



LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS APLINKOS MINISTERIJA
THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

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Ms Mechtild Rössler
Director, UNESCO World Heritage Centre

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CC:
Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO
Permanent Delegation of the Republic of
Lithuania to UNESCO

World Heritage Centre
UNESCO
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**REGARDING THE UPDATED REPORT FROM THE STATE PARTY -
LITHUANIA**

Dear Ms Mechtild Rössler,

We enclose herewith an Updated Report from the State Party – Lithuania to the World Heritage Centre on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the World Heritage Committee's Decision 38 COM 7B.28 and agree to make the document available for public access and to be uploaded on the official website.

Please, accept the assurance of my highest consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Linus Jonauskas
Vice-minister

Updated Report from the State Party – Lithuania to the World Heritage Centre on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the World Heritage Committee's Decision 38 COM 7B.28

2015

The Curonian Spit (Lithuania/Russian Federation) (C 994)

Name of World Heritage Property (State Party) (Identification number)

1. Executive Summary of the report

Following the World Heritage Committee's Decision 38 COM 7B.28, an ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to the property was organized on 19–22 January 2015. The Mission considered the preliminary plans to construct a suspension bridge from Klaipėda across the Lagoon to the Spit; construction of a liquefied gas terminal outside Klaipėda and a proposed construction of a deep sea port at Klaipėda.

1. According to the paragraph 5 of the Decision 38 COM 7B.28 regarding Liquefied Natural gas (hereinafter – LNG) terminal outside Klaipėda (Lithuania). LNG terminal is located within Klaipėda port territory, outside the UNESCO property boundaries and outside the Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park. During Lithuanian LNG terminal implementation both Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (hereinafter – SEIA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (hereinafter – EIA) had been carried out. The Heritage Impact Assessment comprises the part of the EIA. The EIA concluded that no adverse significant impact on the protected areas, as well as on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Property. All required impact mitigations measures have been implemented.

2. In paragraph 7 of the Decision 38 COM 7B.28 regarding a deep sea port of Klaipėda (Lithuania). Responding to the statement above, Lithuania would like to assure that a decision regarding the location of the deep sea port of Klaipėda only will be taken, when Master Plan of Klaipėda port and off-shore will be prepared and supported by appropriate environmental assessment procedures, public hearings and consultations.

3. In paragraph 6 of the Decision 38 COM 7B.28 regarding the preliminary ideas to construct a suspension bridge from Klaipėda across the Lagoon to the Spit. Lithuania underlines that there are no studies, plans nor decisions taken about the feasibility to construct such a bridge, there is only a discussion in mass media. The construction of a bridge connecting Klaipėda city and the Curonian Spit is not included in any strategic or territorial planning documents of the Republic of Lithuania.

With the purpose to strengthen Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park, forest protection, forest fire control and to ensure best forest management practices, on 4 February 2015 the Government decided by the Resolution No. 110 to transfer forest governance, protection and management functions to Kretinga State Forest Enterprise. On 15 April 2015 it was decided by Government Resolution No. 389 to revise Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park Management Plan. In order to strengthen the management efficiency of the Curonian Spit property, the World Heritage Management Plan for the whole property is being under the revision and finalisation.

In 2015, by the Order of the Seaport Authority, the preparation of the General plan of Klaipėda State Seaport is being started.

On 28-29 September 2015, celebrating the 15th Anniversary of the Curonian Spit inscription into the World Heritage List, Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO organized the training course “Capacity Building Training in Communication and Management of Trans-boundary Properties.”

Lithuania in implementing projects always has a goal to avoid any negative impact on Curonian Spit.

2. Response to the Decision 38 COM 7B.28 of the World Heritage Committee

State Party – Lithuania informs that following the World Heritage Committee's Decision 38 COM 7B.28 (hereinafter – the Decision), an ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission (hereinafter – the Mission) to the property was organized on 19–22 January 2015. According to Terms of Reference the Mission was arranged to consider the preliminary plans to construct a suspension bridge from Klaipėda across the Lagoon to the Spit; construction of a liquefied gas terminal outside Klaipėda and a proposed construction of a deep sea port at Klaipėda.

Report on the ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission to Curonian Spit (C 994) prepared by an ICOMOS expert dr. Tamas Fejerdy and is available online:

<http://whc.unesco.org/document/135175>

The Report was translated into the Lithuanian language and officially approved.

1. According to the paragraph 5 of the Decision 38 COM 7B.28 regarding Liquefied natural gas (hereinafter – LNG) terminal outside Klaipėda (Lithuania).

During Lithuanian LNG terminal implementation both Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (hereinafter – SEIA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (hereinafter – EIA) of the LNG terminal and other permits according Lithuanian law and international requirements had been carried out to ensure that the LNG terminal during both construction and operation phases does not cause any negative impact onto environment as well as on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property or the environment of Curonian Spit in all project phases.

Lithuania wishes to stress that LNG terminal is located within Klaipėda port territory and outside the UNESCO property boundaries and outside the Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park.

The Heritage Impact Assessment of the project is an integral part of the appropriate SEIA and EIA procedures entailed in applicable national and EU legislation. The assessment information, findings, conclusions and recommendations if applicable are provided in all related documentation. Accordingly, three territory alternatives for the placement of the LNG terminal and related infrastructure had been investigated by the feasibility study and SEIA and two of them during the next stage in the EIA study.

The EIA of the LNG terminal was carried out in 2011–2012. The Heritage Impact Assessment has been carried out in accordance with Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties (ICOMOS, 2011) and comprises the part of the EIA. The results of Heritage Impact Assessment are included in the EIA Report. All documents are public and available in both languages – Lithuanian and English on the special section at the above mentioned website <http://www.sgd.lt>.

The EIA concluded that no adverse significant impact on the protected areas, as well as on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Property as well as on landscape, cultural heritage objects, environmental air, surface water, underground water resources, soil and subsoil, fauna and flora, social environment and public health would be caused during construction and operation phases of the LNG terminal.

We would like to draw your attention to the fact that the Working Group of EIA and respective process involved the best national heritage and environmental protection experts and all relevant public institutions. All 14 state institutions, including State Service for Protected Areas, Ministry of Environment and Directorate of Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park, endorsed EIA conclusions. NGO's are very active, discussions are on constant basis. The final EIA Report was approved by the national authorized institution in October 2012 and an appropriate

environmental decision was issued. The decision provides specific environmental and safety requirements to be followed during construction and operation of the LNG terminal and related infrastructure in Klaipėda port and onshore. All required impact mitigations measures have been implemented.

The State Party assures the proper continuation of the monitoring of the LNG terminal and its possible (non-visual) impacts as requested by the Mission.

2. In paragraph 7 of the Decision 38 COM 7B.28 regarding a deep sea port of Klaipėda (Lithuania).

Responding to the statement above, Lithuania would like to assure that a decision regarding the location of the deep sea port of Klaipėda only will be taken, when Master Plan of Klaipėda port and off-shore will be prepared and supported by appropriate environmental assessment procedures, public hearings and consultations.

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania initiated the Master plan of Klaipėda port on July 2014. We assume that all required procedures will last approximately two years and we expect to take this decision not earlier then at the end of 2016 or early 2017.

Decision regarding possible extension of Klaipėda Port in the sea might be taken only after an updated Master Plan of Klaipėda Port will be prepared (expected period of completion – early 2017), as decided by the Government of Lithuania in July of 2014. In any case port development options will be carefully treated from various perspectives, including social and environmental consequences, impact on the cultural heritage, health issues, etc. All communications about any intended developments and appropriate consultations with local and state stakeholders will be respected as provided in the national legislation and international agreements.

Lithuania would like to reiterate the basic information on the processes related to the development of Klaipėda port including deep sea port.

By the Resolution on 29 October 2002 No IX-1154 the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania had approved the Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania. In section 5.1 of the Plan it is decided to modernize the infrastructure of the Klaipėda port, to construct deep sea port if such a development will be proofed and confirmed by special feasibility study.

It is important to emphasize that the Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania is currently being revised and supplemented with its marine part. Planning process has been undertaken under the supervision and coordination of the Ministry of Environment. All documentation of the Plan and the SEIA is available on the website of the Ministry of Environment <http://www.am.lt/VI/index.php#r/1558> with a summary of essential information in English. We would like to draw your attention that the supplementation of the Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania with the marine part provides several territorial alternatives for construction of the deep sea port – off-shore close to Klaipėda and close to Būtingė which is 35 kilometres north from Klaipėda. As required by the national and international legislation situation analysis has been carried out, concept proposals have been prepared and approved, the SEIA Report has been prepared taking into account comments from relevant authorities and the public. All these documents have been made publicly available on the website of the Ministry of Environment since January 2013 and presented to the public in Vilnius and Klaipėda at the special information events.

Environmental concerns and sustainable development of the port infrastructure was an absolute priority of port and national authorities. Each and every project is carefully treated from the environmental perspective and carefully discussed with stakeholders, including the public, before decision on investment is made.

3. In paragraph 6 of the Decision 38 COM 7B.28 regarding the preliminary ideas to construct a suspension bridge from Klaipėda across the Lagoon to the Spit.

Lithuania wishes to stress that there are no studies, plans nor decisions taken about the feasibility to construct such a bridge, there is only a discussion in mass media. The construction of a bridge connecting Klaipėda city and the Curonian Spit is not included in any strategic or territorial planning documents of the Republic of Lithuania, just opposite – an inter-institutional working group, led by the Ministry of Transport, adopted a recommendation to municipalities of Klaipėda and Neringa to look for better alternatives than bridge.

On this occasion we would like to reiterate main information and the position of Lithuania sent to the World Heritage Centre.

In December 2013, the Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania established a Working Group commissioned to analyze the issues related to the possible construction of a bridge to the Curonian Spit and to assess the alternatives for the transfer of the Smiltynė ferry from its current place in the Klaipėda port (hereinafter – the Working Group). Representatives from both the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Transport and Communications, from the municipalities of Klaipėda city and Neringa, other state authorities were involved.

In December 2013 – April 2014, the Working Group held several meetings and considered only theoretical proposals on the construction of a bridge to the Curonian Spit. In January 2014, Neringa municipality held a special Municipality Council meeting at which the question on the construction of a bridge and the position of the Municipality's representatives on these issues in the Working Group were discussed. As the positions of the representatives were highly divergent on the issue there was no possibility to reach an agreement on this in the Working Group. The Working Group provided only a suggestion for the municipalities of Klaipėda city and Neringa to further analyse mobility issues and traffic situation in this area. In this regard and in line with mobility and environmental policy of the EU, Neringa municipality has initiated preparation of the mobility plan of the municipality. The mobility plan was contracted in August 2014 and intended to be prepared in a period of one year. Within its scope existing planning documents, transportation and mobility needs will be analysed and appropriate recommendations for possible modifications of transportation modes will be provided. The Mobility Plan is a subject to SEIA procedure where state and local authorities as well as the public will be involved.

Lithuania would like to underline that current status of the discussion on the bridge is “a public dispute in mass media” only, a picture of a San Francisco's Golden Gate like “large suspension bridge” crossing Curonian Lagoon was drafted by journalists and multiplied in the national media to illustrate ongoing discussion only, thus no decision on the construction of a bridge has been taken and no actions need to be stopped in this respect.

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

In 2015, by the Order of the Seaport Authority, the preparation of the General plan of Klaipėda State Seaport (its land, port's internal waters, external raid and related infrastructure) is being started. On 12 August 2015, the Agreement on Preparation of General Plan No. 34-2015-361 was signed with the company UAB “Sweco Lietuva”, acting together with its partners in joint activity the companies UAB “Urbanistika” and UAB “Kelprojektas”. The term of the provision of services – 22 months from the day of the signing of the agreement.

In addition, the Seaport Authority is presently preparing tender documentation, thus it is intended in the nearest future to commence the public procurement procedure for the selection of the provider of the services of preparation of project proposals for the object “Reconstruction (construction) of the northern and southern breakwaters of Klaipėda State Seaport and reinforcement of a part of the Curonian Spit slope” and the assessment of the impact on environment made by the object “Improvement (dredging and expansion) of the external and internal shipping channel of the Klaipėda State Seaport, reconstruction (construction) of the northern

and southern breakwaters and reinforcement of a part of the Curonian Spit slope and construction of the southern gates of the port.” The planned term of the provision of services – 36 months from the day of the signing of the agreement.

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity

With the purpose to strengthen Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park, forest protection, forest fire control and to ensure best forest management practices, on 4 February 2015 the Government decided by the Resolution No. 110 to transfer forest governance, protection and management functions to Kretinga State Forest Enterprise. The Resolution came into force on 1 April 2015.

In order to evaluate solutions of Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park Management Plan and to improve conditions for sustainable development of the Park settlements and identify an integrated approach in addressing social, economic and environmental challenges, on 15 April 2015 the Government decided by the Resolution No. 389 to revise Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park Management Plan, which had been approved by Government Resolution No. 702 on 6 June 2012.

In order to strengthen the management efficiency of the Curonian Spit property, the World Heritage Management Plan for the whole property is being under the revision and finalisation. With this purpose the meeting of responsible authorities and stakeholders was held in Neringa municipality on 13 November 2015.

Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park as one of the main governing bodies in the Curonian Spit, Lithuania, has been participating in a number of national and international projects and other activities related to the sustainable tourism, awareness raising, proper preservation of its cultural and natural heritage and etc. Some of the projects are worth to mention:

- An international project “Joining Hand and Minds: Network of the Nordic and Baltic Sea World Heritage Sites” led by the Gotland County Administration, Sweden. The participation in its specific project “Grand Tour of Baltic Sea Region” encourages closer collaboration of the countries in the region. Lithuanian and Russian National Parks Administrations have been both participating in the project.

- A local project “Restoration and preservation of the biodiversity in Natura 2000 Sites”, financed from EEA and Norway Grants, and is dedicated to the sustainable management of the marine type open grasslands.

- An international project “United for Nature Conservation in Curonian Spit” was carried out by the Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park together with the Lithuanian Fund for Nature this year. The project was financed from the World Heritage Volunteers’ Initiative 2015.

Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park has initiated a discussion about the possibility to rebuild former Amber Excavation Company “Stantien&Becker” which buildings were situated in the Amber Bay in Juodkrantė in the second part of 19th century. The activity of that company had a huge impact on the development of a local fishermen village into a popular resort place and till now the imprints of its work can be seen in landscape. If the scientific research validates the possibility to rebuild this former complex only then Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park and Neringa municipality will start a planning process. These buildings constructed in style of former complex of Amber Excavation Company would serve as the Visitors and Exposition Centre where visitors could learn more about the history of this site and also actively participate in the education process.

We would like to mention that the historical research is going on. There is no SEIA, EIA and HIA have been done yet, because of a very initial stage.

According to the Law on the Coastal zone, Kuršių Nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park Administration is responsible for the implementation of coastal protection measures in the property. A new Coastal Zone Management Programme for 2014-2020, defining coastal protection measures was approved by the Order of the Minister of Environment in 2014.

The 15th Anniversary of the Curonian Spit inscription on the World Heritage List took place this year. Celebrating this occasion and in collaboration with the Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park the training course-seminar “Capacity Building Training in Communication and Management of Trans-boundary Properties” was organized on 28-29 September in Nida, Lithuania.

The aim of the training course-seminar was to build capacity of communicating and managing the trans-boundary World Heritage Sites in order to ensure sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region and to increase public awareness, involvement and support for the World Heritage. The proposed two workshops were on: 1) Management of UNESCO trans-boundary cultural landscape territories locally and internationally (theory, requirements and best practice examples; 2) Explanation, presentation and communication about Outstanding Universal Value (theory, practical training and best practice examples). Representatives from the Lithuanian and Russian National Parks, Neringa and Klaipėda City Municipalities, the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Culture, the State Service for Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment, the Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture, local NGOs and distinguished delegates from other World Heritage Sites from Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany and Ukraine have participated in the training course-seminar. Welcome speech was made by the Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Lithuania to UNESCO, Mr Arūnas Gelūnas. After the training course-seminar the Guidelines on effective communication about the OUV of the World Heritage Sites have been prepared based on the material of event.

Seizing the opportunity, we would like to emphasize our strategic principle – Lithuania in implementing projects always has a goal to avoid any negative impact to Curonian Spit. Each project is carefully treated from the environmental perspective and discussed with stakeholders, including the public, before the decision on investment is made.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

Herewith we agree to make an Updated Report from the State Party – Lithuania to the World Heritage Centre on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the World Heritage Committee’s Decision 38 COM 7B.28 available for public access and to be uploaded on the official website.

6. Signature of the Authority

Linus Jonauskas
Vice-minister

