
Historic Centre of Florence (Italy) No 174bis

1 Basic data

State Party
Italy

Name of property
Historic Centre of Florence

Location
City and Province of Florence, Tuscany Region

Inscription
1982

Brief description

Built on the site of an Etruscan settlement, Florence, the symbol of the Renaissance, rose to economic and cultural pre-eminence under the Medici in the 15th and 16th centuries. Its 600 years of extraordinary artistic activity can be seen above all in the 13th-century cathedral (Santa Maria del Fiore), the Church of Santa Croce, the Uffizi and the Pitti Palace, the work of great masters such as Giotto, Brunelleschi, Botticelli and Michelangelo.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report
12 March 2015

2 Issues raised

Background

When the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List, in 1982, it encompassed the historic city centre and the settled area on the other side of the river Arno enclosed by the former 16th century city walls (505ha) but no buffer zone was proposed.

Taking into account the progressive expansion of the contemporary city and the increasing pressures which its historic part and the inscribed property may be prone to, the Municipality of Florence promoted and developed a study so as to define a buffer zone for the Historic Centre of Florence.

This research was carried out according to three main lines of approach: the inventory of the public views and vistas in the surrounding hills from which the historic centre can be seen; the identification of the requirements for the safeguarding of the inscribed property; the definitions of strategic projects/plans for promotion and communication to sustain the qualifying features of the inscribed property.

The preliminary study for the buffer zone was based on a multidisciplinary and multi-scalar approach. This examined different cultural maps that allowed identification of a variety of settings, differing in scale and profile. The analysis was developed at a regional scale – considering the wider settlement system of historic towns of which also Florence is part; at a provincial scale related to the broad belvedere basin of the city; and at a municipal scale – related to the skyline of the city and to the multiple layers of historical and cultural relationships among the components of the inscribed property and of the property within its setting.

The proposed buffer zone was based on the results of the study and covers 10,480 ha, encompassing the hillsides surrounding the city of Florence to the north, south and east, and the plains to its north-west. The municipalities responsible for the various portions of the buffer zone approved the boundaries in 2013. The proposed buffer zone was examined by the World Heritage Committee at its 38th session (Doha, 2014), and was referred back to the State Party (Decision 38 COM 8B.52).

Decision 38 COM 8B.52

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Documents WHC-14/38.COM/8B.Add, and WHC-14/38.COM/INF.8B1.Add,*

2. *Refers the examination of the proposed buffer zone for the Historic Centre of Florence, Italy, back to the State Party in order to allow it to:*

- a) *Explain in detail the rationale for the delineation of the buffer zone, also through graphical and photographic documentation, and its relation to the results of the preparatory study,*
- b) *Clarify and illustrate through cartographic and visual documentation the relevant views, vistas and belvederes worthy of protection, including those from inside the inscribed property towards the outside hillsides,*
- c) *Explain in detail how the protection and management systems function in practice,*
- d) *Clarify how and by when the management system/plan submitted in 2006 will be amended so as to include the necessary regulatory and management measures to allow the buffer zone to effectively act as an added layer of protection for the inscribed property,*
- e) *Adopt and approve the urban regulations concerning the respecting of belvederes and views in any future planning and building decision.*

Modification

In response to the World Heritage Committee decision, the State party has now addressed these requests as follows:

1. A descriptive report extracted from the preparatory study has been provided together with related graphic tables illustrating the rationale for the buffer zone.
2. Maps and photographic documentation have been provided which illustrate relevant views from 18 points inside and outside the property.
3. A detailed description of how the protection and management system functions in relation to control of

skyline transformation has been provided. The system enables graphic insertion of new development proposals in order to determine what impact they may have on the skyline. The system has already been used successfully in relation to control of construction of a new stadium.

4. The new Management Plan to be drawn up by the Historic Centre of Florence UNESCO Office is aimed at promoting sustainable development of the Historic Centre of Florence while safeguarding the urban skyline, in turn directed at maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value of the inscribed property. The Management Plan will include the buffer zone in the strategic part of the document, highlighting how proposed landscape changes will be controlled through application of local and State legislation for protection of views from the established viewpoints.
5. Development within the four local municipalities whose jurisdiction covers part of the buffer zone is already controlled by Local Plans. However all 18 viewpoints are located within areas protected by State Regulations and control of the inscribed property and skyline is effectively covered by the Municipality Structure Plan (approved 22.06.2011). A variation to the Structure Plan approved 31.12.2014 controls the 18 viewpoints and related visual axes. The new Town Planning Regulations of the Municipality of Florence (also approved 31.12.2014) state that outside the historic city centre “the transformation interventions that modify the existing skyline must be subject to verification of correct insertion having as reference the key viewpoints identified in the Structure Plan”.

ICOMOS notes that the successful application of this requirement will depend on adequate communication between the relevant municipal planning bureaucracies.

ICOMOS considers that the information set out above responds adequately to the requests made by the World Heritage Committee.

3 ICOMOS Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zone for the Historic Centre of Florence, Italy, be **approved**.

