

MOMAr

Action Plan for the South Bohemian Region

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General Information

- Project:** MOMAr - Models of Management for Singular Rural Heritage
- Partner organization:** Regional Development Agency of South Bohemia - RERA
- Country:** Czech Republic
- NUTS2 region:** CZ03 - Jihozápad (Southwest)
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- Policy Instrument:** Integrated Operational Programme (IROP) was designed to support regional development in the Czech Republic. IROP is based on ERDF. It focuses on regional or local development in the fields of civic infrastructure, basic education, energy efficiency, public services and, last but not least, cultural and natural heritage. The originally aimed IROP 2013-2020 cannot be longer influenced because it has ended during the MOMAr project lifetime. However, it was replaced by IROP 2021-2027, which is a direct successor with basically same goals and general objectives. Nonetheless, new granting schemes were introduced, including the involvement of Local Action Groups (LAGs) and creation of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) schemes.

Introduction

This action plan was prepared within the framework of MOMAr project, funded by Interreg Europe programme. It summarizes the experience gained within the project in Exchange of Experience events, exchange of good practice examples and stakeholder involvement. For South Bohemia, Czech Republic, the following action was selected for the Action plan:

Action 1 - New life to Orty mining site

Submission of a new project for opening of Orty mining site to IROP programme 2021-2027, ERDF-based national policy instrument.

Action 1 - New life to Orty mining site

1. The background (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

The first action will aim at Integrated Operational Programme (IROP) policy instrument, in a form of submitting a new project to this policy instrument and exploiting knowledge gained within the MOMAr project. IROP programme is designated for smaller, regional projects rather than large infrastructural works.

The proposed action is a submission of a project for opening former china-clay mines called “Orty” in České Budějovice outskirts for the general public, schools, experts on mining and mining history. Orty was originally opened in the second half of the 19th century to provide china clay for local earthenware producer. The quality of the clay is relatively low, preventing the production of highly-valued chinaware (as opposed to Western Bohemia, where large deposits of highest-quality china clay are available). Also, the deposit volume wasn't very large. The mining operation ceased at the beginning of the 20th century with the availability of cheaper earthenware. However, Orty presents one of the only two underground china-clay mines in the country, the other one being in Western Bohemia (also non-functional anymore). Otherwise, china clay in the Czech Republic is mined in open-pit mines (surface mining, strip mining). According to the geological survey, the Orty site is a clay deposit of the Cretaceous raging river and presents quite a unique setup from a geology perspective.

In 1991, Orty was declared an industrial and natural area of protection. The industrial value lies in its mining history while natural value is represented by bats who inhabit some of the abandoned tunnels as their hideout and wintering place. Nonetheless, until 2016 the Orty site was rather forgotten and only a handful of locals and geology experts was aware of its extent and potential. In 2019 the Regional Authority of South Bohemia announced plans for opening the mines as a tourist attraction. The Covid-19 outbreak caused a delay of such plans, also the ending 2014-2020 programming period made public authorities postpone the plan until the new period funding would be available. In 2021 the idea was brought back and the work on the opening has started. However, since it concerns a long-abandoned mining structure, protected area and natural wintering place for bats, a lot of legislative and technical studies needed to be done before starting any physical works. By around mid-2022, a lot of studies and expert opinions will be known. So far, no obstacle that could not be overcome has appeared. In 2021, the Regional Authority of South Bohemia selected the Regional Development Agency of South Bohemia (RERA) as a cooperation body, which encompasses carrying out some of the preparation tasks, including a project proposal on Orty management models and site-use.

Action #1 aims at the utilization of modern and innovative models of management of the Orty heritage site, taking inspiration from experience and knowledge gained in the MOMAr project. MOMAr partnership, through International Exchange of Experience conferences, good practice examples and study visits, has provided a lot of various managements models, or their elements, to be included in the Orty management study. Especially the following good practices have shown to be inspiring:

1) Topolnitsa Cave

Presented by Romanian partner, preparation and organization of music performance in a cave system in Mehedinti county

2) Via Transylvanica

Thematic heritage route Via Transylvanica, linking thematic sites in the Mehedinti region in a single tourism and educational product

3) St. Michael Monastery

Digitalization of interiors (and partly exteriors) of St. Michael monastery in Saxony-Anhalt. The adaptation to online, interactive web presentations was part of the initiative.

4) Los Bañales

Involvement of visitors in activities usually performed by site experts and staff - demonstration and involvement in archaeological work. The 'playground' is, however, adapted to the general public, safe and outside truly valuable plots

2. Action (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

The proposal will be submitted to Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP) 2021-2027, an ERDF-based, Ministry of Regional Development managed policy instrument, under Priority Axis 4, Specific Objective 4.4 - Empowerment of culture and sustainable tourism as regional economic drivers.

The action will be taken in the following steps:

1) Affirmation of the concept of the Orty management model by regional authorities,

to ensure the official adoption of the concept. It includes clarification of the site operator, initial funding sources and their volume and compliance with all technical, legal, safety and environmental requirements.

2) Preparation of the study and the project proposal

The next step will consist of the preparation of the IROP project proposal, which includes a study that describes the project in great detail. Thus, the study authors can include all sorts of inspiration from the MOMAr project, proposing steps or activities to further improve

Orty's qualities. For example, thematic routes experience can be included, since the mining history of the region is not limited to Orty. The links to the industrial development of České Budějovice city or the construction of a horse-drawn railroad to Upper Austria in the 19th century offer countless options for thematic package setup. Digitalization of at least some spaces is foreseen, both for visitors (to see, for example, inaccessible flooded parts of Orty) and experts (to have samples of status-quo of rock-and-clay formations for analyses and future comparison of changes, movements etc.)

3) Submission

The study will be a part (albeit very important) of the set of documents needed for submission into the IROP call. The whole set will be prepared by RERA, avoiding any discrepancies between the information provided. At the time of submission of this Action plan, the submission into Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) of IROP is planned. It makes the approval more likely than if submitted into a national open call. ITI calls are administered by the bearer city (České Budějovice in this case) and the concerned territory is limited. Also, the ITI calls will be thematically focused. Naturally, the Orty site is within ITI territory.

4) Implementation

Once the IROP project is approved for implementation, the physical preparation works will start. They are planned for construction work season 2023. It is expected that the physical implementation will overshoot the end of the MOMAr project 2nd phase.

However, should the project proposal turn unsuccessful, the study would remain in effect, only with different funding sources. The Regional Authority plans to carry out the project regardless of its funding sources, even if it meant its own budget. This action will improve the Policy instrument via the type of change in accordance with the Interreg Europe programme's manual - type #1: Implementation of new projects.

Indicators and monitoring

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| Studies conducted | 1 |
| Project proposals submitted | 1 |

Risk Assessment

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| Project failure at IROP submission | Medium/Low | The project proposal will be prepared with all the care, strictly following the conditions of the respective call. The likelihood for an open IROP call is medium, for the ITI scheme it's low because ITI will launch regionally limited and thematically focused calls. |
| Poor quality of the study | Very low | The study will be conducted by a team of experienced authors and evaluators of RERA. The involved staff has broad experience in the preparation of such studies. Inclusion of experience from the MOMAr project is ensured by involving the MOMAr project manager(s) with the author team. |
| Eventual cancelling of the realization of Orty opening | Low | The project is embraced by the South Bohemian Regional Authority which already approved the implementation in all legislative bodies (Regional council, Regional board). Also, all concerned municipalities are in favour. |

3. Players involved (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

RERA

RERA is a producer of the study on management and utilization of Orty mines and the author team will include experience from the MOMAr project into the activities included in the study.

South Bohemian Regional Authority

South Bohemian Regional Authority (JČK) is the owner of the area and the most possible site operator. Even if it isn't JČK itself, it would be run by one of its subsidiary organizations. JČK is also an initiator of the idea and bearer of all activities linked to opening the site to the general public. Last but not least, JČK will co-finance the IROP project.

Municipalities of Hosín, Borek and Hrdějovice

These relatively small municipalities are involved in the initiative since Orty lies in their land-registered area (municipal cadaster). Thus, the municipal authorities are in a position of the approval body of many steps in the Orty opening effort. However, when the idea appeared and started to materialize, these municipalities were invited to express opinions, objections or suggestions. All these factors were taken into account and, according to ongoing talks, they are in favour of the venture and only minor details are being discussed.

IROP 2021-2027 programme managing authority

Ministry of Regional Development (MMR), the managing authority of the IROP programme, is an involved player since it is a provider of substantial financial support in a form of an IROP project. Currently, there is a discussion on whether to submit the Orty project into an open IROP call or as a part of the České Budějovice Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) sub-programme, also provided by IROP.

Miscellaneous

The construction preparations will require cooperation with expert bodies, for example, the National Mining Institute or the Agency of Nature and Landscape Protection, some of which have already conducted preliminary studies on the feasibility of the venue.

4. Timeframe: 2022-2023

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| Concept of the study: | May - July 2022 |
| Preparation of the study: | July - September 2022 |
| Approval of the study and submission to IROP: | October - November 2022 |
| Approval of the application in IROP: | December 2022 - January 2023 |
| Construction works to open the mines: | March 2023 - November 2023 |
| Opening for public: | March 2024 |

The subject of this Action plan is the preparation of the study and submission into IROP operational programme. The physical implementation will take place beyond the scope of the MOMAr project. However, the measures proposed in the study are expected to be carried out either during construction work or preparations for public opening.

5. Costs (if relevant):

The study is worth around 3 000 € and it will be covered by the site owner and future operator, i.e. Regional Authority of South Bohemia. The costs for the implementation of proposed measures cannot be estimated since the measures and activities will be specified in the study. The overall resources for Orty opening are estimated to be approx. 1 700 000 €.

6. Funding sources (if relevant):

The study will be funded by the Regional Authority of South Bohemia, the implementation will be funded by the IROP programme.