



LIFE RESTORE FOR MDD

UNESCO Five-country
Biosphere Reserve
Mura-Drava-Danube



BENICA - SIDE CHANNEL RESTORATION

FACTSHEET

The Mura River is an exceptionally important river for nature conservation. It once meandered widely across its floodplain, but today its natural dynamics are limited to floodplain forests directly along the river. Regulation and hydropower plants in the upper reaches have interrupted sediment transport, leading to channel deepening and lower groundwater levels. Consequently, floodplain forests along the riverbanks are under threat.

The Benica side channel restoration is implemented on the left bank of the Mura River, south of Benica in the Municipality of Lendava, near the Croatian border. An existing inflow into the Benica side channel is present at the site. Sediment deposition from floods in recent decades has reduced the connection between the side channel and the Mura River during medium and low water levels.

The area included in the implementation of the measure also covers the Natura 2000 sites POV Mura (SI5000010) and POO Mura (SI3000251). Since 2021, the area has also been part of the UNESCO Five-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

- Removal of sediment deposits and deepening of the existing side channel:
 - length: 205 m;
 - width: 20 m;
 - depth: 2.2 – 2.7 m.
- Excavation of approximately 8,056 m³ of sediment from the Mura River channel and partial diversion of flow into the side channel.
- Total area of measure implementation: 0.53 ha.
- Improvement of natural conditions over 44 ha of floodplain forests (habitat type 91E0*).

Monitoring the effectiveness of the measure:

- Biotic monitoring: survey of selected target bird species and other important bird species in the area and along the Mura River.
- Abiotic monitoring: LiDAR, bathymetric and photogrammetric surveys, and monitoring of hydromorphological quality element.



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LIFE RESTORE FOR MDD: THREE RIVERS, FIVE COUNTRIES, ONE PROJECT

In the project “Preserving and restoring floodplain forest habitats along the Mura–Drava–Danube rivers” (LIFE RESTORE for MDD), 17 partners from five countries are involved. Between 1 October 2023 and 30 September 2028, various measures will be implemented to improve the condition of floodplain forests along the Mura, Drava and Danube rivers.

INITIAL SITUATION:

- Flooding with sediment deposits.
- Reduced inflow of water from the Mura River into the side channel during medium and low water levels.

OVERVIEW OF THE MEASURE

- Planned implementation period: 2025–2026.
- Estimated cost of implementation (excluding VAT): 209,830.83 €.
- Objective: to improve the connection between the Benica side channel and the main channel of the Mura River.

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE MEASURE

- Increased connectivity of floodplain forests.
- Restoration of natural hydro-morphological processes.
- Establishment and improvement of natural river dynamics.
- Reduction of flood risk.
- Increase in biodiversity.
- Rise in groundwater levels.
- Improvement of drinking water quality.
- Strengthening of cross-border cooperation.
- Increased aesthetic value of the area.



Overview of the restoration of the Benica side channel..



Side channel Benica..

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