoor (in school) or, preferably, outdoor (on the canal). Is also can be arranged in different forms: workshops, roundtables, walking tours (‘safaris’), live discussions, etc.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from education and culture + project team
Measure type	Soft measure – Related to intangible local infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G3 + G4
Duration	Very short-term (<6 months), but it can be “circular”
Complexity	LOW > Mainly organisation of the different steps in implementation + Promotion and communication
Cost estimation	EUR 1,000 per an event
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and local NGOs, International projects
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for education, culture, sport, and tourism, local schools, local NGOs in education, culture and youth.

4.2. MEASURES FOR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Measure No 1.14	Student workshops about the spatial potentials of the canal
Description The research conducted during the project confirmed that there is a plenty of data and a lot of local experience about the Great Bačka Canal and life around it. More peculiar and complex knowledge about the canal environment, culture, heritage locations, etc. had to be shared with and transmitted to students from city, region or abroad in the form of workshops, which can last one or more days. They can be organised indoor, outdoor (on canal) or combined.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from education + project team
Measure type	Soft measure – Related to intangible local infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G3 + G4 + G6
Duration	Very short-term (<6 months), but it can be “circular”
Complexity	LOW > Mainly organisation of the different steps in implementation + Promotion and communication
Cost estimation	EUR 1,500 per an event
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and local NGOs, International projects
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for education, culture, sport, and tourism, local schools, local and regional NGOs in education, culture, and youth, universities, local pedagogy faculty, R&D entities and companies

Measure No 2.01	Museum of the DTD Hydro-system in old pumping station in Sombor with communal functions
Description This is one of the key measures in this study. The old pumping station near “Štrand” in Sombor is in a state of disrepair. The owner, “Vojvodina Waters” WPE, does not have plans to bring back the station to its original purpose. However, the station is still physically in a solid condition, with the preserved elements of the canal-related industrial heritage. Thus, the plan is to refurbish the building and reuse it as a small museum dedicated to exhibition of the Great Bačka Canal and the whole DTD Hydro-system, including already present old pump and other devices as an authentic ambience. Aside of the museum function, the station with its yard can become also a place for other communal functions, such as cultural events.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from culture + project team
Measure type	Hard measure – Reconstructed physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G3 + G5 + G6
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Design project + Sensitive restoration + Equipment + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 100,000
Relevant funding	International (IPA projects), national, provincial, local
Included stakeholders	“Vojvodina Waters” PWE, Provincial Secretariat for Transport, Provincial Secretariat for Environmental Protection, City of Sombor – administration for culture, National Museum of Sombor, “Prostor” CPE Sombor

Measure No 2.02	Viewpoint platform on the Bezdan Lock at the nearby Danube shore
Description An access to the Bezdan Lock, which is both hydro-heritage and functional hydro-structure owned and managed by “Vode Vojvodine / Vojvodina Waters” public enterprise, is restricted due to this nature. Hence, an alternative had to be done in the form of a viewpoint at the corner where the Danube and the canal meet 40 m west of the lock. This should be designed as tourist-leisure place with adequate landscaping and urban furniture in the current river forest area, with the key structure of a viewpoint (and new landmark) on the lock, canal and the Danube.	
Proposal from	Project team
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical infrastructure, but without complex interventions
Targeted goals	G2 + G3 + G6 + G7
Duration	Short-term (<2 years)
Complexity	MEDIUM > Permissions and preconditions + Design project + Construction + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 50,000
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and local NGOs, International projects
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for urbanism, tourism, Tourist Organisation of Sombor, “Vojvodina Vode / Vojvodina Waters” PWE, “Zelenilo/Greenery” and “Prostor/Space” PCEs Sombor, border police

Measure No 2.03	Tourist access and promotion of two water chapels near the canal – Rome catholic chapel in Karlica near Bački Monoštor and Orthodox chapel in Bukovac near Sombor
Description Water chapels are an example of regional heritage in Pannonian Plain, as a small sacral places next to the sources of good water. Thus, this unique heritage in Sombor Region had additional promotion. Furthermore, water chapels are also the part of religious and social life of nearby population. Both named chapels in the vicinity of Great Bačka Canal are in a good shape as buildings, but there is necessity to improve access to them (roads, parking lots, greenery, etc.) and to better touristically promote them for prospective pilgrims and other external visitors.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from Bački Monoštor + project team
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical infrastructure, but without complex interventions
Targeted goals	G2 + G3 + G6
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	MEDIUM > Permissions and preconditions + Design project + Pavement + Equipment + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 50,000
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and owner-religious organisations
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for culture, Tourist Organisation of Sombor, Rome Catholic Church, Serbian Orthodox Church, , “Zelenilo/Greenery” and “Čistoća/Cleaning” PCEs Sombor

Measure No 2.04	Children and student camps with educational programmes about the canal and the DTD as cultural assets / heritage sites
Description The research conducted during the project confirmed that there is a plenty of data and a lot of local experience about the Great Bačka Canal and life around it. This knowledge deserves to be shared with and transmitted to local population and, especially, youngsters. The city organisations, as well as NGO active in education are invited to do education activities about the cultural and ecological values of the canal and the whole DTD system in the form of children and student camps and similar forms (summer schools, workcamps, etc.). This can be done indoor, outdoor (on canal) or combined in various locations, but, especially in reused older buildings.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from education + project team
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical infrastructure, but without complex interventions
Targeted goals	G1 + G4 + G5 + G6
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	MEDIUM > Permissions and preconditions + Design project + Pavement + Equipment + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 50,000
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and local NGOs, International projects
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for education, culture, sport, and tourism, local schools, local NGOs in education, culture and youth.

Measure No 2.05	Tourist cycling-pedestrian bridge in Tromeda Locality near the crossing between the canal and Mostonga
Description This new tourist cycling-pedestrian bridge is planned on the location west of Tromeda Locality and near the crossing between the canal and the Mostonga River. In this way, it will be a key connection between two prospective tourist and recreation pedestrian-cyclist paths along two canals: the Great Bačka Canal and Odžaci-Sombor Canal. As this is planned as a completely new bridge, a new professional competition for its authentic appearance can be organised, as well as the design for access and supplementary facilities in hospitality sector in surroundings.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from culture + project team
Measure type	Hard measure – New physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G6 + G7
Duration	Long-term (5+ years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Urban design project + Construction + Equipment + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 800,000
Relevant funding	National, international and local funds
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor, “Vojvodina Vode / Vojvodina Waters” PWE, provincial secretariats for urbanism, water management, “Prostor/Space” PCE Sombor, NGOs in cycling, walking, environment, INTERREG/IPA actors, local hospitality sector.

Measure No 2.11	Tourist promotion of the Great Bačka Canal and thematic routes
Description The aforementioned collected data and knowledge about the Great Bačka Canal as a heritage location, ecological corridor and the place of social life also indicate that the canal and surrounding space can be treated and promoted as a tourist destination on its own. Local tourist entities, led by the Tourist Organisation of Sombor, can play a crucial role in developing it as a destination for domestic and foreign tourists by creating and promoting thematic routes, such as 'heritage route', 'gastronomic route', 'eco-route', 'route by bike', 'canal walking safari', etc.	
Proposal from	Local policy (Spatial Plan of the City of Sombor) + stakeholders from culture, tourism and hospitality
Measure type	Soft measure – Related to intangible local infrastructure
Targeted goals	G3 + G5 + G6
Duration	Very short-term (<6 months), but it should be "permanent"
Complexity	LOW > Mainly promotion and communication
Cost estimation	EUR 10,000 per campaign
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and local NGOs
Included stakeholders	Tourist organisation of Sombor, City of Sombor – administrative units for culture, sport, private tourist agencies from city and region, local NGOs in culture, old crafts, tourism and heritage promotion, private hospitality sector

Measure No 2.12	Digitalisation of intangible cultural heritage related to the canal, such as old stories, legends, myths, old stories > Websites + QR codes + applications
Description The research and activities conducted during the project show that the Sombor Section of the Great Bačka Canal (as well as the whole DTD System) have a lot of intangible heritage developed by and in synergy with the canal. This includes: old stories, legends, myths, old crafts, historic customs and traditions. It deserves digitalisation and digital presentation, which can be done by website, QR codes, special digital application, augmented reality, etc. Furthermore, this digitalised heritage had to be adequately promoted on strategic location in Sombor and vicinity.	
Proposal from	Local policy (Development Plan of the City of Sombor)
Measure type	Soft measure – Related to intangible local infrastructure
Targeted goals	G3 + G5 + G6
Duration	Short-term (<2 years), but it can be "circular"
Complexity	MEDIUM > Data transition + Promotion and communication + Digital maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 75,000
Relevant funding	National and international funds
Included stakeholders	Tourist Organisation of Sombor, R&D sector in culture, heritage and digital technologies, private companies in digital technologies, NGOs in heritage and culture, National Museum in Sombor, INTERREG/IPA actors, Provincial secretariat in culture, hospitality sector.

4.3. MEASURES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Measure No 2.11	The research and mapping of the canal cultural landscapes – “Canalscapes”
Description The URBACT Project clearly positions the Great Bačka Canal, as well as the whole DTD hydro-system as a huge socio-cultural potential for research, systematisation and promotion of related cultural, heritage, social and ecological values. The main imperative in this concern is to carry on this in an organised ways through research and development framework. This can be done through dedicated national and international research and professional projects, where the DTD system can be studied and compared with similar international examples. In addition, to sole research and planning activities, some <i>in situ</i> pilots can further be applied.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from education + project team
Measure type	Soft measure – Related to intangible local infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G3 + G4 + G5 + G6
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	LOW > Mainly organisation and high-education work
Cost estimation	EUR 200,000
Relevant funding	National and international funds
Included stakeholders	Research institutions, universities, local NGOs in heritage and culture, Serbian ministries and provincial secretariats for culture and research, INTERREG/IPA actors, City of Sombor, national museum in Sombor, “Vojvodina Vode / Vojvodina Waters” PWE, local schools

Measure No 3.01	Reforestation of the canal embankment outside protected areas
Description The embankment of the Great Bačka Canal in Sombor region is already active in many ways: recreation, tourism and hospitality, sports, weekend accommodation, etc. However, it is not forested in many sections, which decrease the eco-potential of the canal and the comfort of all users. As the embankment in publicly owned, it can be easily forested with locally acceptable (“autochthon”) tree species. In some sections, even two lines can be added along the canal, to accelerate eco-friendly environment in Bačka Region, where forests are more then scarce.	
Proposal from	Local policy (Spatial Plan of the City of Sombor) + stakeholders from ecology
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical albeit not very complex intervention
Targeted goals	G2 + G4 + G5
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	MEDIUM > Permissions and preconditions + Intervention (“planting”) + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 20,000 per kilometre
Relevant funding	National and international funds
Included stakeholders	Local ecological organisations and NGOs, City of Sombor, schools, Serbian ministries and provincial secretariats for water management and environment, INTERREG/IPA actors, “Vojvodina Vode / Vojvodina Waters” PWE

Measure No 3.02	Renewal of green leisure zone next to the canal in Sombor
Description This green leisure zone in Sombor spreads 2.5 km along the left side of the canal, from a bridge on Apatin Road to Tromeđa Locality. The core of this zone is a combined lane for cyclists and pedestrians with lush albeit narrow green belt along it. Both the lane and belt require a renewal, plus modernisation. This process had to be well planed with a special urban design project. A new programme of urban furniture and digital hotspots can be a good addition to necessary renewal. Side to this process, a potential expansion toward hinterland, i.e., towards the city can be examined, planned and eventually codified.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from Sombor
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical infrastructure along the route, albeit without very complex interventions
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G4 + G5 + G7
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	MEDIUM > Permissions and preconditions + Design project + Equipment + Greenery + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 400,000
Relevant funding	International or local funds
Included stakeholders	The administrative units of the City of Sombor for urban development, greenery, etc., “Prostor/Space”, “Zelenilo/Greenery”, and “Čistoća/ Cleaning” PCEs in Sombor, NGOs in environment, “Vojvodina Vode / Vojvodina Waters” PWE

Measure No 3.03	“Green” camp site at Tromeđa Locality near Sombor, with reforestation
Description The first section of the Great Bačka Canal between Bezdan and Sombor is officially an eco-corridor due to relatively unpolluted the canal water. Furthermore, the part around Bezdan is next to “Gornje Podunavlje” protected area, rich in flora and fauna. This potential should to be transmitted to interested citizens and, especially, youngsters. Activities are planned as camps about the eco-values of the canal, as well as similar forms (summer schools, workcamps, etc.). Aside of usual camp activities, an outdoor stage was an additional facility, to support various events throughout the year.	
Proposal from	Local policy (General Urban Plan of Sombor)
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G2 + G4 + G5
Duration	Short-term (<2 years)
Complexity	MEDIUM > Permissions and preconditions + Urban design project + Construction + Greenery and equipment + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 100,000
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and local NGOs, International projects
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for education, youth and environment, local schools, local NGOs in education, ecology and youth, INTERREG/IPA actors, “Gornje Podunavlje” PE, “Vojvodina Vode” PWE

Measure No 3.04	“Reed Park” between Štrbac and Bezdan with educational infrastructure
Description Štrbac Locality on the Great Bačka Canal between Bezdan and Bački Monoštor is especially rich in wetland land with lush reed. However, this local particularity is not visible to most of visitors of this region. This measure is about forming a recreational and educational area on this land. Its main element is a wooden path elevated above the reed area, additionally equipped with urban furniture (benches, podiums, etc.), viewpoints on reed and info-tables about local flora and fauna.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from Bački Monoštor
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical albeit not very complex intervention
Targeted goals	G2 + G4 + G6
Duration	Long-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	MEDIUM > Permissions and preconditions + Urban design project + Pavement + Greenery + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 200,000
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and local NGOs, International projects
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for environment, local NGOs in education, ecology and youth, entities from Bezdan and Bački Monoštor, INTERREG/IPA actors, “Gornje Podunavlje” PE, “Vojvodina Vode” PWE, Provincial Institute for nature protection

Measure No 3.05	Recultivation and reforestation of an illegal dump south of Bezdan
Description This location south of Bezdan and close to the left embankment of the canal is already cleaned from illegally left dump. Nevertheless, it requires the further upgrading, including complete recultivation and eventual reforestations. This means that land or soil in this location had to be restoring due to human activity, plus, to replant trees on it. In this way, natural ecosystem can be restored, to combat climate change and recover local biodiversity.	
Proposal from	Local policy (Spatial Plan of the City of Sombor) + Stakeholders from Bački Monoštor
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical albeit not very complex intervention
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G4
Duration	Short-term (<2 years)
Complexity	MEDIUM > Preparations (“cleaning”) + Intervention (“planting”) + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 30,000
Relevant funding	Local – City of Sombor and local NGOs, International projects
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative unit for environment, local NGOs in ecology, “Zelenilo/Greenery”, and “Čistoća/ Cleaning” PCEs in Sombor, “Gornje Podunavlje” PE, “Vojvodina Vode” PWE, Provincial Institute for nature protection, INTERREG/IPA actors

Measure No 3.06	New arboretum with education facility in Mostonga area in Sombor
Description An arboretum is a specialised botanical garden dedicated exclusively to local plants, with a usual focus on trees. Often described as a “living museum”, its primary purpose is the study, conservation, and public display of diverse species. In Sombor, such place is planned on Apatin road, next to the Mostonga River and close to the canal. Its approximate area is 6 hectares. The new arboretum had to include an urban park, communal buildings for maintenance, parking, and small hospitality sector (restaurant, cafes, etc.).	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from ecology
Measure type	Hard measure – New physical infrastructure is not very complex, but on large area
Targeted goals	G2 + G4 + G7
Duration	Long-term (5+ years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Detailed urban plan + Pavement + Greenery + equipment + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 1,000,000
Relevant funding	International and national funds
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative unit for environment, local NGOs in ecology and education, “Prostor/Space”, “Zelenilo/ Greenery”, and “Čistoća/ Cleaning” PCEs in Sombor, Provincial Institute for nature protection, INTERREG/IPA actors, schools

Measure No 3.07	New hackberry forest park along Mostonga in the southern part of Sombor
Description The Mostonga River in Sombor can be also considered as a canal, as its natural riverbed was completely artificially transformed. Moreover, the Sombor Bypass in its southwestern part lays parallel to the Mostonga. The location between the river, the canal and the bypass is mostly barren. This measure therefore refers to the planting new hackberry forest, as hackberries are one of the city symbols. The new urban park-forest can be further developed for sport and recreation – trails, jogging paths, bike lanes, orienteering, etc.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from city administration + Project team
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical infrastructure is not very complex
Targeted goals	G1 + G2 + G4 + G5
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Urban design project + Pavement + Greenery + equipment + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 40,000
Relevant funding	Local funds, eventually international funds
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative unit for environment, local NGOs in ecology and education, “Prostor/Space”, “Zelenilo/ Greenery”, and “Čistoća/ Cleaning” PCEs in Sombor, Provincial Institute for nature protection, INTERREG/IPA actors, schools

Measure No 3.11	Sustainable reuse of the canal water for technical water – watering city greenery
Description This measure is replicated as the best practice from the lead URBACT partner from Greece. The point is that the canal (non-potable) water can be used to water the city greenery, parks, and alleys during drought periods, which are more often with climate change. This is relatively inexpensive measure as the city had to buy a special vehicle with a water tanker. In this way, canal water becomes a vital, multifunctional community asset, as it provides a natural, cost-effective water source to support sustainability in many ways; for instance, to decrease the urban heat island effect.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from communal infrastructure + Project team
Measure type	Soft measure – Related to light local technical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G4 + G7
Duration	Short-term (<2 years), but it should be “permanent”
Complexity	MEDIUM > Mainly organisation + purchase of technical equipment
Cost estimation	EUR 60,000 for new vehicle
Relevant funding	Local funds; eventual international funds
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative unit for environment, local NGOs in ecology, “Zelenilo/ Greenery”, and “Čistoća/ Cleaning” PCEs in Sombor, Provincial Institute for nature protection, INTERREG/IPA actors

Measure No 3.12	Eco-tourism on the canal: watching of flora and fauna
Description Eco-tourism in Sombor Region strongly relies on the “Gornje Podunavlje/ Upper Danube” special nature reserve area in the uppermost section of the Great Bačka Canal. This area has many unique plants, birds, insects, and mammals. The intersections of the nature reserve and the canals are especially rich in them. The measure includes the creation of local feasibility study for eco-tourism, an action plan and the organisation of pilot activities on the most prospective locations.	
Proposal from	Local policy (Spatial Plan of the City of Sombor) + stakeholders from ecology
Measure type	Soft measure – Related to intangible local infrastructure
Targeted goals	G2 + G4 + G6
Duration	Very short-term (<6 months), but it should be “permanent”
Complexity	LOW > Mainly organisation and promotion
Cost estimation	EUR 500 for strategic part + EUR 500 per tour
Relevant funding	Local funds; eventual international, national, and regional funds
Included stakeholders	“Gornje Podunavlje” PE, City of Sombor – administrative units for tourism and environment, Tourist Organisation of Sombor, local NGOs in ecology, private tourist entities/agencies, Provincial Institute for nature protection, INTERREG/IPA actors

4.4. MEASURES FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT WITH ECONOMY

Measure No 3.12	Promotion of recreational fishery for already built moorings in Gradina Locality
Description The Great Bačka Canal is also a popular location for fishermen, especially those parts which are less developed, such as the section between Sombor and Mali Stapar, known as Gradina. This section was recently activated in this mean, with fishermen' moorings on canal. In the future, better access to the moorings in Gradina had to be added, but, the most important element is a well-organised and properly tailored tourist and recreative promotion. This plan for tourist development had to include the other aspects of fishing-driven tourism: technical elements, accommodation, supplementary activities, etc.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from ecology and recreation
Measure type	Soft measure – Related to intangible local infrastructure
Targeted goals	G2 + G4 + G5 + G6
Duration	Very short-term (<6 months), but it can be “circular”
Complexity	LOW > Mainly organisation and promotion
Cost estimation	EUR 30,000 per event
Relevant funding	Local funds; eventual regional/provincial funds
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for tourism and environment, “Vojvodina Vode/ Vojvodina Waters” PWE, local and regional fishermen' associations, Tourist Organisation of Sombor, private tourist entities/agencies

Measure No 4.01	New marina with ancillary facilities in Bezdan
Description The construction of a new marina on the Great Bačka Canal in Bezdan is already planned, while project phase in progress. The planned marina in Bezdan will cover 3 hectares and it will be able to accommodate 120 vessels with supplementary facilities: technical structures, cafes, parking lots, etc. By plans, the importance of the marina will be beyond the tourist offer, as it is expected to stimulate the local economy. On the other side, the project for the new marina had to ensure that the current ecological balance will be preserved.	
Proposal from	Regional and local policy (Regional Plan, Regional Water Management Strategy, Spatial Plan of Sombor)
Measure type	Hard measure – New physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G2 + G6 + G7
Duration	Long-term (5+ years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Urban design project + Construction + Equipment and furniture + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 3,300,000
Relevant funding	National funds, private investments
Included stakeholders	“Vojvodina Vode/ Vojvodina Waters” PWE, Serbian Ministry of Tourism, National Agency for Port Management, City of Sombor – various administrative units, NGOs from Bezdan, hospitality sector from Bezdan

Measure No 4.02	The restoration of Shipyard in Bezdan with renewed previous ship building activities
Description Shipyard on the western edge Bezdan and on the Great Bačka Canal has not been active for two decades, but local strategic documents plan the restore of previous ship building activities. This means that this shipyard had to restore all key activities: design, construction, repair, and retrofitting of ships and marine vessels. The restoration of this shipyard can be challenging for local ecology and for the status of this canal section as an eco-corridor. In line with this, the eventual restoration of ship building activities had to respect all contemporary environmental conditions.	
Proposal from	Regional and local policy (Regional Water Management Strategy, Spatial Plan of Sombor) + Bezdan stakeholders
Measure type	Hard measure – Reconstructed physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G3 + G5 + G6 + G7
Duration	Long-term (5+ years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Design project + Reconstruction + Equipment + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 2,000,000
Relevant funding	National funds, private investments
Included stakeholders	“Vojvodina Vode/ Vojvodina Waters” PWE, Serbian Ministry of Economy, National Agency for Port Management, City of Sombor – administrative unit for economy and transport, NGOs from Bezdan

Measure No 4.03	City cargo port in the industrial zone of Sombor
Description The new cargo port in Sombor is planned in the city industrial zone on the canal, downstream of Tromeda Locality. The port had to offer modern logistics options and to be connected with modern road and industrial rail with the main transport network in Serbia, which means that it is planned as an intermodal node. A cargo port had to contain specialised terminals, heavy-lifting machinery (like ship-to-shore cranes), expansive temporary storage, and customs-processing zones to transfer goods between cargo ships, lorries, and freight trains.	
Proposal from	Regional and local policy (Regional Plan, Regional Water Management Strategy, General Urban Plan of Sombor)
Measure type	Hard measure – Reconstructed physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G5 + G7
Duration	Long-term (5+ years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Design project + Reconstruction + Equipment + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 1,500,000
Relevant funding	National funds, private investments
Included stakeholders	“Vojvodina Vode/ Vojvodina Waters” PWE, Serbian Ministry of Economy, National Agency for Port Management, City of Sombor – administrative unit for economy and transport, local NGOs, regional chamber of commerce

Measure No 4.04	New pumping station in Bezdan – “Bezdan 2”
Description “Bezdan 2” is a new pumping station planned in the first kilometre of the Great Bačka Canal, west of Bezdan. Basically, the new station will be very close to the existing “Bezdan 1” pumping station. This project is an indirect consequence of climate change, as using the canal water for the irrigation of nearby agricultural fields has become a paramount issue recently. “Vojvodina Vode/ Vojvodina Waters” public water enterprise is in charge of the realisation of this investment.	
Proposal from	Regional policy (Long-term Plan of the Development of “Vojvodina Waters” PWE)
Measure type	Hard measure – New physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G5 + G6
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Design project + Construction + Equipment + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 150,000
Relevant funding	National funds
Included stakeholders	“Vojvodina Vode/ Vojvodina Waters” PWE, Serbian Ministry of Economy, City of Sombor – administrative unit for economy and transport, local NGOs, regional chamber of commerce

Measure No 4.05	The reconstruction of “Češka ćuprija” bridge near Bački Monoštor into a new road bridge
Description Češka Ćuprija or, translated, Czech Bridge is a hydro-structure on the Great Bačka Canal upstream from Bački Monoštor. It was built in 1962 as a safety constitution for flood protection and water regime management. The location is also popular as a natural and nautical attraction. Similarly to many other economic complexes on the canal, it is also already planned and designed to be completely reconstructed. The reason is due to the current height limits of the bridge for vessels.	
Proposal from	Local policy (Spatial Plan of the City of Sombor) + project team
Measure type	Hard measure – Reconstructed physical infrastructure
Targeted goals	G1 + G5 + G6
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years)
Complexity	HIGH > Permissions and preconditions + Design project + Reconstruction + Maintenance
Cost estimation	EUR 1,500,000
Relevant funding	National funds
Included stakeholders	“Vojvodina Vode/ Vojvodina Waters” PWE, Serbian Ministry of Economy, City of Sombor – administrative unit for economy and transport, NGOs from Bački Monoštor, regional chamber of commerce.

Measure No 4.11	The renewal of reed manufacture in Bački Monoštor for traditional constructions, plus the new-modern ways of reed use
Description Reed in the Danubian part of Bačka was traditionally used for many things, including old roof constructions. The old tradition of reed roofs is still alive in Bački Monoštor, but it requires an urgent support to be preserved for the future. The measure addresses this issue, but it is also proactive to modernise this sector with new ways of using reed as natural material. As reed is a versatile and renewable resource, it can be used for highly effective sustainable building materials, as well as for artistic expression.	
Proposal from	Stakeholders from Bački Monoštor
Measure type	Hard/soft measure – New physical albeit not very complex infrastructure + Intangible infrastructure
Targeted goals	G3 + G4 + G5 + G6
Duration	Medium-term (2-5 years), but it should be “permanent”
Complexity	HIGH > Preparations + Equipment + Permanent education about handcraft + Promotion
Cost estimation	EUR 250,000
Relevant funding	Local funds; eventual international funds
Included stakeholders	City of Sombor – administrative units for environment, culture, and economy, local NGOs in old crafts, ecology, and culture, “Zelenilo/ Greenery” PCE in Sombor, Provincial Institute for nature protection, schools, INTERREG/IPA actors

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF INVESTMENT PLAN

A key element in implementing the enlisted measures in the investment plan is that the plan had to be understood as a **“policy link”** between the measures already proposed in the other regional and local policy documents, which are already operative, and the other measures obtained during the creation of the investment plan, through urban participation with the ULG members and citizens and the professional observation of the project team. The **main gain** in the whole process is that the Great Bačka Canal and its surroundings are in a **professional focus** by an official policy document in Sombor first time, despite the canal importance for the city and its length in the city territory.

5.1. PHASES IN IMPLEMENTATION AND PRIORITISATION

The implementation of the measures proposed in the investment plan is organised into **three phases**, in respect to the **duration** of all measures and their implementation logic. There are four types of measures distinguished by the time required for their establishment, whether they involve physical construction in the case of “hard measures” or the set up of intangible activities, services and data in the case of “soft measures”. Second, the implementation of some of soft measures have a difference between their set up and their **“exploitation”**. For instance, the measure of eco-tourism on the canal (No 3.12) requires a relatively short period to systematise adequate data and create eco-tours routes, while its operation through the organisation of guided tours should be permanent. Finally, some soft measures are short-term, easy-to-organise and require relatively small budgets, but they should be **repeated seasonally or periodically**. Such examples are children, youth, and student camps, as well as cultural festivals. The **Gantt chart (Fig. 23)** clearly emphasises relations between soft and hard measures.

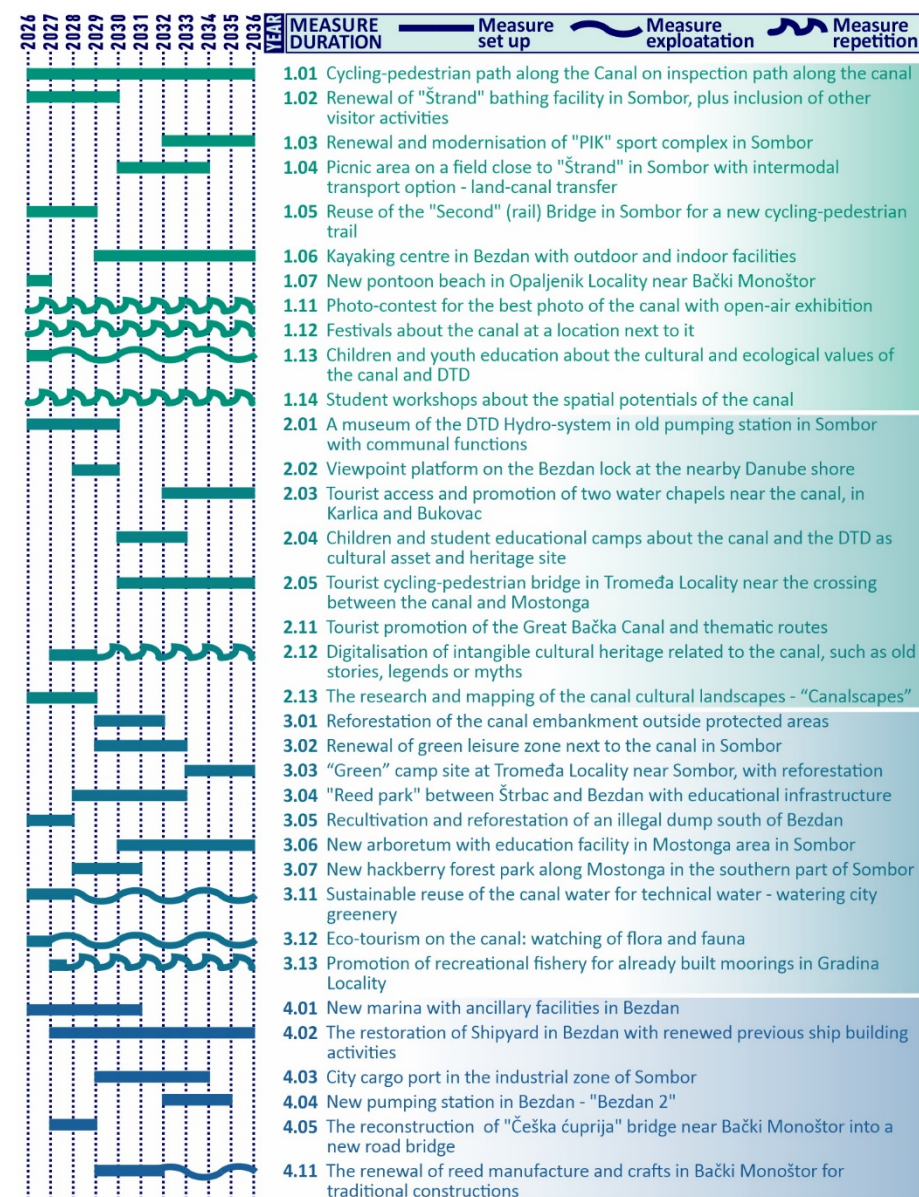


Figure 23: The phases and duration of planned measures (Author: B. Antičić).

Prioritisation: The logic behind this phase organisation is that a **priority** is given to the measures that are related to **locations**, buildings and complexes that are already active or have an existing level of use, regardless of measures themselves are long-, medium- or short-term. Their activation is seen as a “**magnet**” to trigger widen (re)development in vicinity. On the other side, the measures planned after the completion or set up of the priorities are usually those ones which respond on the “follow up effects” of prioritised measures.

The **priority actions** were identified through a collaborative process involving the local URBACT team and stakeholders during the ULG workshops, and were further informed by citizens’ proposals collected at the final event, the “Kanalisanje” Festival, held in July 2026. The resulting list comprises **eight priority actions**:

- 1) Action 1.02: Renewal of “Štrand” bathing facility in Sombor, plus inclusion of other visitor activities;
- 2) Action 1.05: Reuse of the “Second” (rail) Bridge in Sombor for a new cycling-pedestrian trail;
- 3) Action 1.11: Photo-contest for the best photo of the canal with open-air exhibition;
- 4) Action 2.01: A museum of the DTD Hydro-system in old pumping station in Sombor with communal functions;
- 5) Action 2.12: Digitalisation of intangible cultural heritage related to the canal, such as old stories, legends or myths (websites + QR codes + applications);
- 6) Action 3.01: Reforestation of the canal embankment outside protected areas;
- 7) Action 3.11: Sustainable reuse of the canal water for technical water - watering city greenery;
- 8) Action 4.11: The renewal of reed manufacture in Bački Monoštor for traditional constructions, plus the new-modern ways of reed use.

5.2. MAIN IMPLEMENTATION ACTORS AND FUNDING OPTIONS

One of generally unplanned albeit important advantage achieved during the creation of the investment plan and accompanying participation activities is **established collaboration and better mutual understanding** between different stakeholders within the ULG, especially between public bodies and local non-governmental organisations. This advantage of enhancing local stakeholder networks should be nurtured in the future, in particular during the revisions of the investment plan.

Key actors in implementation: Stakeholders in urban participation are important for implementation of the planning measures, but they are not the only critical factors. Hence, it is important to mobilise all relevant bodies, organisation, institutions and groups from different levels. Furthermore, it is also important to clarify the **role and responsibilities** of each key actor in the future implementation.

Table 3: Key actors in the measure implementation of the investment plan.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL (GLOBAL, EUROPEAN, CROSS- AND TRANS-BORDER)
• World Bank (WB) • European Investment Bank (EIB) • European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), • EU Cohesion Funds through IPA-led projects in INTERREG EU programmes (Danube, Adrion, Europe, URBACT, Serbia-Hungary, Serbia-Croatia, etc.), • UN Agencies (UNDP in Serbia, UN Habitat, UNEP, etc.) • Global actors through bilateral cooperation (Turkey, China, Russia, etc.)
NATIONAL (MINISTRIES, NATIONAL AGENCIES AND ENTERPRISES)
• Ministries of the Republic of Serbia, especially, ministries in charge for transportation, environment, urban development, construction, culture, education, research and science • Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia

- National agencies: especially for in charge of ports and marinas, for digitalisation and ICT, for public investments, regional development, tourism.
- Border police
- University of Belgrade
- National associations for heritage preservation, culture, ecology, etc.

REGIONAL-PROVINCIAL (SECRETARIATS, REGIONAL AGENCIES AND ENTERPRISES)

- Autonomous Province of Vojvodina – secretariats, especially in charge for transportation, environment, urban development, construction, culture, education, research and science
- “Vode Vojvodine / Vojvodina Waters” public water enterprise
- Institute for Natural Preservation of Vojvodina Province
- Regional Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Novi Sad
- Regional branch of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia in Sombor
- Administration of the West Bačka District in Sombor
- “Bačka” Regional Development Agency
- Regional branch of “Vode Vojvodine / Vojvodina Waters” PWE in Sombor
- University of Novi Sad
- Regional media, such as Radio television of Vojvodina

LOCAL (PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS)

- City of Sombor – Major’s office
- City of Sombor – administrative units, especially in charge especially in charge for transportation, environment, urban development, construction, culture, education, research and science
- Tourist Organisation of Sombor
- National Museum in Sombor
- “Laza Kostić” Culture Centre in Sombor

- Public communal enterprises in Sombor: “Prostor/Space”, “Zelenilo/Greenery”, “Čistoća/Cleaning”, “Parking Service” and “Vodokanal/Water-Canal”
- Ward administrations in Sombor, Bezdan, Bački Monoštor and Stapar
- Local NGOs in culture, heritage protection, old crafts, education, arts, walking, cycling, environment, youth and children, social policy, economic and regional development
- Faculty of Pedagogy in Sombor
- Local primary and secondary schools
- Local private sector in hospitality and tourism
- Local private sector in education
- Local SMEs through donations and grants
- Local religious organisations, especially, Serbian Orthodox and Rome Catholic Church
- National councils of ethnic minorities
- SMEs which belong to old crafts
- Local media and portals

5.3. RISK ANALYSIS

Some of proposed measures – mainly **soft measures** – are short-term, less expensive and easier for implementation. Accordingly, they are with the low probability of risk considering their implementation. However, the problem with such measures is their **durability**, as many of them should be repeated or interconnected to make a “full effect”. This requires **local commitment and stability**, which is always challenging in Serbian conditions.

The implementation of most of **hard measures** is with a higher level of risk. This is in especially evident for the measures that do not have a ‘commercial background’, i.e., those ones which are explicitly based on cultural, social, and communal values.

The **main risks** for the implementation of the proposed measures in the plan can be scrutinised in the following points:

- Climate change as a global problem has a paramount influence of the state and use of the Great Bačka Canal and its surrounding and, therefore, can deviate many the essence and implementation of many proposed measures;
- Unstable political and economical situation at international and national level;
- Limited financial and organisational resources to enable the fast implementation at local level, i.e., City of Sombor;
- Demographic problems (depopulation, ageing, “brain drain”) are over-present in Sombor Region, which negatively triggers the implementation of measures which had to be primarily initiated and carried by local level;
- Most of the measures are heavily dependent on close cooperation with upper levels (national and provincial levels). Probably 2/3 of all measures require cooperation with “Vode Vojvodine / Vojvodina Waters” Public water enterprise at provincial level;
- The measures that are mainly economically driven have possible negative social and ecological impacts, such as habitat destruction, pollution and waste, change of local milieu, social polarisation, etc.;
- Many measures are quite novel and comprehensive for local level. Thus, they will bring many uncertainties and doubts in their implementing, managing, and monitoring;
- Public awareness about the Great Bačka Canal as a cultural, social and eco-asset is still insufficient, as many citizens have not been exposed to the positive social and cultural sides of the canal and its surroundings;
- The canal section within the urban territory of Sombor has some parts (for example, around “Štrand”) where commercialisation of the canal banks is already pressing. This complicates their sustainable development;

- Many traditional activities and customs incorporated in some of the proposed measures, such as the traditional use of reed, straw marquetry artist tradition, old crafts, old religious customs, are under the threat of socio-economic changes due to globalisation and consumer shift;
- Possible conflicts between private and public interests in the hinterland of the canal area can significantly impede the realisation of measures in which a good land access is an important element;
- Many settlements which are relatively physically close to the canal (e.g., Stapar, Kljajićevo) have bad road connections to it, which can slow or, even, hinder the implementation of some measures.

5.4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The adequate implementation of the proposed measures is a challenge for every strategically oriented document. Two elements are of a particular concern for Sombor in the case of this investment plan: monitoring and the progress evaluation.

The monitoring of the plan implementation had to be led by the **plan monitoring committee**. This local-level body should consist of the members of local URBACT team and the most active members of the ULG. The committee should have regular meetings in the form of **reviews**. An interim review about the implementation progress for the half of the plan duration period is obligatory, while annual reviews are recommendable. The final contributions of these reviews are **progress reports**, where all proposed measures should be independently evaluated.

The aforementioned reviews should rely on critical the fulfilment of the **indicators** that are relevant for each measure. In this case, indicators should be perceived as specific, measurable variables used to assess the success, performance, and progress of each proposed measure in the plan. Hence, they are mainly output indicators. Basically, these indicators act as tangible signs

that show whether such a measure is being achieved or not and to indirectly show which measures require additional assistance in their implementation.

The design of relevant indicators in this document follows the so-called “SMART” model, which implies that they had to be:

- **Specific:** they clearly describe what is being changed;
- **Measurable:** they can be quantified or described with objective evidence;
- **Achievable:** it is realistic to expect the change within the timeframe of the proposed measure;
- **Relevant:** they directly answer the core evaluation question; and
- **Time-bound:** they specify when the change or measurement is expected.

Table 4: Indicators of the implementation progress of the planned measures.

No	MEASURE	INDICATOR
1	SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	
1.01	Cycling-pedestrian path along the Canal on inspection path along the canal	Percentage of completed sections of the path per year
1.02	Renewal of “Štrand” bathing facility in Sombor, plus inclusion of other visitor activities	The (rise) of the number of visitors per year Number of related posts and reactions in social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)
1.03	Renewal and modernisation of “PIK” sport complex in Sombor	The (rise) of the number of sport users per year Number of sport entities (clubs, association) who use the complex each year
1.04	Picnic area on a field close to “Štrand” in Sombor with intermodal transport option – land-canal transfer	Number of outdoor events organised in this area per year Number of related posts and reactions in social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)
1.05	Reuse of the “Second” (rail) Bridge in Sombor for a new cycling-pedestrian trail	Number of users through surveillance and/or sensors
1.06	Kayaking centre in Bezdan with outdoor and indoor facilities	Number of kayak club members The level of satisfaction of the kayak club members – survey
1.07	New pontoon beach in Opaljenik Locality near Bački Monoštor	The level of satisfaction of the population of Bački Monoštor – survey
1.11	Photo-contest for the best photo of the canal with open-air exhibition	The number of entrees to the contest The level of satisfaction in general population about this event – e-survey

		The number of reactions on the posted news and press releases
1.12	Festivals about the canal at a location next to it	Number of festivals with the topic connected to the canal Number of participants – directly (by sold tickets) or indirectly (by consumed food and beverage)
1.13	Children and youth education about the cultural and ecological values of the canal and DTD	Number of children and youth who participated in education activities
1.14	Student workshops about the spatial potentials of the canal	Number of students who participated in the workshops
2	CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	
2.01	A museum of the DTD Hydro-system in old pumping station in Sombor with communal functions	Annual number of activities (roundtables, workshops, special exhibitions, etc.) in the venue Annual number of visitors in the venue
2.02	Viewpoint platform on the Bezdan lock at the nearby Danube shore	Number of related photo-/video-posts and reactions in social media (Facebook, Instagram)
2.03	Tourist access and promotion of two water chapels near the canal – Rome catholic chapel in Karlica near Bački Monoštor and Orthodox chapel in Bukovac near Sombor	The level of satisfaction among general population and tourists about this improvement – e-survey
2.04	Children and student camps with educational programmes about the canal and the DTD as cultural asset and heritage site	Number of children and students who participated in educational camps Number of organised educational camps

INVESTMENT PLAN FOR THE HYDRO-CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SOMBOR, WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL

2.05	Tourist cycling-pedestrian bridge in Tromeda Locality near the crossing between the canal and Mostonga	Number of users through surveillance and/or sensors
2.11	Tourist promotion of the Great Bačka Canal and thematic routes	Number of participants in guided thematic tours Number of related photo- and video-posts and reactions in social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)
2.12	Digitalisation of intangible cultural heritage related to the canal, such as old stories, legends or myths	Number of visits to related website, platforms and applications Number of downloads of available offline material from related website, platforms and applications
2.13	The research and mapping of the canal cultural landscapes – “Canalscapes”	The number of conducted activities Number of published communication and dissemination material through both professional and general channels
3	ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT	
3.01	Reforestation of the canal embankment outside protected areas	Number of (re)planted trees per year
3.02	Renewal of green leisure zone next to the canal in Sombor	Number of related posts and reactions in social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) The level of satisfaction among population about this improvement – e-survey
3.03	“Green” camp site at Tromeda Locality near Sombor, with reforestation	Number of (re)planted trees per year Number of related posts and reactions in social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)
3.04	“Reed Park” between Štrbac and Bezdan with educational infrastructure	Number of visitors through surveillance and/or sensors Number of related posts and reactions in social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)
3.05	Recultivation and reforestation of an illegal dump south of Bezdan	Number of (re)planted trees per year

3.06	New arboretum with education facility in Mostonga area in Sombor	Number of related posts and reactions in social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) Number of visitors through surveillance and/or sensors
3.07	New hackberry forest park along Mostonga in the southern part of Sombor	Number of (re)planted trees per year
3.11	Sustainable reuse of the canal water for technical water – watering city greenery	Quantity of transferred water by this watering measure Number of the kilometres travelled by a given vehicle per year
3.12	Eco-tourism on the canal: watching of flora and fauna	Number of participants in guided eco-tours
3.13	Promotion of recreational fishery for already built moorings in Gradina Locality	Number of participants in related organised events Number of related posts and reactions in social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)
4	INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT WITH ECONOMY	
4.01	New marina with ancillary facilities in Bezdan	The number of tourist visitors to Bezdan Number of vessels docked during (a) the whole year and (b) at least three days
4.02	The restoration of Shipyard in Bezdan with renewed previous ship building activities	The number employees in industrial activities in Bezdan
4.03	City cargo port in the industrial zone of Sombor	The annual freight activities at city/municipal level
4.04	New pumping station in Bezdan – “Bezdan 2”	/
4.05	The reconstruction of “Češka ćuprija” Bridge near Bački Monoštor into a new road bridge	Number of users through surveillance and/or sensors
4.06	The renewal of reed manufacture in Bački Monoštor for traditional constructions, plus the new-modern ways of reed use	Number of related posts and reactions in social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)

6. REFERENCES

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ANNEX – REPORT ON PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

The Investment Plan was developed through a continuous participatory process involving the URBACT Local Group (ULG), citizens, local institutions, professionals and students. Participation was integrated into all stages of the Plan—from data collection and the identification of values, problems and potentials to the formulation of development priorities and project proposals.

The participatory process included:

- 1) An online questionnaire completed by 82 citizens;**
- 2) Five thematic ULG workshops held between October 2024 and July 2026;**
- 3) The meeting with political representatives;**
- 4) The “Kanalisanje” Festival, including exhibitions, presentations, public discussion and participatory voting on priority projects.**
- 5) A public photo contest and open-air exhibition;
- 6) Historical research, public lectures and preparation of an e-publication on Sombor’s hydro-heritage;
- 7) Open Youth Class;
- 8) Dissemination of project results at professional conferences;
- 9) Student workshops and development of flagship project proposals;

These activities established a continuous exchange between the Plan preparation team and local stakeholders and enabled integration of professional with local knowledge and preferences on future development of the area.

The results presented in this Annex are limited to those participatory activities (1-4) that directly informed the content of the Investment Plan -

online questionnaire conducted among Sombor residents, ULG workshops, meeting with political representatives and citizens’ voting on proposed measures. These contributions influenced the identification of key values and challenges, the definition of development priorities, and the formulation of concrete projects and measures.

The findings obtained through participation complement the professional analysis by providing qualitative insights into the existing situation. They reflect the knowledge, experience, perceptions and attitudes of stakeholders and residents of Sombor and the surrounding area regarding the socio-cultural significance of the Great Bačka Canal, particularly its role as an element of local hydro-cultural heritage.

Other participatory activities were also important, but their primary purpose was to increase the visibility of the hydro-heritage approach and the canal area itself, as well as to encourage citizens to become involved in project activities and in the possible future implementation of the measures defined by the Investment Plan.

I. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS: SOMBOR RESIDENTS' VIEWS ON THE HYDRO-CULTURAL HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL

The survey was conducted to gain insight into the opinions, experiences and proposals of Sombor residents concerning the values, challenges and future possibilities for the development and improvement of the Great Bačka Canal as hydro-cultural heritage, an ecological system, and a space important for economic activities and the quality of life of people who are living in its surroundings.

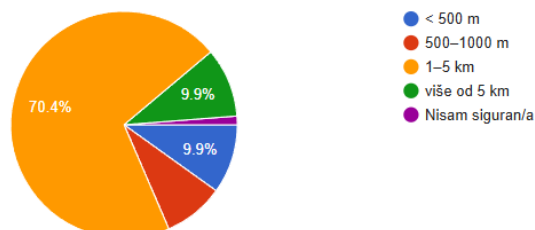
The survey was intended to improve the quality, legitimacy and sustainability of proposals concerning the canal's desirable future. We believe that local residents have the most comprehensive knowledge of its everyday life and of places with particular value that are often not recorded in formal documentation. The canal is an economic, natural, landscape and social resource, and it is therefore important to understand how residents perceive it and what they believe should be preserved, changed or improved. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous.

The results obtained from the responses of **81 participants** are presented below.

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS

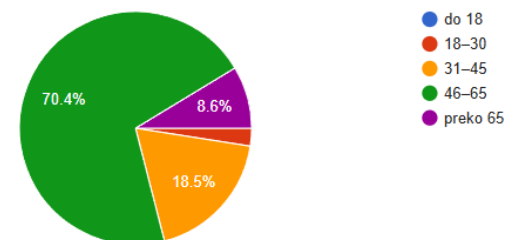
1) Distance between home and the canal

· Less than 500 m	8
· 500–1,000 m	7
· 1–5 km	57
· More than 5 km	8
· Not sure	1



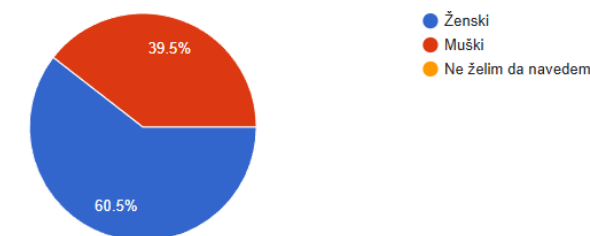
2) Age group

· Under 18	0
· 18–30	2
· 31–45	15
· 46–65	57
· Over 65	7



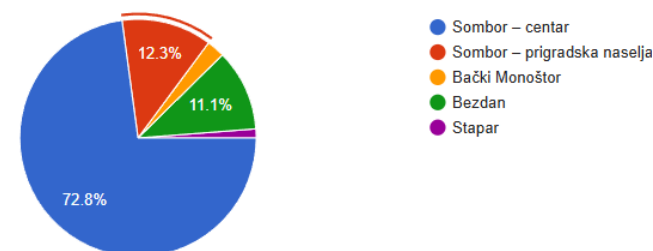
3) Gender

· Female	49
· Male	32
· Prefer not to say	0



4) Settlement in which you live

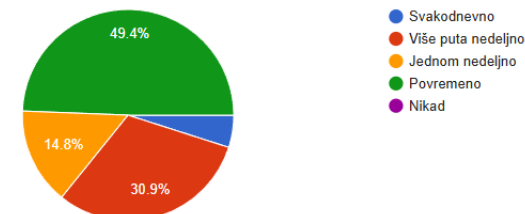
· Sombor – centre	59
· Sombor – suburbs	10
· Bački Monoštor	2
· Bezdan	9
· Stapar	1



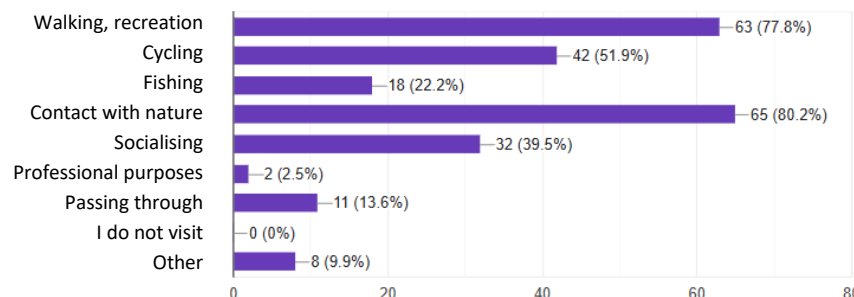
YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL

5) How often do you spend time near the canal?

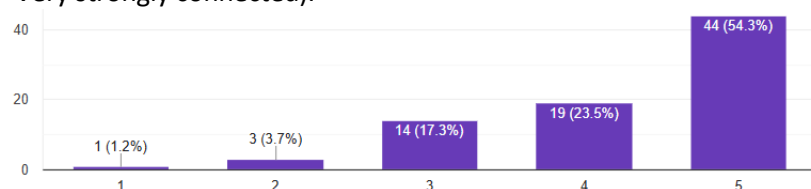
· Every day	4
· Several times a week	25
· Once a week	12
· Occasionally	40
· Never	0



6) Reasons for visiting the canal

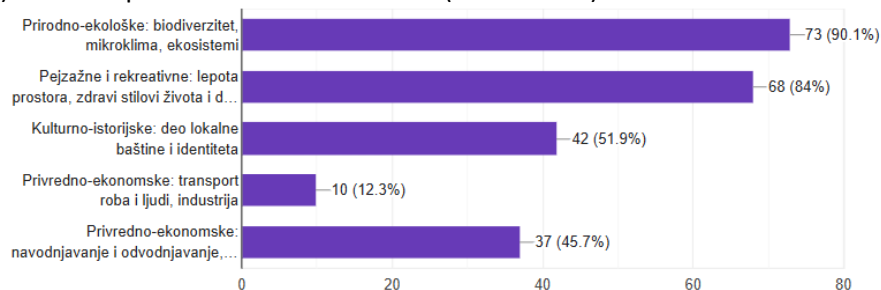


7) Rate your personal connection to the canal 1-5 (1 = Not connected at all; 5 = Very strongly connected).

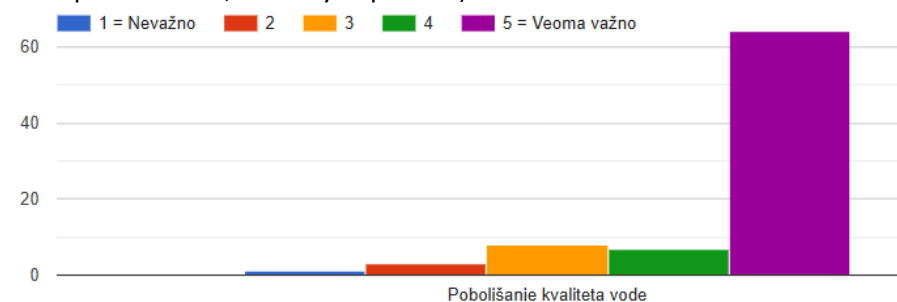


VALUES OF THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL

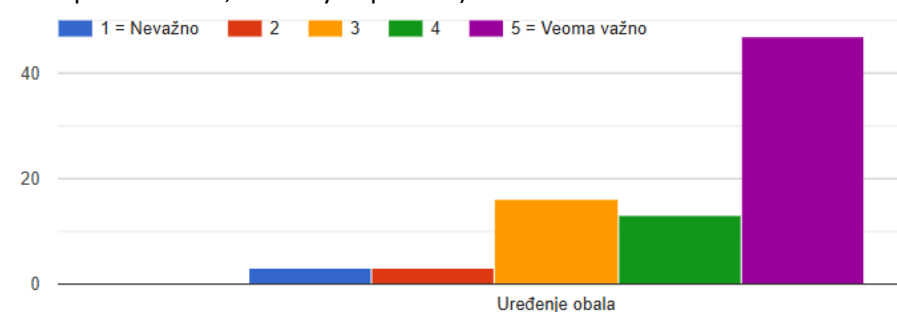
8) Most important values of the canal (select three)



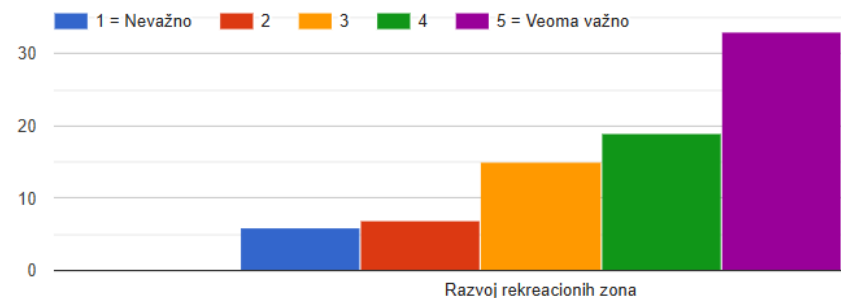
9) Rate the importance of measures to improve water quality 1-5 (1 = Not important at all; 5 = Very important).



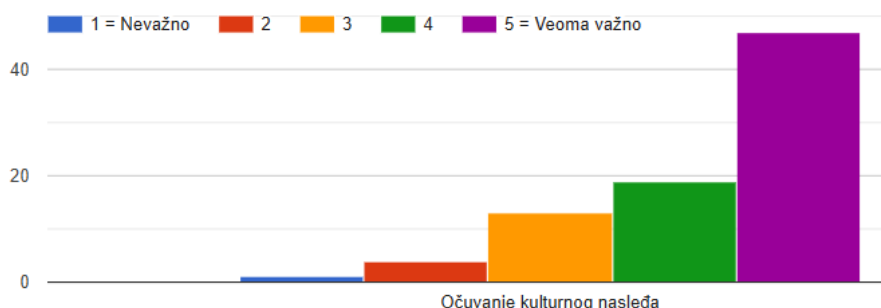
10) Rate the importance of measures to improve the canal banks 1-5 (1 = Not important at all; 5 = Very important).



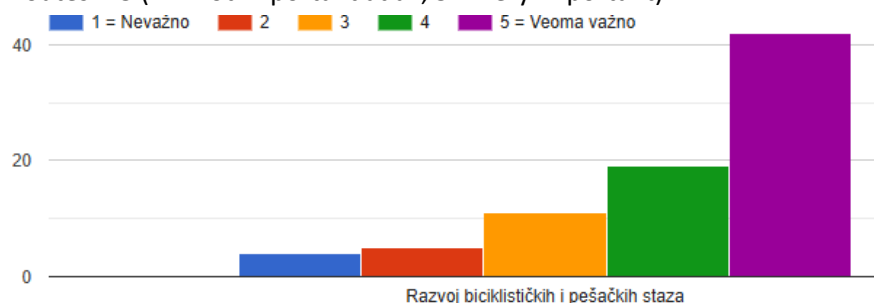
11) Rate the importance of measures to develop recreational zones 1-5 (1 = Not important at all; 5 = Very important).



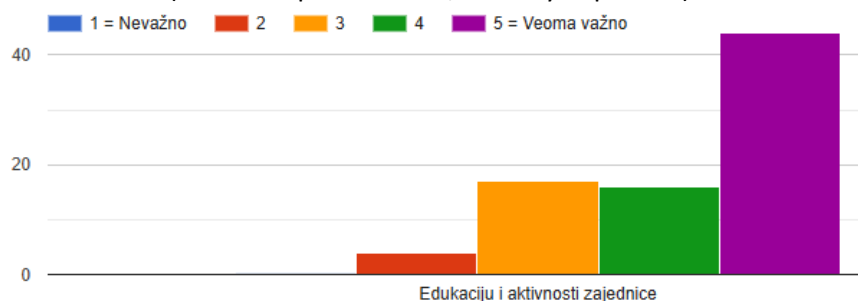
12) Rate the importance of measures to preserve cultural heritage 1-5 (1 = Not important at all; 5 = Very important).



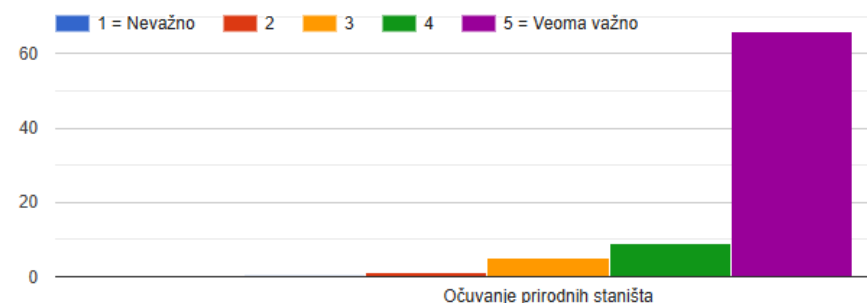
13) Rate the importance of measures to develop cycling and pedestrian routes 1-5 (1 = Not important at all; 5 = Very important).



14) Rate the importance of measures supporting education and community activities 1-5 (1 = Not important at all; 5 = Very important).

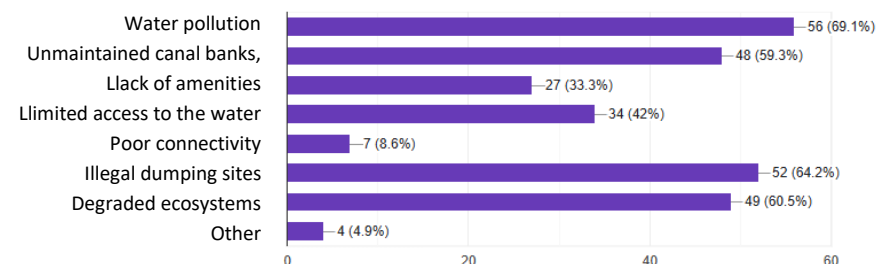


15) Rate the importance of measures to preserve natural habitats 1-5 (1 = Not important at all; 5 = Very important).



PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

16) Which problems do you recognise?



17) The greatest obstacle to improving the canal

- Lack of funding in the local budget 4
- Insufficient institutional care and limited understanding of the canal's value and importance 52
- Poor coordination of responsibilities among different institutions 7
- Limited public interest and awareness of the canal's existence 8
- The canal is viewed only as infrastructure serving economic activities 9
- Other 1

POTENTIAL AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

18) Koje tipove prostora i aktivnosti želite uz kanal? Which types of spaces and activities would you like to see along the canal?

• Pedestrian and cycling routes and rest areas	59
• Educational and nature-observation points	53
• Fishing zones	24
• Beaches	39
• Preservation of wilderness to protect biodiversity	63
• Expansion of employment zones	0
• New landing stages and marinas	4
• New holiday-home settlements	2

19) How can the canal regain its cultural and identity-related significance? *(open format question, 43 responses)*

- Except where strictly necessary, stop the dredging work already under way, as it involves cutting trees on the canal's right bank.
- Through professional expertise.
- First, connect it with the city by cycling and pedestrian routes, improve the bank, and introduce an amenity similar to the "Pčela" riverside restaurant in Apatin, where all citizens can spend time and enjoy nature at affordable prices.
- By recognising how important it is for our city. We do not have a river, but we have our canal. The banks should be improved and afforested, and the local community and municipality should take much better care of it through investment and protection. We should all protect it.
- Through improvement and development.
- The canal first needs to regain an identity: it should become a story that people recognise and proudly pass on. This would include documenting and presenting historical narratives, collecting personal testimonies, creating a digital archive and developing narrative-based branding. The next step would be to shape the canal as a cultural landscape through improved banks, learning points dedicated to its heritage, the return of bridges and traditional riverside establishments, and the preservation of existing buildings. Since identity is created not only through restoration but also through use, the canal should become a meeting place for festivals, educational boat tours, workshops, summer stages and similar activities.

- By improving the canal bank.
- Care, awareness and funding.
- By improving its connection with the city.
- Protect it as a nature park.
- Through the active participation of all citizens and by raising awareness of its importance.
- Citizens should first behave responsibly, protect nature and contribute in different ways to improving conditions.
- Events on the water.
- Allow nature to take its course; when pollution or another problem is identified, help restore it and introduce preventive measures to avoid future pollution and damage.
- Educational boards, educational activities and workshops, with precise directions to the location, as well as public actions.
- Let nature do its work and let people help as much as possible. Remove all holiday homes and improvised docks from the canal bank. Ban construction on the embankment; building may take place only on fields beyond it.
- Educational nature-observation points.
- Awareness alone.
- More activities for young people in nature and on the water.
- Engage experts from different fields.
- Through regattas.
- Through good marketing.
- Construction work should not take place during the swimming season, as happened over the previous two summers. Widening the canal and removing yellow soil from the embankment in the middle of the season muddies the water and discourages swimmers.
- Through on-site education.
- Through even more education for young people.
- Introduce topics on the importance of the canal in preschools and schools and organise visits for children.
- In addition to hospitality venues, which already exist to some extent, educational cultural content is extremely important so that cultural life is not concentrated only in central Sombor.

- Through engagement within public gatherings.
 - More public education.
 - Prevent the construction of holiday-home settlements, especially between Apatinski Bridge and the first railway bridge on the land known as the embankment or former landfill. The land has been illegally subdivided, cleared and built on.
 - Treat it as a treasure, protect it from pollution, preserve biodiversity, improve access in harmony with nature, and PROHIBIT PRIVATE OWNERSHIP THAT RESTRICTS ACCESS TO THE CANAL.
 - More education to raise public awareness.
 - Through legislation and education.
 - Through more active involvement by decision-makers.
 - Strictly control or ban powered vessels, jet skis and motorboats, and eradicate poaching.
 - Legalise plots beside the canal.
 - Educate the population.
 - The Great Bačka Canal can again become a symbol of the region, but not through a single project. This requires a combination of spatial revitalisation, restoration of the historical narrative, cultural events, community involvement, digital promotion, tourism and identity-building projects.
 - Through historical and local stories, traditional dishes, village days, urban customs, and traditions linked to holidays and seasons.
 - By resolving problems and providing education.
 - Preserve nature.
 - Above all, restore citizens' ability to reach and enter the water and monitor wastewater discharges.
- 20) How can the canal's ecological potential be improved and used? (*open format question, 44 responses*)
- It seems sufficient simply not to interfere with it and not to "urbanise" it by building various paths that require tree cutting. The canal is already accessible to both Sombor residents and tourists without additional asphalt or concrete paving close to the water.
 - Through professional expertise.
 - By investing in cleaning and greening.
 - Plant long-lived trees on both sides and protect the canal from dust and pollution from surrounding agricultural land.
 - Through cleaning and improvement.
 - Instead of relying only on conventional cleaning and dredging, which are necessary, green belts should be created along the banks, native plant species protected, and fish stocks protected and restored. Educational eco-routes could present the canal as an outdoor classroom, with nature trails, birdwatching points and information boards on flora and fauna.
 - By protecting it from pollution.
 - Same as above.
 - By raising environmental awareness and penalising environmental offences.
 - By spending more time beside the canal.
 - Protect it as a nature park.
 - Inform local residents about the importance of the entire ecosystem.
 - First plant new trees and create a proper windbreak; clean the canal at least once a year and regularly mow vegetation along the banks and in the canal.
 - Provide on-site educational content.
 - Educate the population.
 - Organise activities to raise awareness of the canal's ecological importance, install educational boards, hold talks, panels and workshops with clearly explained locations, organise public canal-cleaning actions, require the city to act more responsibly and fund canal-related activities, and promote these activities on social media.
 - Provide rest areas and public toilets.
 - Introduce stricter penalties for fish theft and littering, strengthen controls and reduce invasive fish species.
 - Remove the gas facility from the canal bank in Bezdan.
 - Preserve biodiversity.
 - Remove industrial facilities from the waterfront.
 - The population should be educated about the canal's ecological potential. The focus should not be only on exploitation, but on preservation and monitoring.
 - Protection and maintenance.
 - The question is unclear. As a first step, reduce planned cutting of vegetation.
 - Through on-site education and examples of bird-protection parks.

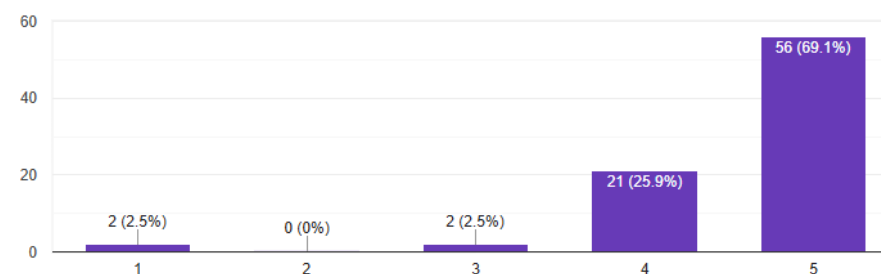
- Regularly remove excessive vegetation from the water, restock fish, test water quality, control fishing and control the construction of holiday-home settlements.
- Control waste disposal from holiday homes.
- Avoid aggressive interventions that could harm existing plant and animal life. Greater human presence inevitably creates pressure, so the concentration of visitors should be carefully managed while leaving small refuge areas where birds and other species can continue to reproduce.
- Preserve what is most important.
- Ban all forms of construction.
- Educate citizens and children, with monitoring and sanctions.
- Place the canal and its banks under protection and prohibit changes that would harm biodiversity.
- Through legislation and education.
- Same as above.
- Possibly build cycling routes and at least two pedestrian-cycle bridges, one near the three-way boundary and one near the Seventh Administration.
- Build a road behind the holiday homes.
- Introduce fines for littering in or around the canal. Prevent tree cutting and forest clearance nearby. Educate people about the importance of ecosystem protection.
- I do not know.
- The ecological potential of the Great Bačka Canal can be realised by combining cleaning and restoration, the creation of an ecological corridor, education, tourism, community involvement and a modern green brand. The canal would then cease to be a problem and become a resource, a marker of identity, a tourist destination and a model of ecological transformation for the entire region.
- Ecological revitalisation of the canal as the foundation of all other actions, restoration of biodiversity, improvement of the banks and creation of green corridors, and development of ecotourism and green businesses.
- Through media attention, workshops and education, together with rigorous penalties for damaging nature and leaving litter, particularly by anglers.
- Under no circumstances should marinas or similar facilities be built.
- Ensure clean water and restrict the expansion of holiday-home settlements.

21) Who should benefit most from improvements to the canal and its surroundings?

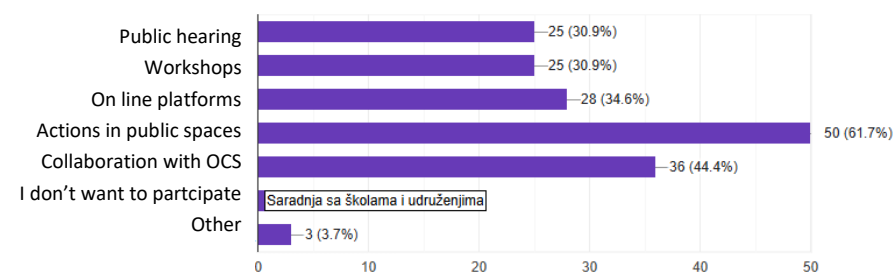
· Children and young people	5
· Older people	1
· Athletes and recreational users	0
· Tourists	1
· Residents of settlements along the canal	5
· Researchers and schools	0
· The entire community	67
· Other	2

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

22) In your opinion, is it important to involve citizens in the canal's renewal process? Values 1-5 (1 = Not important at all; 5 = Very important).



23) How would you personally like to participate?



24) Do you have any suggestions on how communication with citizens could be organised during the preparation of the renewal proposal? (*open format question, 44 responses*)

- Please see my answer to the previous question. 😊
- Round-table discussions.
- Public presentations of the proposed measures.
- Online communication is always useful.
- Present plans and projects to the public.
- Through public consultations with citizens.
- Through frequent information in the media.
- Social media, traditional media, posters, public workshops and surveys.
- Through a questionnaire such as this one.
- Through social media.
- X.
- Public hearings, posters and as much information as possible at all levels.
- Unfortunately, everything is difficult here, including this. Everyone first needs to come to terms with themselves.
- Citizens' assemblies and citizens' initiatives, in accordance with the Law on Local Self-Government.
- I have no suggestion.
- Through social media. Everyone reads and writes all kinds of things online today, so citizens should use the opportunity to become involved.
- Prepare a proposal and then revise the parts that citizens identify as insufficiently well designed.
- Information stands around the city and social media.
- More activities around the canal.
- Public hearings.
- The internet, local radio stations and billboards.
- Through a public call.
- Invitations via social media.
- Through both digital platforms and fieldwork.
- Open a permanent volunteer information point beside the canal.
- Organise talks with engaging content and set up stands where residents can submit ideas and proposals.
- Public lectures and promotional leaflets.
- Through public forums and open dialogue with Sombor residents, so that the needs of citizens, the wider community and the future project are aligned as closely as possible.
- Through different promotional formats and social media.
- Through schools and all associations.
- Through the media, local community offices, campaigns, collective cleaning actions, sports activities on the canal and school activities related to the canal, such as birdwatching, walking and cycling.
- A public forum.
- As many public forums and on-site actions as possible, small workshops for children and parents, and dedicated days for older people beside the canal.
- Organise public forums and discussions in settlements along the canal, allowing citizens to ask questions and submit proposals in person. Open an online platform or form through which citizens can easily send comments, photographs of problems and improvement ideas. Active communication on social media would also help. Researchers could periodically visit the canal banks and speak directly with people who live, work or spend time there, including anglers, walkers, athletes and nearby residents. Cooperation should be established with local schools, associations, sports clubs and local community offices, which could help collect the views of their members. Physical suggestion boxes should be placed at several frequently visited locations, such as local community offices, libraries, cultural centres and the city administration, for those who do not use the internet. Clear and accessible information should be provided on what is planned, the current stage of work and how citizens can participate, using leaflets, posters, local media and social media.
- Through daily announcements and invitations to debates and public forums.
- Advertisements and flyers delivered to homes.
- Meetings of holiday-home settlement residents.
- Through social media such as Facebook and Instagram, and through in-person workshops that are also announced online.
- No.

- Communication must be simple, continuous, two-way and transparent, offered through different offline and online formats, and adapted to different groups of citizens.
- Develop a clear and open communication plan, provide several communication channels for different groups, organise public events that are not tedious, and inform citizens what happens to their proposals.
- Through public media services, schools and citizens' assemblies.
- Do not change anything. Do not pollute nature.

25) If you would like to receive information about the results and participate in further activities related to the preparation of this Study, please leave your contact details.

31 citizens left their contact

II. REPORT ON ULG WORKSHOPS: UNDERSTANDING THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL

The meetings with ULG held on 22th October 2024, 26th March 2025, 7th July 2025 and 20th July 2026 were organised to collect and examine:

- 1) Data relevant to understanding the Great Bačka Canal;
- 2) Participants' views on existing problems;
- 3) Views on development potential;
- 4) Ideas concerning desirable future development, including projects and activities that could be undertaken by local, provincial and national institutions, formal and informal citizens' associations, businesses, clubs, educational and cultural institutions, and other relevant stakeholders.

The specific insights, views and proposals gathered during these meetings are presented below.

1. INFORMATION IMPORTANT FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CHANNEL

Historical and cultural data:

- The centre of canal life was in Sombor – a symbol of the city urbanity.
- The canal is an old structure – it has existed for 224 years; Kiš brothers were canal designers.
- The canal was of great importance for transport until the World War II; there were 30,000 ship sailings per year.
- The first electrical power station in Sombor was located on the canal.
- There were several “suvača” mills – mills powered by horse power.
- Sombor was the centre of the canal society for over 150 years (since 1790).
- There was a plan (in 1830) to dig a canal to the city, so that it would be a “little port” for the city centre.

- Important locations:
 - Mythical city of Bodrog,
 - old pumping station, power station and other industrial/infrastructural facilities as industrial heritage.

Hydrological, technical and infrastructure data:

- The Great Bačka Canal has the initial purpose of drainage, but it is also increasingly used for irrigation today.
- Flow capacity on the section: 30–35 m³/s.
- The canal has a low water level; the construction of another pumping station is planned (location Baračka / Bezdan 2).
- Measures to bring the canal into the designed dimensions (“smoothing”).
- There is a 5-metre-wide inspection path along the canal – a potential for a bicycle path.
- The problem of passages for excavators – necessary attention in planning and construction of roads.
- There is a planned marina in Bezdan, west of the shipyard.
- Important locations:
 - The new pumping station Bezdan 2-Baračka,
 - Inspection path along the canal,
 - New marina in Bezdan.

Ecological data:

- Spread of invasive species, lack of native willow.
- The presence of beavers and a large number of birds (e.g., white herons) – important points for monitoring.
- There are data on water quality (bathing areas).

- Fieldtrip is necessary – the canal sections have different environments: “baren” part near Tromeda, “green” part towards Bezdan, etc.
- Important locations:
 - Bathing zones,
 - “baren” part near Tromeda,
 - “green” part towards Bezdan,
 - Biotopes and habitats, ambient units have not been mapped, but they should be.

Data on accessibility and use of space:

- Numerous unmarked, sheltered areas suitable for socialisation and social activities.
- Some sections are currently impassable by bicycle, e.g., Sombor-Bački Monoštor.
- Important locations:
 - Sombor-Bački Monoštor – route impassable for cycling.
 - some impassable routes, it is necessary to map them.
 - map places that are sheltered and suitable for socialising.

2. PROBLEMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL

Environmental problems:

- Potential negative impacts of the “smoothing” on the ecosystem.
- The spread of invasive species and the lack of native willow.
- The problem of the passage of large ships that disturb the flora and fauna in the Bezdan-Sombor section.
- Faecal purifier planned at the beginning of the canal near Bezdan, where there is a colony of great white herons.
- The fish stock is declining.

- The landfill near between Bački Monoštor and Bezdan has not been removed.

Infrastructure and transport problems:

- Low water level in the canal; therefore, the construction of a new pumping station is planned.
- Pontoon bridge in Bezdan, on the stretch of Štrbac; opens manually, an obstacle to navigation; there is no clear person in charge.
- Second (former railway) bridge: in need of reconstruction into a pedestrian-cycling bridge.
- Unfinished bridge in Bezdan – works started and stopped.
- The lack of lighting for recreational use of the canal (kayakers).
- Fences and impassable paths on the section Bezdan-Sombor and Sombor-Bački Monoštor.
- Bridges problematic for waterways.

Urban planning problems:

- Marina in Bezdan as a point of conflict; boaters against the construction due to collision with the needs of recreational boating.
- A waste water treatment plant to be installed on the most beautiful part of the canal near Bezdan – visual and environmental problem.
- The problem of the impact of large ships on flora and fauna and activities on the canal; for example, bathing.
- The lack of turning segments of ships; there is only one between Bezdan and Sombor.
- The lack of the official maps of interesting places.
- The problem of waterway bridges – they require specific dimensions.

Economic and social problems:

- The history of the place is not well known, nor is industrial heritage.
- Old crafts are dying out and have no market support.
- The problem of sustainable employment in the workshops of old crafts.
- The lack of public spaces for culture and social activities.

3. POTENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL

Natural and ecological potentials:

- A large number of sheltered, naturally beautiful places suitable for tourism and recreation; for example, Ađanka, the water area towards Tromeda, places between the Second bridge and Bački Monoštor, the “opposite side” between Bezdan and Bački Monoštor.
- Locations for bird watching; for example, white herons near Bezdan.
- There are areas under reeds suitable for walking paths between Bezdan and Štrbac.
- Many paths suitable for cycling along the inspection path.
- An increase in the number of beavers indicates an improvement in water quality.
- Possibility of planting trees along the canal.

Cultural and tourist potentials:

- Industrial heritage as a potential for new content: for museum exhibitions, workshops, educational programmes.
- Ethnographic and gastronomic potential; the heritage of the Danube Swabians, crafts, stew, clogs, stained glass, etc.
- Every village has its own identity caused by ethnology and historical events. The data should be used in future development.
- Potential for a museum of the Great Bačka Canal, for which the building of the old pumping station before “Strand” is proposed.

- Large space for festivals; especially the localities of Tromeda, Gradina, and the “Opposite side” (Bezdan-Bački Monoštor).
- “Ball on the water” in October – a traditional event as a potential.
- The potential of a synagogue near Juranović Farm (Vamošer castle).

Management and economic potentials:

- The planned marina – a passenger pier in Bezdan with two levels, 120 berths, a restaurant and accommodation can be a development opportunity if the conflicting points are resolved.
- The planned cargo traffic on the Great Bačka Canal is from its section where it joins the canal from Bogojevo, which frees the Bezdan-Sombor section from heavy and heavy traffic.
- The creation of important policy documents – the General Urban Plan of Sombor (soon for public review) and the Development Plan of Sombor (soon for public discussion) – as an instrument to adequately organise space in the city area.
- The revision of the channel development plan.
- Tourism Development Strategy completed.
- The construction of the Second bridge started – all permissions obtained, work started and then stopped.
- Shipyard in Bezdan open for tourist visits.
- The production of wooden boats as a local brand.

III. REPORT ON THE ULG PROJECT IDEA DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: A REVITALISATION MODEL FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

This ULG workshop was held on December 11th, 2025.

The objective of the workshop was to define development projects for the revitalisation of the Great Bačka Canal and to establish functional, ecological and spatial connections between the canal, its immediate surroundings, the settlements within the City of Sombor, and the wider surrounding area.

The workshop is organised as part of the preparation of the Investment plan in order to ensure that it is firmly grounded in local knowledge and responds to the needs and aspirations of local communities. It also aims to identify realistic development projects that are supported by local stakeholders and that the local community would be willing to contribute to implementing in the future.

The workshop was structured into five parts:

1. Introduction: Presentation of the work carried out so far, including collected data on the canal and its surroundings, identified problems, development potentials and preliminary ideas for its future development.

2. Review and Enrichment of the Knowledge Base: Participants will review and discuss the existing information and identify missing data, while also generating additional ideas regarding the future development of the canal through a structured brainstorming session.

3. Small-Group Work: Participants will work in small interdisciplinary teams (3–5 participants) to further develop one project idea or a set of complementary project ideas by defining: project objectives; expected outcomes; anticipated environmental, social, economic, institutional and political impacts; expected benefits for local communities, surrounding areas and activities, as well as potential impacts at the regional, national and

international levels; implementation activities and project phases; stakeholders responsible for implementation and long-term management; required resources and potential funding sources; implementation schedule and development phases.

4. Presentation of Project Proposals: Each team will present its project proposal to the other workshop participants, either during a plenary session or using the **World Café** method. Participants will provide comments and suggestions regarding possible improvements, integration with other proposals and opportunities for collaboration. Workshop facilitators will document all comments and recommendations.

5. Conclusions and Next Steps: The workshop will conclude with an agreement on further cooperation in preparing the Study and on opportunities for integrating its recommendations into the formal planning framework and planning documents of the City of Sombor.

At the workshop, three project ideas were developed in collaboration with the members of the ULG:

- 1) **HYDRO HUB SOMBOR.** Revitalisation of the old pumping station on the Great Bačka Canal as a centre for hydro-cultural heritage and learning
- 2) **THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL GREEN-BLUE NETWORK.** An integrated system of pedestrian, cycling and water routes connecting settlements with nature and hydro-cultural heritage
- 3) **THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE.** An arboretum and a network of learning stations dedicated to natural and hydro-cultural heritage

Below, we present the first one as an example of a project idea developed during the workshop.

HYDRO HUB SOMBOR: REVITALISATION OF THE OLD PUMPING STATION ON THE GREAT BAČKA CANAL AS A CENTRE FOR HYDRO-CULTURAL HERITAGE AND LEARNING

Location – Canal Segment: The project site comprises the old pumping station on the Great Bačka Canal and its immediate surroundings. Located at the historic intersection of the former Mazgoš River and the canal, it represents an important spatial, functional and symbolic point connecting the urban fabric, the water system and the surrounding landscape. Its position makes it suitable for development as a hub within a wider network of hydro-cultural, educational and recreational facilities.

Objective: The project aims to revitalise hydro-cultural heritage by establishing a functional, educational and socio-economic hub that contributes to quality of life, local identity and the sustainable development of Sombor and the Great Bačka Canal.

Description of the Project Idea: HYDRO HUB SOMBOR envisages the adaptive reuse of the abandoned pumping station and its transformation into a multifunctional centre for heritage interpretation, education, tourism and recreation.

The site's particular value lies in its historical and spatial layers. The pumping station stands at the point where the former Mazgoš River met the present-day canal, which continues along part of its former course. The project will interpret and highlight this continuity and transformation of the water landscape through architectural, landscape and museum design.

The renovated building and canal-side area will accommodate museum and interpretative content, interactive educational programmes, visitor reception and information services, a landing point for small tourist vessels, recreational activities and small-scale commercial services supporting the centre's economic sustainability.

Key Project Implementation Phases and Activities

- 1) **Preparatory and Conceptual Phase.** The first phase includes establishing a consortium or governing council, defining the future management model, conducting historical and spatial research, collecting technical documentation and preparing the programme brief. A conceptual architectural and urban design proposal, potentially developed through cooperation with the Faculty of Architecture and a student competition, will provide the basis for a preliminary cost estimate.
- 2) **Design and Planning.** This phase includes the preparation of building permit documentation, landscape design for the plot and canal bank, and the development of the museum and educational concept. The programme, operational structure and business model will be defined jointly by Vode Vojvodine, the City of Sombor and the City Museum of Sombor.
- 3) **Reconstruction and Equipping.** The building will be rehabilitated and adapted under professional supervision. The interior and outdoor areas will be equipped with digital and interactive educational content, recreational facilities, retail space for local products and souvenirs, and services such as a café and bicycle rental.
- 4) **Programme Implementation.** Following completion, the centre will operate through a year-round public programme of exhibitions, workshops, educational activities and cultural events. Local and regional artists, associations, schools, cultural institutions and other partners will participate in programme development and implementation.

Preconditions: The project requires the approval of Vode Vojvodine, institutional and financial support from the City of Sombor, access to technical and archival documentation, and the preparation of feasibility and sustainability studies. A clear management model and initial budget for project documentation must be secured, followed by applications for local, provincial, national and international funding for implementation and equipment.

Stakeholders:

- **Public Sector.** The main public-sector partners are Vode Vojvodine, responsible for user rights, technical support and water management; the City of Sombor, responsible for strategic support, funding and integration into local policies; and the City Museum of Sombor, responsible for the professional development of museum and educational content.
- **Local Organisations and Citizens.** Cultural heritage and cycling associations, local schools and residents will participate as users, programme partners and co-creators of activities.
- **Entrepreneurs and the Tourism Sector.** Local hospitality businesses, producers and operators providing bicycle, paddleboard and boat rental services will contribute to the tourism offer and economic sustainability of the centre.
- **Cultural Stakeholders.** Artists, curators, designers, educators and heritage interpreters will participate in developing exhibitions, educational content and cultural programmes.
- **International Partners.** International cooperation will involve cities and institutions from the URBACT network, as well as partners from cross-border projects, particularly in Hungary and Croatia.

Financing: The project may combine funding from the City of Sombor, national and provincial programmes for culture, heritage and tourism, and European programmes such as Interreg, Creative Europe and Erasmus+. Private-sector participation may be organised through leases, service provision and other forms of partnership. URBACT primarily provides support for knowledge exchange, planning and capacity building rather than capital investment.

Management Structure: The centre would be managed by a consortium or governing council comprising PWE Vode Vojvodine, the City of Sombor and the City Museum of Sombor, with local associations participating in an advisory role.

Target Groups: The centre is intended for children and young people, university students, residents of Sombor and surrounding settlements, domestic and international visitors, cycle and ecotourists, researchers, heritage and water-management professionals, local associations and civil society organisations.

Expected effects:

- **Environmental Effects.** The project will raise awareness of the importance of water systems, improve and maintain green areas, and encourage healthy lifestyles through walking, cycling, water-based recreation and other outdoor activities.
- **Social and Educational Effects.** The centre will support formal and non-formal education, strengthen local identity and collective memory, and create opportunities for intergenerational learning and community participation.
- **Economic Effects.** Expected economic benefits include the creation of new jobs, expansion of the local tourism offer and support for local producers, service providers and entrepreneurs.
- **Institutional and Policy Effects.** The project will strengthen cooperation between public institutions, businesses and civil society, establish a model of integrated and participatory management and improve the visibility of Sombor within European networks concerned with water heritage and sustainable urban development.

Long-Term Sustainability. Long-term operation will rely on a combination of public funding and self-generated income from services, rentals, retail and programme activities. Year-round educational, cultural and tourism programmes will ensure continuous use of the centre, while regular evaluation will allow activities to be adapted to the changing needs of the local community.

IV. REPORT ON MEETING WITH POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

The meeting with political representatives was organised on 20 July 2026, toward the end of the Investment Plan preparation process, with the aim of presenting and discussing the proposed development priorities, measures and projects before the Plan was finalised. At this stage, it was particularly important to test the proposals from the perspective of local decision-makers, assess their political and institutional relevance, and identify possible conditions, constraints and opportunities for their future implementation.

The timing of the meeting was especially significant because the City of Sombor Development Plan was also under preparation. As one of the key strategic documents guiding the city's future development, it was important to examine the compatibility of the Investment Plan proposals with the priorities and measures being defined within that process. The discussion therefore provided an opportunity to identify potential synergies, overlaps and inconsistencies between the two documents, and to consider how the proposed interventions related to the Great Bačka Canal could be embedded within the broader development agenda of the City of Sombor.

The meeting also helped to clarify which proposed measures could realistically be supported through existing or forthcoming local policies, programmes, institutional responsibilities and investment priorities. In this way, it served not only as a validation of the Investment Plan proposals, but also as an important step toward strengthening their strategic coherence, institutional ownership and prospects for implementation. The meeting complemented the work carried out with the ULG, citizens, local institutions, professionals and students. While earlier participatory activities focused primarily on identifying values, problems, potentials and development ideas, this final-stage consultation helped connect the collectively developed proposals with the local policy and decision-making framework and ensure

that the Investment Plan was aligned, as far as possible, with the city's emerging strategic development priorities.

V. REPORT ON THE PUBLIC VOTING DURING “KANALISANJE” FESTIVAL

The public voting was organised as one of the participatory activities of the “**Kanalisanje**” Festival, held on July 8th, 2026 at the Štrand location on the Great Bačka Canal in Sombor.

The purpose of the voting was to obtain direct feedback from citizens on the measures proposed in the draft Investment Plan and to identify those considered most desirable and important for future implementation. Before the voting started, participants were briefly introduced to the broader context in which the Investment Plan was being developed. Particular attention was given to its relationship with the formal spatial, urban and strategic planning documents of the City of Sombor, as well as to the possible forms of future institutional, financial and programme support that may arise from plans and projects developed within the URBACT framework.

The voting was organised in a simple and accessible format. A large printed table was displayed at the festival venue, listing the proposed measures together with short descriptions of their purpose and content. Citizens were invited to review the proposals and use markers to indicate the measures they considered **priority, desirable and relevant for the future development and activation of the Great Bačka Canal and its surroundings**.

The format enabled participants to compare the proposed measures directly and express their preferences in a visible and straightforward way. At the same time, it created opportunities for informal discussion among citizens and with members of the project team, allowing additional explanations of individual measures and their possible effects.

The measures that received the highest number of citizens’ votes were the following:

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Hard measures

- 1.01 Cycling and pedestrian path along the canal inspection route: *4 votes*
- 1.02 Renewal of the “Štrand” bathing area in Sombor, including facilities and activities for the local community: *23 votes*
- 1.03 Renewal and modernisation of the “PIK” sports complex in Sombor: *9 votes*
- 1.05 Reuse of the “Second” railway bridge in Sombor for a new cycling and pedestrian route: *11 votes*

Soft measures

- 1.11 Photo competitions for the best canal photograph, accompanied by an open-air exhibition: *11 votes*
- 1.12 Canal-related festivals organised at locations along the canal: *5 votes*

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Hard measures

- 2.01 Museum of the DTD hydro-system in the old pumping station in Sombor, accompanied by social and community activities: *6 votes*
- 2.04 Children’s and student camps with educational programmes about the canal and the DTD system as a cultural asset and heritage site: *7 votes*

Soft measures

- 2.12 Digitalisation of canal-related intangible cultural heritage, such as old stories, legends and myths: *7 votes*

ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Hard measures

3.01 Afforestation of canal embankments outside protected areas: *13 votes*

3.02 Renewal of the green recreational area along the canal in Sombor: *7 votes*

3.02 “Green” campsite at the Tromeđa site near Sombor, accompanied by afforestation: *12 votes*

3.06 New arboretum with a building for educational activities in the Mostonga area of Sombor: *6 votes*

3.07 New park-forest planted with “bođoš” trees along the Mostonga in the southern part of Sombor: *6 votes*

Soft measures

3.11 Sustainable reuse of canal water as technical water for irrigation of urban greenery: *8 votes*

3.12 Eco-tourism along the canal, including flora and fauna observation: *4 votes*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Soft measures

4.11 Revival of the traditional use of reed in Bački Monoštor, both for traditional roofing and for new forms of use: *8 votes*

CONCLUSION

The results indicate particularly strong public support for the **renewal of the Štrand bathing area**, which received 23 votes and was the highest-ranked measure overall. Among the environmental measures, **afforestation of canal embankments** and the proposed **green campsite at Tromeđa** also received

comparatively strong support, while the reuse of the railway bridge and the photo competition were among the most supported measures within the social development group.

The voting was not conceived as a formal decision-making procedure, but as an additional participatory instrument for testing public preferences at the final stage of preparation of the Investment Plan. The number of votes should therefore be understood as an indication of relative public interest and support rather than as a representative survey of the population of Sombor.

The results were considered together with the outcomes of previous ULG meetings, workshops, consultations and other participatory activities. In this way, the public voting contributed to the final prioritisation of measures and provided an additional basis for identifying interventions that combine professional and strategic relevance with visible support from the local community.