
Prague (Czech Republic)

No 616

1 Basic data

State Party

Czech Republic

Name of property

Historic Centre of Prague

Location

Prague (Hlavní mesto Praha)
Czech Republic

Inscription

1992

Brief description

The Historic Centre of Prague represents a supreme manifestation of Medieval urbanism (the New Town of Emperor Charles IV built as the New Jerusalem). The Prague architectural works of the Gothic Period (14th and 15th centuries), of the High Baroque of the 1st half of the 18th century and of the rising modernism after the year 1900, influenced the development of Central Europe, perhaps even all European architecture. Prague represents one of the most prominent world centres of creative life in the field of urbanism and architecture across generations, human mentality and beliefs.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

14 March 2012

2 Issues raised

Background

The property was inscribed in 1992 as a serial property, combining two nomination requests submitted separately, one for the historic centre of Prague submitted in 1991 and an extension request for Průhonice Park submitted in 1992. The two components were inscribed with only one buffer zone for the Historic Centre of Prague, which did not surround the Průhonice Park.

The exact boundaries of the buffer zone of the historic centre of Prague were lately subject to debate, as the nomination dossier contains two contradictory sets of information: a textual description which corresponds to a legal ruling of 1981 and a map which indicates a different buffer zone. The buffer zone indicated on the map corresponds to the outer boundary of the city of Prague and the region of Prague and is considerably larger than the buffer zone described in the text or the corresponding legal reference on the establishment of a buffer zone for the Historic Centre of Prague, No. Kul/5-932/81 of 19 May

1981. Since a reactive monitoring mission visited the Historic Centre of Prague in 2008, the discrepancy of the buffer zone boundary indication became evident, and the State Party pointed out, that the buffer zone indicated on the map at the time of nomination had been incorrectly drawn around the outer boundaries of the city and the region at the time. The State Party clarified that the correct reference was the textual description given and the corresponding legal act that had been annexed.

The 2008 World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission recommended that the authorities conduct an evaluation of the two potential buffer zones in order to assess their effectiveness, and the successive mission in 2010 advised that the State Party should propose a revision of the buffer zone, following the procedures outlined for minor boundary modifications, and include into the buffer zone the Průhonice Park.

Modification

The modification request is in fact a request to acknowledge the legally defined boundaries presented in the text of the nomination dossier of 1991 as the buffer zone boundaries for the Historic Centre of Prague. In addition, the request for minor boundary modification proposes a separate buffer zone for the Průhonice Park, which had previously been without buffer zone.

The buffer zone to be confirmed was established by the legal act Kul/5-932/81 of 19 May 1981, which guaranteed legal protection for the buffer zone of the historic centre of Prague, a decade before its World Heritage inscription. Lately, the legal protection provided by this act was complemented by an amendment to the existing land-use plan, which prohibits the construction of excessive height buildings within the buffer zone boundaries. Excessive height buildings are defined within three categories for this purpose and include buildings above 40 meters, buildings of significant mass or volume not complying with the standard city proportions, as well as buildings which may impact panoramic views.

The buffer zone to be confirmed covers 9016 hectares, which completely surround the 894 hectares of the Historic Centre of Prague site component and has been defined on the basis of visual relations and geography of the territory. It covers the areas in which inappropriate developments could impact negatively on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property component. The extension of the buffer zone around the property varies between a minimum of approximately 2 km and a maximum of more than 10 km.

The newly proposed buffer zone for Průhonice Park covers an area of 871 hectares and surrounds the 211 hectares property component towards all directions. As for the Historic Centre of Prague, this buffer zone corresponds to the extensions of a legal instrument adopted on 12 February 1981, which established a buffer zone for the Palace and Park of Průhonice. Like the previous buffer zone, the legal act establishing this zone prohibits the development of excessive height buildings.

3 ICOMOS Recommendations

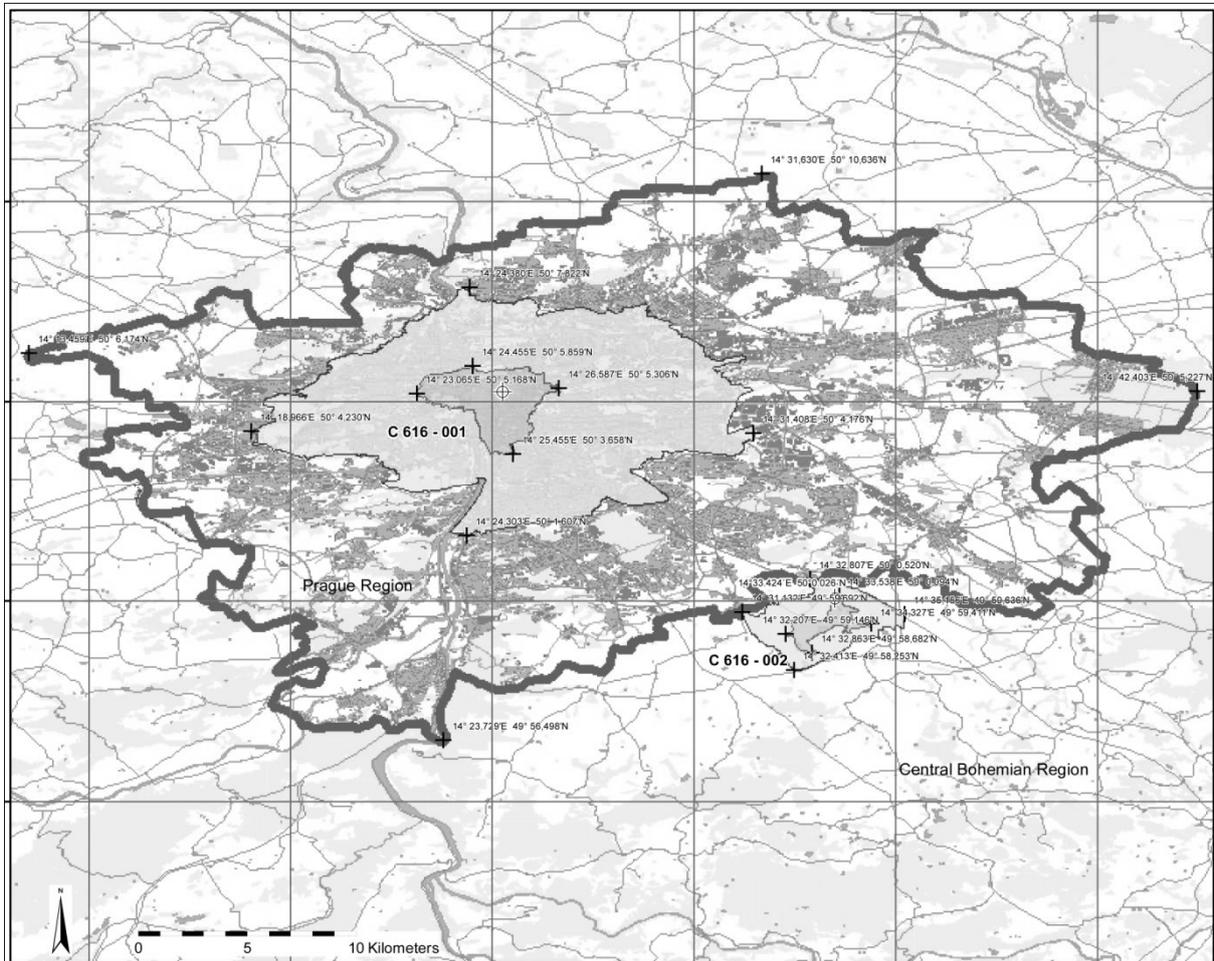
ICOMOS considers that given the absence of any legal regulation for protection of a buffer zone outside the zone established by the legal act Kul/5-932/81 of 19 May 1981, the buffer zone that effectively functioned for the past 20 years since inscription of the property was the smaller buffer zone defined in the text, and not the map, of the nomination dossier.

ICOMOS welcomes that this protection has recently been strengthened by an amendment to the existing land-use plan which expands the definition of prohibited excessive height buildings towards disproportional volumes and buildings that may impact on panoramic views. In combination, the existing legal protection and the amendment to the land-use plan guarantee sufficient protection of the Historic Centre of Prague. ICOMOS recommends that these principles are firmly integrated in any future revisions of the land-use plan.

ICOMOS also welcomes the designation of a buffer zone for Průhonice Park and considers the boundaries proposed appropriate.

Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zones for the Historic Centre of Prague, Czech Republic, be **approved**.



Map showing the revised boundaries of the buffer zone