

The Report on the State of Conservation of the UNESCO World Heritage property

Auschwitz-Birkenau, German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945) (Poland) (C-31)

In August 2015, the State-Party received an official document entitled "ICOMOS review of the report on the state of conservation of the World Heritage property Auschwitz Birkenau, German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945)" (letter no. CLT/HERJWHC/8180/PL/AS/KR), which refers to the subsequent report on the state of conservation of the site (letter no. NID-M/1646/215/15/BF), sent on 3rd March 2015. The document includes questions related to: present proposals of the planned ring road of Oświęcim with a feed road, along with the proposed bridge over the river Soła, particularly due to the need of preparation of the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA); a management plan; new visitor centres in Brzezinka and Oświęcim and the Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value.

The mentioned ICOMOS review of 2015 has been sent to the stakeholders and each of them provided answers, which are presented below: the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum responsible for the World Heritage property (response no. 6222 of 16 November 2016), the entities responsible for the property's buffer zones — the Commune of the Town of Oświęcim (response no. BRM.033.14.2015.I of 8 October 2015) and the Commune of Oświęcim (response no. WI.0310.2015.GK of 16 November 2015), and also the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorway (response no. DPI.WO.4110.213.2015.mmb of 23 October 2015).

This report presents the current state of work on the preservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of Auschwitz Birkenau, German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945) and its surroundings. The report covers the period from March 2015 to the beginning of January 2016.

The most recent decision of the World Heritage Committee concerning Auschwitz Birkenau (no. 33 COM 7B.115) was adopted at the 33rd meeting which took place in June 2009 in Seville. The answer to it was the Report on the State of Conservation sent to the World Heritage Centre on 25 January 2011 (letter no. NID-M/676/92/11), which was subsequently submitted to ICOMOS on 21 February 2011. The answer from the World Heritage Committee to this report was not received by the State-Party up to this day. Nonetheless, the State-Party is obliged by the Centre and the advisory body of ICOMOS to submit further reports, what has been done in years 2014, 2015, and currently in 2016.

I. The position of the State Party explaining the situation related to the planned expressway S-1 and the south ring road of Oświęcim

ICOMOS reviews from 2014 and 2015, where one of the main subjects is the planned expressway S-1 and the south ring road of Oświęcim, have been submitted to all stakeholders (i.e. to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, the Commune of Oświęcim, the Commune of the Town of Oświęcim, and

the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways) in order to get acquainted with experts' remarks and guidance, and prepare answers in this respect.

The planned expressway S-1 on the section from the "Kosztowy II" junction in Mysłowice to the "Suchy Potok" junction in Bielsko-Biała and the south ring road of Oświęcim has already been presented in the report of 25 January 2011 (letter no. NID-M/676/92/11) as a matter pending determination. Subsequently, the plans regarding the said expressway were presented on the meeting with international experts in 2013 and the further reports of 2014 and 2015. This report presents the current progress with respect to the said investment as at the end of 2015.

At the end of April 2015, a meeting of the Commission for the Assessment of Investment Projects (CAIP) of the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways (GDDKiA) was held in Warsaw. The various variants of expressway S-1 on the section of Kosztowy - Bielsko-Biała were discussed during that meeting. The Commission unanimously approved the main route of expressway as part of variant E (the hybrid variant), which covers the construction of the ring road of Oświęcim, along with the bridge over the river Soła. The variant E is a combination of variants A and B, whose routes have been approved by the World Heritage Committee at the 33rd Session in 2009 (decision no. 33 COM 7B.115) as variants that do not pose a threat to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property; they were also approved by a group of international experts in 2013. The variants in question have also been consulted and received a positive opinion from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Changing the name of the variant of expressway S-1 to E (the hybrid one) resulted from modification of a part of this road near Międzyrzecze, in order to move it away from the coal mine KWK Piast Ruch II, but it does not change the approved route of the expressway and the ring road of Oświęcim (see Appendix 1 – plan of the investment location).

In the response sent in October 2015 (letter no. DPI.WO.4110.213.2015.mmb), the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorway informed that an application for a decision on the environmental conditions for approval for implementation of an investment was submitted to the Regional Director for Environmental Protection in June 2015 (in short — an environmental decision). The said document sets out the environmental conditions for the undertaking and is not a decision determining whether a given undertaking will be carried out or not. An environmental decision determines (resolves) which of the variants analyzed in the Report on the impact of the investment on the environment may be implemented. The GDDKiA informed that further research and analyses related to the route of the ring road of Oświęcim in the area of the World Heritage property will be carried out at next stages of the construction works, i.e. after receiving the environmental decision. Therefore, Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), in accordance with ICOMOS guidelines, and a view and spatial analysis between the bridge on the river Soła and a complex of the former camp Auschwitz I will be carried out at the development stage of the Programme Concept, following the environmental decision. A detailed map for project purposes will be developed then, hydrogeological surveys will be conducted, road grade-line will be determined, and the analysis of construction scenarios of the bridge over the river Soła will be carried out. Thus, at the stage of the Programme Concept, the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways will have appropriate data at its disposal that is essential to conduct the analyses in question.

The concepts of S-1 expressway, along with the ring road of Oświęcim and the bridge over the river Soła, aim at comprehensive solution of transport malfunctioning on the east Silesian voivodeship and the west Małopolska region. The ring road of Oświęcim will enable to relieve the national road no. 44 on the junction from Bieruń to Oświęcim and the town itself of heavy traffic because the current state of the road is not adjusted to the present traffic intensity. Therefore, the scheduled ring road is a key investment and the top priority, both for the town and for the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum which manages the World Heritage property. An increase of the number of people visiting the property calls for an immediate adoption of new transport infrastructure solutions. The planned road

will provide a better access to the property, and the reduction of heavy car traffic from the town center and the immediate surroundings of the former camp Auschwitz I. As for the construction of the bridge over the river Soła, it is an essential point to connect the ring road of Oświęcim with provincial road no. 948, and then with national road no. 44 along the route to Cracow and Wadowice.

II. Other issues raised in the ICOMOS review on the World Heritage property

1. Conservation policy

Since the last report of 3rd March 2015, work has been continued with an aim of the protection, conservation and presentation of the World Heritage property – mainly conducted by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum to fulfil its statutory tasks; and its surroundings.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum is managed on the basis of relevant acts and regulations, simultaneously reacts on a regular basis to different situations, analyzing tendencies and defining threats in the area of the UNESCO World Heritage property. A project phase of a comprehensive conservation of two brick prisoner barracks no. 7 and 8 located in the oldest part of the camp (sector BIb) has been commenced in the area of the camp Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The main purpose of these works is to strengthen the structure of barracks while preserving to the possible extent the authenticity of historical buildings, with minimum interference in frail fabric of a historic nature. The works in question are unprecedented on the world scale because such objects have never been covered by a full conservation programme. All brick barracks located on the former camp Birkenau will be successively renovated in the years to follow. The works related to the regulations of hydrographic conditions in this area are also being conducted. Also a multidisciplinary research is carried out consisting in the collection of data with an aim of developing a detailed conservation programmes, and modernization of one of the storerooms in which post-camp textiles are held.

Details on the activity of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum can be found in the Annual Report (see Appendix 2)

Conservation strategy for the World Heritage property Auschwitz Birkenau, German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945) which was discussed in the previous reports, and which consist in three volumes including the principles for protection and conservation of the World Heritage property and its surroundings, on the basis of valorization of objects and landscape of historic significance, has been submitted to the World Heritage Centre at the beginning of April 2015 (letter no. NID-M/2551/333/15/BF). Until this report was concluded, the State-Party has not received from the Centre any remarks related to the *Strategy* in question (unfortunately according to the ICOMOS review, the State-Party has not submitted the *Strategy*).

Historical structures associated with the camp Auschwitz II-Birkenau, located within the protection zone of the World Heritage property, in the area of the Commune of Oświęcim, i.e. Judenrampe, potato and cabbage warehouses are systematically monitored, and the area around them is maintained on a regular basis. Moreover, to the tasks implemented as part of the 5th Oświęcim Strategic Government Programme (OSGP) for the years 2016 to 2020, the Commune of Oświęcim submitted a task entitled “Adjustment of the former potato warehouses to the permanent museum exhibition related to Judenrampe”. As part of the task in question, the necessary documentation will be prepared, the warehouse area will be cleaned in accordance with the documentation, and the museum exhibition will be created following the prior substantive arrangement upon the contents of the exhibition and its aesthetics with the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Detailed information on the tasks implemented as part of the 5th OSGP were presented in the previous report of March 2015.

2. New Service Centres for Visitors in Brzezinka and Oświęcim

Both investments: construction of the main parking lot for visitors to KL Birkenau along with associated infrastructure (in Brzezinka) and the New Service Centre for Visitors of the Auschwitz Memorial (in Oświęcim) have been repeatedly presented in detail in subsequent reports submitted by the State-Party since 2011. The State-Party has never received any remarks as to the projects proposed.

The main parking lot for visitors to KL Birkenau along with associated infrastructure in Brzezinka is an investment made as part of the Oświęcim Strategic Government Programme and received a positive opinion from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. It has been used since 2013. The parking lot was one of the places visited by experts during the international advisory mission in October 2013.

The New Service Centre for Visitors of the Auschwitz Memorial in Oświęcim reached the stage of a prepared construction project. At present, intensive search for funds to implement this key investment is being conducted.

As to the recurrent question of a helicopter pad, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum assures that a landing zone will be secured as part of the parking space to fulfil its ad hoc function only in case of emergency.

3. Strategy for Visitors Traffic Service and Flow

The traffic of visitors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in 2015 has been determined at the maximum level of people admitted every hour, achieving the total of 1.72 million persons. This resulted in a necessity to introduce early registration and booking of visits. This revolutionary change resulted in better control of the number of visitors, convenient planning over the course of day, and improved visiting conditions, both from the viewpoint of the visitors and the Museum's structures themselves.

At present, visitors are provided with parking lots along the infrastructure, both in Oświęcim near Auschwitz I (owned by the ABSM), and in Brzezinka where the parking for the visitors of Auschwitz II-Birkenau is located (owned by the Commune of Oświęcim).

The strategy for visitors traffic service in the Commune of Oświęcim is successively developed, and it depends mainly on the funds allocated for its implementation. From a logistics viewpoint, the parking for the visitors of KL Birkenau along with the associated infrastructure, better access as well as organization of car traffic in the vicinity of Judenrampe and potato warehouses, in which the permanent museum exhibition (referred to before) is going to take place, are all an important part of visitors routes. Another stage of works as part of the Oświęcim Strategic Government Programme will consist in, *inter alia*, construction of a road to release traffic located on the outskirts of the Museum in Brzezinka, and construction of an access road to Judenrampe and the potato warehouses, linking Piwniczna and Kombatantów Streets in Brzezinka.

4. Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the property

In response to the comments of ICOMOS of April 2015 with regard to the Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, the document in question has been corrected, and after consultation with the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, the site manager, sent once again to the World Heritage Centre. At present, the corrected document is verified by ICOMOS. The State Party is awaiting for the answer.

Concluding comments

The State-Party expresses its sincere acknowledgements for invaluable substantive help and commitment of the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS International to protection of the World Heritage property Auschwitz Birkenau, the Nazi German Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940–1945). However at the same time we would like to point out that in the ICOMOS reviews frequently repeat questions to which Poland, pursuant to the provisions of the Convention and the Operational Guidelines for its implementation, has already answered, or voluntarily submitted extensive material, each time hoping for the help and support of the international community in the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, the said support being expressed in, *inter alia*, decisions of the Committee.

List of Appendices:

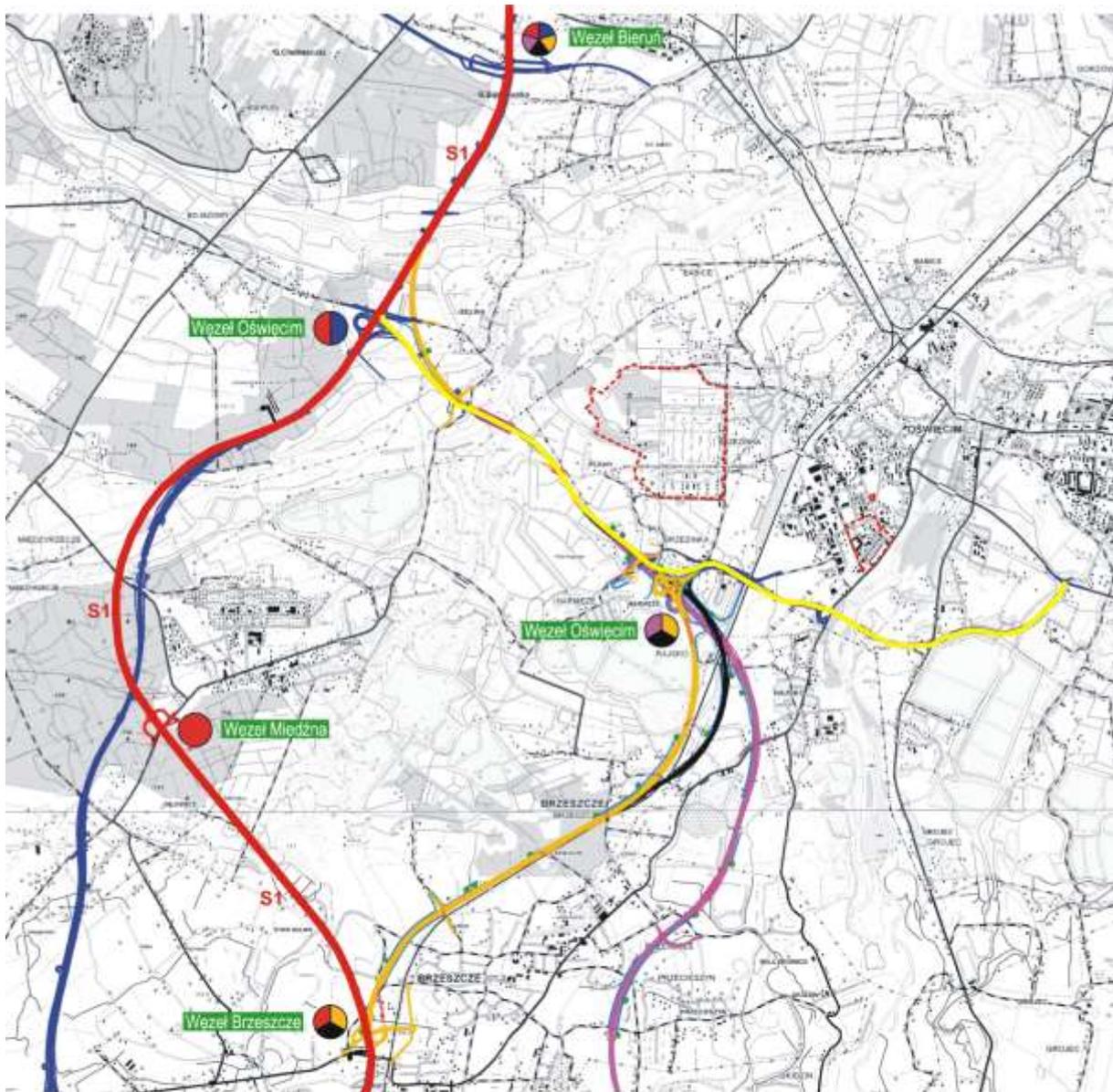
Appendix 1 – plan of location of variant E (hybrid variant) of the expressway S-1 along with the south ring road of Oświęcim and the bridge over the river Soła.

(source: <http://www.gddkia.gov.pl/pl/a/7890/s1-kosztowy---bielsko-biala>, of 12 January 2016)

Appendix 2 – Report of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

Appendix 1

plan of location of variant E (hybrid variant) of the expressway S-1 along with the south ring road of Oświęcim and the bridge over the river Soła
(source: <http://www.gddkia.gov.pl/pl/a/7890/s1-kosztowy---bielsko-biala>, of 12 January 2016)



Appendix 2