

Highlights of the Babina Greda Smart Village Strategy

CROATIA



About Babina Greda

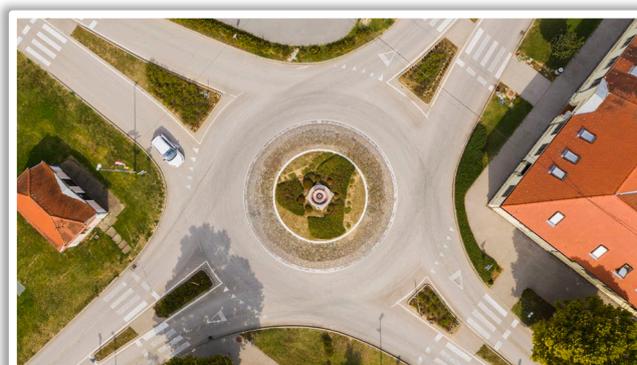
The Babina Greda municipality has a population of 2 895 inhabitants (2018). It is located in Eastern Croatia, in Vukovar-Srijem County, near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Babina Greda has an exceptionally favorable geographical location due to the direct motorway exit to the A3 Zagreb-Lipovac, the proximity of Pan-European Corridor V (Budapest-Ploče) and Sava River.

Although industrial development has increased significantly in recent times, agriculture remains a major activity for the population of Babina Greda. Agricultural land occupies two thirds of the commune's area, and the production of milk and dairy products is particularly important. Apart from the high economic activity, Babina Greda is also very socially active, and the village is often branded as a "guardian of tradition".

Key challenges & assets

Babina Greda is currently facing demographic challenges in connection with its ageing population and youth out-migration. As a result, the working population has declined and the need for care for older people has increased. There are limited market opportunities for local agricultural products. Support for entrepreneurship and branding of local products and services is insufficient. The local community lacks a sports hall and multifunctional spaces that could be used for social, cultural and educational activities and for the social inclusion of the elderly population. Older people and people with physical disabilities also lack public transport.

However, an excellent geographical location with industrial development in the economic zones, favorable natural conditions (soil and forests, geothermal potential), a strong and active community and civil society, and experience in numerous projects are relevant assets for future development.



Main objectives of smart village strategy

- **Objective 1:** Develop a more sustainable and competitive economy, primarily by adding new value to local products
- **Objective 2:** Engage the local community and improve the quality of life, especially of the younger and older population
- **Objective 3:** Develop a smart, environmentally friendly and economically efficient agriculture
- **Objective 4:** Strengthen the recognisability of the identity and the basic products and services of Babina Greda

What is smart?

Community Participation in Strategy Development

A total of 28 participants and experts from various fields attended the meetings. Workshops and six focus groups took place, in which the shortcomings of the village were described in detail and the goals and measures for the development of the area were defined. Communication with the local community and the public was carried out through social media, the municipality's website and through a series of advertisements and articles in local print media and on the radio.

Links to other strategies

- ✓ The **Development Strategy of Babina Greda 2016-2020** is the first strategic document dedicated to the welfare of the local community and the agricultural development. The Smart Village Strategy recognises its achievements and obstacles and brings more focused and innovative approaches.
- ✓ The **Local Development Strategy of LAG Bosutski niz** covers a wider area with similarities to Babina Greda and offers networking potential.
- ✓ The **Regional Strategies of the Vukovar-Srijem County until 2020** provide great framework for the Smart Village Strategy because of their shared focus on sustainable economic growth, the competitiveness of agriculture and community development.

What smart actions are implemented?

- ✓ **Soil fertility control project (with the University of Osijek)** has given insight into the state of agricultural land and provided recommendations for both more successful and more environmentally friendly agriculture.
- ✓ **Digital cadastre of unutilised agricultural land** revealed new potentials for agricultural development.
- ✓ **Zaželi (Make a Wish) project** employed 18 women aged 50+. Each of them was assigned six elderly people to care for and improve their living conditions.

A smart action that we are planning

- ✓ **Smart and eco-friendly agriculture** (further cooperation with university, new digital technologies on farms)
- ✓ **Retro-innovation:** using traditional **village reading rooms** as new intergenerational learning hubs



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