

Levoča (Slovakia)

No 620 bis

*Official name as proposed
by the State Party:*

Levoča and the work of
Master Paul in Spiš

Location:

Prešov Region,
Republic of Slovakia

Brief description:

Following the Saxon colonisation of the 13th and 14th centuries, under the protection of the Kingdom of Hungary, the town of Levoča represents the foundation and flowering of a fortified urban centre with craft and commercial activities. It complements the 'Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments' group of buildings already inscribed on the World Heritage List

Its enrichment made possible a remarkable cultural development, particularly in the decorative religious art of polychromatic wood, illustrated by the works of Master Paul, a sculptor and painter of the first half of the 16th century.

Category of property:

In terms of categories of cultural properties, as defined in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

1. BASIC DATA

Included in the Tentative List: 16 June 2002

*International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for
Preparing the Nomination:* None

*Date received by the
World Heritage Centre:* 26 January 2007

Background: This is a proposal for an extension of 'Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments,' which was inscribed on the List at the 26th session of the World Heritage Committee (Cartagena, 1993) on the basis of criterion (iv).

Consultations: ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committees on historic towns and villages and on wood.

Literature consulted (selection):

Homolka, Jaromír, *Levoča, hlavný oltár v kostole sv. Jakuba, der gotische Altar, l'autel gotique [sic], the gothic altar, el altar gótico*, Bratislava 1965.

Buran, Dusan, *Studien zur Wandmalerei um 1400 in der Slowakei*, Weimar 2002.

Technical Evaluation Mission: 24–28 August 2008

Additional information requested and received from the State Party: ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on 15 December 2008, asking it to confirm that the management group for the property operates for all the properties, to

supply its work timetable, and to consider changing the name of the property.

The State Party replied on 26 February 2009 with a synthesis letter accompanied by two additional documents (8 pages). The analysis of this documentation is included in the present evaluation.

*Date of ICOMOS approval
of this report:*

10 March 2009

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The property comprises the historic centre of the town of Levoča, founded in the 13th and 14th centuries, within a fortified enceinte which forms the outer boundary of the property. Most of the initial urban plan, the monuments, and a large part of the housing and fortifications have been preserved up to the present day.

The property extends around a vast central space, forming an elongated rectangle of 4.4ha, which was originally the market square. This space, through which the main road passes, was originally used for the market. It was then incorporated into the urban layout in order to provide for the town's civil and religious functions, and thus became surrounded by rich burgher houses. Today it includes the main venues and public civil and religious buildings of the town. The square is the site of the market, the Parish Church of St Jacob, which houses the artistic works of Master Paul, the Evangelical Church, the Town Hall, and the County Hall.

The St Jacob Church dates from the first half of the 14th century; it was completed in 1380. It is an imposing rectangular Gothic church, with a central nave prolonged by a polygonal choir, two lateral naves, the entrance beneath the bell tower, and various adjacent buildings (chapels, vestry).

The church houses a set of ten altars grouped together close to the choir, mostly from the 15th and 16th centuries, forming a remarkable collection of polychromatic wooden retables in the Late Gothic style. The masterpiece is the choir altar with its retable, the dimensions of which are very large (18.6m high), constructed around 1510 by Master Paul. It comprises a group of sculptures and paintings of remarkable skill, illustrating the monumental culmination of Late Gothic conceptions of the polychromatic wooden retable. The sculptor and painter worked from 1507 to 1517 for St Jacob's Church and contributed to its embellishment with other altars and sculpted and painted elements: the retables of St Nicholas, St Anne, and St John, the equestrian statue of St George, and the sculpted group of the Nativity in adjacent chapels. Master Paul sometimes combined Late Gothic elements with others inspired by the Renaissance (the retable of St John). Later, at the end of the 17th century and in the 18th century during restoration works, Baroque elements were sometimes added or used to rearrange some altars (the retable of the Nativity).

St Jacob's church also includes medieval mural paintings, including an allegorical cycle of the seven Christian virtues.

The Town Hall was originally built in the 14th century, alongside St Jacob's Church. It was restored and rebuilt at the start of the 17th century following fires, and it was then restored in a neo-Renaissance style at the end of the 19th century. Today it is adjacent to the Renaissance belfry.

Also located in the central space, the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession is a rectangular building with a central dome. It was constructed in the classical style between 1823 and 1837.

The old houses of the old town, of which more than 600 survive, contribute to its urban, architectural, and historical value. There are several streets of burgher houses, each of which incorporates its own structural and decorative solutions. The plots are regular in size, lending a homogeneous urban style to Levoča which transcends individual diversity. The burgher houses are representative of the prosperity of the town during the Renaissance and the modern period in Europe, as a result of trade, craft activities, and the agricultural market. These economic activities have given a structure to the housing in its functional forms and in the layout of the streets, which are wide enough to allow access by car. The facades continue to bear witness to these trades and craft activities in their dimensions and the disposition of openings, the frontage alignments, and the presence of arcades. The basic plan has been in place from the origins of the town, and was designed to meet the different requirements of commercial activities, storage in vast cellars or upper floors, and the residential function. The building of the town and its embellishment continued during the Renaissance. Many burgher houses were rebuilt following fires or because extensions were required, and stone decisively replaced wood. One series of facades giving out on to the central space is exceptional.

The medieval town was certainly fortified at the end of the 13th century, and the defences were completed at the start of the 14th century. The oldest battlements are similar to those of the castle of Spišský Hrad, which was built at this period. Various modifications were then made to the surrounding wall, and complementary structures were added, reflecting the evolution of military technology, particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries. Today, 80% of the wall has been conserved; the missing part is the result of the construction of barracks at the end of the 19th century. The wall includes the following structures: the Košická Gate, the Bastion or Powder House, the Pol'ská Gate, and the Menhardská Gate.

The Gothic Church of Gymnaziálny was built at the start of the 14th century next to the Pol'ská Gate. Its interior was renovated in the Baroque style during the Counter-Reformation period.

The Church of the Holy Spirit was built next to the Košická Gate during the second half of the 18th century. It occupies the site of the former medieval church of the Franciscan convent, destroyed by a fire.

Extension

Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments form one of the most extensive groups of 13th and 14th century military, political, and religious buildings in Eastern Europe, and its Romanesque and Gothic architecture has remained remarkably intact. The inscribed property comprises the castle of Spišský Hrad, the associated religious foundation of Spišská Kapitula, and their urban

and rural outbuildings in the town of Spišské Podhradie and the village of Žehra.

History and development

The site was an important military training ground during the Great Moravian period (9th century). The remains of various built structures in the present town indicate the presence of a community in the 11th and 12th centuries.

The development of the town of Levoča was linked with an early German colonisation, which increased considerably in the mid-13th century following the Mongol devastations of 1241. The town is mentioned for the first time in a document of 1249 for its frontier role.

A privilege was granted to the Saxons of the Spiš region by the King of Hungary, Stephen V, in 1271. Spiš and Levoča were the main centres of the Saxon presence; Levoča became the administrative capital by the Law of 1271 (*Communitas Saxonum de Scepus*). Since it was raised to the status of a Free City, all its inhabitants, whether Saxons or not, were given important undertakings: individual freedom, the right to freely exploit the land and the subsoil, personal property rights, etc. They also had the right to govern themselves. The Charter does not mention the right to fortify, but the construction of fortifications is attested by a document of 1319.

A second law, that of 1380 (*Zipser Willkür*), confirmed these prerogatives and extended them, especially with regard to religion. In exchange, attachment to the Kingdom of Hungary was reasserted and the duties and taxes due to the sovereign were revised.

A 'Union of the twenty-four towns of Spiš' was created in the 14th century, forming a province of the Kingdom; however, the capital, Levoča, did not form part of that union but retained the status of an independent Royal town. At this period, it developed a rational urban planning layout inside the fortifications (see *Description*).

A pilgrimage developed at the start of the 14th century, between the town and the Mariánska Chapel, located on a nearby hill overlooking the town. The pilgrimage has taken place regularly up to the present day.

Located on a major inter-regional route between Poland, Silesia, Moravia, and Hungary, the region developed and prospered. Levoča became an important centre of trade at the end of the Middle Ages, a role that was facilitated by its Free City status, its rational town planning layout, and the presence inside its walls of numerous merchants and craftsmen. The Charter of 1321 conferred on the town a very advantageous bonded entrepôt status which enabled it to play the role of a staging town for European trade. Regular trade was carried out with Cracow, Wrocław, Debrecen, and more distantly with the Germanic territories, Austria, and the Balkans.

Guilds of craftsmen were present from the Middle Ages onwards, and there were more than thirty such guilds in the Renaissance period. Its tailors, tinsmiths, masons, stone masons, and button makers were highly reputed and participated in national and international trade.

In 1412, part of the province of Spiš was ceded to Poland, and Levoča lost a significant part of its administrative and legal role at the head of a district reduced to eleven towns. At the end of the 15th century Levoča lost its position as

regional capital, which returned to the Castle of Spišský Hrad; however the town retained its special status and was directly dependent on the King of Hungary. The Charters that he granted in 1419 and 1492 exempted the town's merchants from commercial duties and from toll charges throughout the Kingdom. Levoča remained an important town for trade, a staging post between different regions and cultures. The great merchant dynasties, such as the Thurzos and the Rholls, were present in Europe. Heavily involved in the mines of Slovakia, the Thurzos had at the end of the 15th century an agreement with the Fuggers of Augsburg for the control of copper in the Kingdom of Hungary. Conversely, several major Polish, Silesian, and Austrian trading houses had agencies in Levoča. The town was also the venue for large merchant fairs.

The 15th and 16th centuries were a period of reinforcement of the town's defensive system and of closer packing for its urban planning scheme, with the construction of many stone houses. The cadastral system made it compulsory to follow urban frontage lines and dimensions for the facades. The architectural elements of the Renaissance then took effect in the new buildings and in the many renovations, as the town suffered fires in 1550, 1561, and 1599. The reconstruction of the Town Hall and the creation of arcaded streets are representative of this period.

Bolstered by its economic and cultural power, and boasting renovated urban fortifications and a town planning scheme of high quality, Levoča continued to grow. It attracted in particular the nobles and religious institutions in charge of the administration of the District of Spiš, which in practice regained a proportion of its regional institutional power.

During the Renaissance in Central and Eastern Europe, Levoča played an important regional cultural role, particularly through a highly regarded municipal school in the early 15th century. Its many pupils went on to study at various European universities, particularly at Cracow. A library was built in 1517, a bookshop opened in 1557, and a printing house, the first in Slovakia, in 1625

After the Counter-Reformation, Levoča simultaneously had a high school run by the Evangelicals and a Roman Catholic *gymnasium*. In the 16th century Levoča was the birthplace of Jan Henckel, a humanist of European renown; it was also home to other cultural and scientific luminaries; a pharmacy was established there. Several notable musicians were born or resided there, with particular connections with the Evangelical Church.

Levoča was a leading Central and East European centre for sculpture and painting which flourished in the Late Gothic period. Many artists converged on the rich merchant city. The apogee of this movement is represented by the works of Master Paul. Initially he made a series of altars for St Jacob's parish church (see Description); from 1530 onwards, he established a sculpture workshop at Levoča which became renowned.

Artistic traditions, particularly painting and sculpture, were maintained in the town in the 17th and 18th centuries. Levoča became a centre for Baroque art in Central Europe, its products being widely distributed in Slovakia and Hungary. The town was a centre for foreign artists from Sweden, Poland, and Bohemia, whilst its own artists were sent to St Petersburg and Vienna.

The town's commercial, cultural, and artistic activities continued in the 18th and 19th centuries. It had a regional

scientific society, and a theatre opened its doors in 1827. However, several periods of economic stagnation caused a decline in the town's commercial position. It remained untouched by the Industrial Revolution at the end of the 19th century because it was not served by a railway. It then went into rapid decline, and this was not checked by its return to the role of regional capital of the Spiš Region in 1922, following the creation of Czechoslovakia.

From an urban planning viewpoint, the 18th century was notable for religious restorations in the Baroque style, while the fortification system suffered decay. At the start of the 19th century various public building works were undertaken: the Evangelical Church and the District Hall followed by the reconstruction of the bell tower of the parish church. Work was also carried out in the town: cobblestones were laid in the streets and public lighting was installed. Part of the fortifications was destroyed and replaced by barracks at the end of the century. In 1911, the Gymnazialny Church was rebuilt in the Art Nouveau style.

Interior restoration work was undertaken in the early 1950s on St Jacob's Church, on the works of Master Paul in particular. They were carried out by the Kotrba family group of craftsmen who specialised in painting, stone and wood sculpture, polychromy, and gilding, and the family continued to monitor this work for several decades.

Other renovation work was, however, necessary – in 1989 on the St Nicholas altar and in 2003–2004 on the Nativity altar.

Levoča and the works of Master Paul in Spiš values

The creation of the town of Levoča illustrates an important moment in the history of migrations and colonisations within medieval Europe. The town subsequently developed regularly and harmoniously as a Free City with Royal status.

With its well conserved urban buildings, which were from the first dedicated to craft and trade activities, Levoča complements the heritage properties resulting from Saxon colonisation that are already inscribed on the World Heritage List, i.e. Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments (see Description).

Levoča constitutes an important example of European urban planning at the end of the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, at the meeting point between Central and Eastern Europe. Its many facades, its monuments, its fortifications, and its overall urban skyline bear witness to this today, in a well preserved environment.

The works of sculpture and painting, particularly the large altarpieces and the polychromatic wooden statues of St Jacob's church, mark the cultural apogee of Levoča, in the decorative and spiritual flowering of the Late Gothic period (first half of the 16th century).

3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY, AND AUTHENTICITY

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The city of Levoča helps to strengthen the integrity of the property already inscribed on the World Heritage List, Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments, one of the most extensive groups of 13th and 14th century military,

political, and religious buildings in Eastern Europe, the Romanesque and Gothic architecture of which has remained remarkably intact. Levoča adds to this regional group of buildings, originally linked to Saxon colonisation, the dimension of a Free City, with Royal status, with commercial and craft activities.

The town plan of Levoča represents an ensemble of great integrity, which is clearly visible in the street network of today. This plan illustrates the late medieval conception of rational town planning for the purpose of craft and trade activities. It was completed during the Renaissance, in the form of a coherent and homogeneous group of public and private buildings which is well preserved today. Several series of burgher house facades that well illustrate the property's architectural integrity are situated around the central space and along several of the main streets of the old town. Occasional burgher houses that are inadequately or badly maintained adversely affect the overall expression of architectural and urban integrity.

The city wall is preserved over about 80% of its original length. About 40% survives in its complete original form, and three of the four gates still exist today.

When viewed from the exterior, especially from the Košice and Spišská Nová Ves roads, the urban landscape of the historic town is quite close to what it was around 1500.

The public and religious buildings of the central space, the key point around which the urban plan is laid out, have conserved their original functions.

The interior architectural ensemble of St Jacob's Church and the retables of the many altars, which are typical of the polychromatic wooden art of the Late Gothic period, have not undergone any major or irreversible alterations, apart from some Baroque reworkings.

ICOMOS considers the integrity of the property to be satisfactory, but the poor state of maintenance of a certain number of buildings somewhat limits its impact.

Authenticity

The urban ensemble, in its plan and in its buildings, has a good degree of authenticity. Authenticity should be judged over a relatively long history involving various periods and various developments, in terms of both military architecture and public and private buildings.

The military constructions have undergone restoration on various occasions, but these were only partial (see History). Individually, the religious buildings display good authenticity, and they correspond stylistically with the periods of their construction. For the Town Hall, which was rebuilt after fires, the stylistic composition is mixed, recalling its origins while at the same time lending it a specific syncretic personality.

A large proportion of the burgher houses, about 50% of the total built structure, have retained gables which correspond to the original styles, generally from the Renaissance, and with a good level of detail (openings, decorative features, respect for facade treatments and colours). It is, however, difficult to assert that their original individual forms are known, in view of the number of houses involved and the repeated maintenance interventions that they have undergone in many cases.

The polychromatic wooden features in St Jacob's Church by Master Paul are authentic.

ICOMOS considers that the degree of authenticity of the property nominated as an extension is satisfactory. Special attention should, however, be given to the quality of the maintenance and restoration work on the private buildings.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met.

Comparative analysis

The initial nomination dossier for Spišský Hrad (1993) did not include a comparative analysis properly speaking, and Levoča is therefore not mentioned in it. The ICOMOS evaluation at that time stated with regard to the comparative analysis that there 'is no group of properties of this type in Central Europe or in Eastern Europe with which the overall value can be compared.'

The comparative analysis for the nomination for extension locates the fortified urban centre of Levoča in its relationship with historical and heritage elements of the region of Spiš. The Free City, with Royal status, dedicated to trade and craft activities, is complementary to a property which is already inscribed, the Castle of Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments. It is a regional ensemble with the same colonial origin and the same history (see *History and development*), of which Levoča illustrates the economic and cultural dimension, from the Late Middle Ages to the beginning of the contemporary period.

The medieval urban plan and the private, civil, and religious buildings are, in the view of the State Party, comparable with other properties already inscribed on the World Heritage List, both in Slovakia (Historic town of Banská Štiavnica and the technical monuments in its vicinity (1993, criteria (iv), (v)), Bardejov Town conservation reserve (2000, criteria (iii), (iv)), and elsewhere in Europe (eleven listed urban sites are inscribed in the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, Austria, France, Switzerland, and Spain). The State Party focuses on the remarkable completeness of the administrative, economic, cultural, military, and religious functions brought together in Levoča, and the dimensions and the quality of preservation of its historic centre, largely as a result of its relative economic decline from the end of the 19th century onwards.

The works of Master Paul bear important witness to European sculpture and polychromatic art, in the Late Gothic style. They constitute a remarkable group at St Jacob's Church.

ICOMOS considers the comparative study to demonstrate that Levoča constitutes a group of urban buildings which complement the inscribed property of Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments, adding the dimension of urban planning dedicated to craft and trade activities. It is different in particular from the town of Spišské Podhradie because of its status as a Free City, governed by Royal Charters. Levoča and the works of Master Paul thus strengthen the expression of the outstanding universal value of Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments.

Following the suggestion by ICOMOS in its letter dated 15 December 2008 and pursuant to the object of the World Heritage Convention covering immovable properties, the State Party has accepted to change the initial name of the

property including its extension to: 'Levoča, Spišský Hrad and the associated cultural monuments.'

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of Levoča for the World Heritage List as an extension of the site of Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments.

Justification of the Outstanding Universal Value

The property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property, extending the already recognised universal value of Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments, for the following reasons:

- The town of Levoča was created and fortified as a free Royal town, whereas the nearby contemporary town of Spišské Podhradie was dependent on the Castle of Spišský Hrad.
- Levoča illustrates, by its medieval urban plan and by the completeness of its public and private buildings, trading and craft functions on the territory of Spiš, at the meeting point of important European trade routes.
- Levoča was over a long period an important military, political and administrative centre, as well as the capital of the Saxons of the Spiš region.
- Levoča testifies to the existence of a cultural, artistic, and educational centre over a long time span, at a meeting point between Central Europe and Eastern Europe. It is in particular the site of the polychromatic wooden masterpieces of Master Paul, which are characteristic of the Late Gothic. It is also the destination of an ancient pilgrimage route which is still in use.

Justification for inscription of the original nomination

The castle of Spišský Hrad and the associated sites of Spišské Podhradie, Spišská Kapitula, and Žehra constitute a remarkable ensemble of military, political, and religious elements of a type that was common in medieval Europe but of which almost none have survived in so complete and unaltered a state.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The extension is proposed on the basis of the same criterion as that for which Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments was inscribed: criterion (iv).

Criterion iv: be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Spišský Hrad and the associated cultural monuments of Spišské Podhradie, Spišska Kapitula, and Zehra constitute a remarkably well preserved and authentic ensemble, illustrating medieval human settlement in Central Europe primarily in its military, political, and religious functions.

By virtue of its identical origin, Levoča strengthens the significance and the values of Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments. The town demonstrates the setting up of a free, stable, and prosperous urban community, in Central Europe after the end of the Middle Ages. It

includes in particular a medieval urban plan dedicated to trade and craft activities, with a very comprehensive set of military, civil, religious, and private buildings from the end of the Middle Ages, from the Renaissance, and from the Baroque period. The town also displays in St Jacob's Church the polychromatic wooden works of art of Master Paul, which are characteristic of Late Gothic art. Lastly, it is remarkable for the authenticity of its urban landscape as viewed from outside the town.

ICOMOS considers that the points highlighted by the State Party in favour of criterion (iv) are satisfactory, and have indeed been demonstrated for the town of Levoča, as an extension of the outstanding universal value already recognised for Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

ICOMOS considers that the extension nominated meets criterion (iv) and that the Outstanding Universal Value has been demonstrated.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

Development pressures

Urban traffic is today the main threat to the property, giving rise to danger and pollution which detract from the expression of its value for visitors. Traffic makes access to the historic centre difficult at certain periods. This issue also affects the environs of the historic town (the immediate buffer zone).

There is no significant pressure from urban development, either on the property or on its buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers that the road and urban transport reorganisation plan is an important dimension of the commitments relating to the management of the property. The question of car parking in the area near the historic town must also be dealt with.

Tourism pressures

Tourism generates, and will increasingly generate, pressure from urban traffic and the parking of private vehicles and of buses, since Levoča is one of the Slovakian towns with the highest number of visitors, particularly for St Jacob's Church. The question becomes crucial in summer and when exceptional events are held, such as the pilgrimage and the commercial and craft fairs in the historic centre. Outside the summer tourist season the historic town tends to become a centre for congresses, cultural events, and meetings. The town is also a residential resort for winter sports because of its geographical location.

The polychromatic wooden works of Master Paul are extremely fragile and could be affected by a change in the atmosphere of the church because of excessive numbers of visitors.

ICOMOS considers that specific tourism pressures reinforce the need for a traffic plan in the historic town and its environs. The plan must in particular include the definition of pedestrian zones, the question of parking, and basic facilities for visitors.

ICOMOS considers that an analysis of tourism infrastructures and the introduction of specific directives to control future tourism development and recommended good practices for private initiatives in this field are necessary (rehabilitation of old buildings in the nominated property, architectural and town planning rules in the buffer zone, etc).

ICOMOS considers it necessary to give consideration to potential changes to the atmosphere in St Jacob's Church resulting from excessive numbers of visitors, as this could cause a deterioration in the polychromatic wooden works of Master Paul that would be difficult to reverse.

Environmental pressures

The sources of local air pollution are mainly linked to municipal heating. Its effects are, however, limited as natural gas is predominantly used for this purpose.

Levoča is not an industrial centre. The management of urban waste is carried out by a municipal department.

ICOMOS considers that environmental pressures at present are at a low level. The quality of the environment must, however, remain a matter of concern for the authorities, and particularly changes in solid-waste collection and processing, in terms of how the value of the property is expressed.

Natural disasters and impact of climate change

A document analysing natural and environmental risks for the district of Levoča was produced in 1998, for the purposes of civil protection. In particular it defines intervention priorities in the event of an exceptional accident. Only St Jacob's church is currently included in the first category.

The main dangers examined, and the measures taken, are:

- the location of the hydrocarbon reserves and their removal from the historic centre;
- a risk of flooding, landslides, or rock fall, which is considered to be low;
- there is a possibility of a tornado with strong wind effects at Levoča, because of the geography of the valley. Measures to strengthen roofs are recommended; these are also intended to deal with exceptional snowfall;
- there is a fire risk at Levoča, as fire may spread from the nearby forests, or as a result of negligence or accidents inside the town. A series of preventive measures is in place, together with means of intervention (hydrants, extinguishers). An emergency intervention service is in place at all times.

The Regional Civil Protection and Fire Service Directorate is based in the town.

ICOMOS considers that, in connection with the municipal fire-fighting plan, a detailed intervention scheme should be specified for the historic town, covering infrastructures, means of intervention, and the training of fire-fighting personnel.

ICOMOS considers that the main threat is tourism pressure, which is insufficiently controlled in terms of transport and urban planning. Detailed fire protection is also needed.

5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION, AND MANAGEMENT

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The property has an area of 52.22ha. In 2006 it had a population of 2165 people.

The buffer zone entirely surrounds the property. Its area is 670ha and its population in 2006 was 12,327 inhabitants.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the property and the buffer zone are adequate.

Ownership

The property consists of 687 items of property or land; 591 (86%) belong to private individuals, 81 (12%) to public authorities, and 15 (2%) to religious authorities.

Protection

Legal protection

A protected zone for the historic town of Levoča was first established in 1950. A governmental decree in 2001 (No. 596) specified the status and limits of this Urban Monuments Reserve.

In this zone, 305 individual property items have been declared National Cultural Monuments (situation in December 2006), i.e. 44% of the buildings. They have been inscribed on the Central Register of Historic Monuments and Sites. The buffer zone contains nine such items. Monumental and furniture elements have also been inscribed.

The main law providing legal protection for the property nominated for extension is Act No. 49/2002 *On the Protection of Historic Monuments and Sites in the Republic of Slovakia*, which governs interventions by the national authorities and defines the framework for regional and local actions; it is completed by the Edict of the Culture Ministry No. 6/2002.

The other laws which apply to the protection of the property, including their amendments and application decrees, consist mainly of the Acts on:

- Administrative Procedures (71/1967),
- Urban Planning and the Building Code (50/1976),
- Municipalities and Their Properties (369/1990 and 138/1991),
- Archives (395/2002),
- Landscape and Nature Protection (543/2002),
- the application of the status of towns to Levoča (Municipal Order 108/2003), particularly the provisions relating to the management of historic buildings, urban planning, and relations with private owners and citizens' associations.
- Transfers of Ownership from the Republic of Slovakia to the Municipalities (172/2004),
- the Evaluation of Impact on the Environment (24/2006).

In addition to the application of town status, a set of municipal orders governs the property and land components of the nominated property:

- Protection of Former Military Properties (32/1996),
- Administration and Management of the Properties of the Municipality of Levoča (seven orders between 2003 and 2005),
- Municipal Plan (138/2005).

Traditional protection

This is considered here to relate to the behaviour of private owners in the management of their properties on the basis of collective ownership criteria, and more widely to the individual behaviour of inhabitants in their relations to the built structure and its urban environment.

Effectiveness of protection measures

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place, and particularly the system for authorising renovation projects and the architectural control of new buildings, is satisfactory.

The State Party and the local authorities seem to have great confidence in the legislative and regulatory system, while acknowledging some difficulties in convincing inhabitants and private owners of the importance of having a coordinated and responsible approach in the application of protection measures.

Buffer zone: The existing regulations, grouped together in a framework document (Buffer Zone Protection Principles) makes possible the control of urban development by means of low buildings that respect the visual integrity of the property.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate.
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Conservation

Inventories, recording, research

The state archives and the regional archives at Levoča contain many original historical manuscript documents, particularly charters and declarations of urban liberties since the mid-13th century.

There are also old maps of the region and the town scattered among various archives and libraries in Slovakia. They cover a period from the end of the 17th century to the 19th century.

The Central Register of Historic Properties and Sites for the old town of Levoča is an official document issued by the Culture Ministry (National Monuments Office). In cooperation with the local authorities, a detailed inventory and mapping of property plots is currently being completed. It constitutes a basic tool for the evaluation and implementation of architectural and urban conservation. It is to be published shortly. It will also make it possible to draw up individual datasheets for buildings and conservation indicators.

The dossier includes a brief inventory of the elements constituting the work of Master Paul at St Jacob's Church.

ICOMOS notes with satisfaction the progress made in the knowledge of the individual buildings and their mapping. It

encourages the publication of the property inventory now being completed, and strongly urges the creation of datasheets for the monitoring of individual buildings, as a database for conservation.

Present state of conservation

Public programmes were focused first on the restoration and conservation of public buildings and the central space of Levoča, and also on the works of Master Paul.

A major aid programme for the restoration of roofs (see Threats) carried out over recent years demonstrates a real determination to adopt an overall approach to the conservation of the historic town. This has permitted the bulk of the urban built structure to be rendered watertight.

The National Cultural Monuments are judged to be in a relatively good state of conservation by the State Party, following the substantial effort made in restoration and maintenance over the last few years. Today it is St Jacob's Church which requires the most substantial works.

Many changes of ownership, and the fact that a significant proportion of the old houses have been abandoned and/or remained unused (about 12%), mean that there are contrasts in the results of the conservation analysis. Substantial problems of damp in walls have, for example, been noted in the case of buildings which have not been maintained or only scantily maintained. Around thirty burgher houses require urgent intervention (about 4%). A certain number require maintenance or restoration works in the medium term. Some work on private facades is not in keeping with the historic heritage, but the State Party judges that the work concerned is reversible.

The polychromatic wooden works of Master Paul in St Jacob's Church have required substantial restoration since the 1950s (see History). They still remain fragile, however (see Threats).

Active conservation measures and maintenance

The *Let's Restore our Houses* programme is coordinated by the Regional Monuments Office, Levoča Section, and is technically and administratively managed by the District Renovation Office, located in the old town, and the establishment of the Urban Monuments Reserve of Levoča. This programme consists of encouraging the private owner to draw up a renovation project for his or her house, ensuring that authenticity is respected, and to apply for authorisation and aid. For this purpose there is a guide to the principles of restoring historic monuments and sites. It is accompanied by a charter for the maintenance and correct use of the buildings of the historic town.

Similar measures apply to the buffer zone for buildings of recognised historic value. Activity conditions are governed by the *Urban Development Plan of the Town of Levoča*.

Effectiveness of conservation measures

The general condition of the historic town and of private housing in particular, was very poor in the 1980–90 period, when the political transition took place. This seems to have been why Levoča was not included in the application of Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments for inscription on the World Heritage List in the early 1990s. Substantial efforts have been made since then, resulting in the urban ensemble regaining a satisfactory level of integrity and authenticity. However, much still remains to

be done, and the State Party is still having some difficulties in applying its preservation and conservation measures.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation situation of the polychromatic wooden works of Master Paul in St Jacob's Church must be strengthened by installing a permanent control of the atmosphere and, if necessary, ventilation measures and/or regulation of tourist flows.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation situation is satisfactory, despite some shortcomings, and that there is positive momentum in this field.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The management of the historic centre of Levoča will be integrated in the overall management process of Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments, under the authority of the Management Group for all the properties. The Group establishes short- and long-term policies within the framework of the plans and regulations in force, and it also monitors them.

The Management Group works in close liaison on the one hand with the Regional Monuments Office and its national supervisory organisation, and on the other hand with the government of the Prešov Region.

The Management Group also acts in concertation with the municipal councils of the areas where the properties are located. It includes representatives of the various individual owners inside the property.

The application of the legislative and technical measures in the management of the properties is the responsibility of the Regional Monuments Office and of the partner municipalities.

In response to the letter from ICOMOS dated 15 December 2008, the State Party provided in its reply dated 26 February 2009 details regarding the actual operation of the Management Group, at the level of the group of properties. It has been meeting since November 2007, approximately once a quarter. It involves all the municipalities, representatives of public authorities, churches, relevant non-governmental organisations, and citizens. Its activity has concerned in particular the preparation and the drafting of the management plan, ensuring the greater involvement of representatives of the regions, and the coordination of activities at each site. Cooperation is particularly active between the three municipalities concerned, Levoča, Spišské Podhradie, and Žehra, which share the expenses and material tasks. The Management Group also recently set up a working group on the implementation of the management recommendations, a permanent secretariat (located in Levoča), and an internet-based documentation and shared workspace.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

Within the regulatory framework already mentioned, a series of plans is implemented and coordinated by the Management Group all of which is now collated in the property management plan:

- the master plan of the properties incorporated in the regional master plan,
- the *Let's Restore our Houses* programme, together with the principles and recommendations for the preservation of historic towns (see Conservation),
- the development programmes of the towns in which the properties are located; for Levoča in particular, the urban transport renewal plan, the waste management plan, the economic and social development plan, and recommendations concerning activities in the buffer zone;
- the plan for the preservation of the outstanding value of the works of Master Paul in St Jacob's Church at Levoča.

Specific tourism management measures are in existence. Levoča has the Spišské Museum, which is more of an exhibition and cultural centre for the town than a museum for collections, covering the history of the site and its interpretation.

Further to the letter from ICOMOS dated 15 December 2008, the State Party provided in its reply dated 26 February 2009 details about the progress made with the management plan for the entire property. The latter is steered by the Management Group and supported by the Istituzione Nova Academy in Spišské Podhradie. The Management Group approved the management plan at its last meeting (10 February 2009). However, it has not yet been translated into either of the two working languages of the Convention and it is yet to be officially published.

ICOMOS considers that the policy concerning visitor facilities and the interpretation of the historical and cultural aspects of the property is extremely inadequate. This policy needs to be defined in an overall plan, specified for each of the elements of the property, and implemented as an element of the management plan.

Risk preparedness

ICOMOS considers that improvements should be made with regard to certain aspects of risk preparedness such as fire (See Threats).

Involvement of the local communities

Local communities are involved on the one hand through the elected representatives of municipal councils and the representatives in the Management Group, and on the other hand through specific house-restoration projects, under the programme and recommendations established for this purpose (see Conservation).

Resources, including staffing levels, expertise, and training

The Regional Monuments Office administers public funds allocated for the conservation of the properties.

The restoration and maintenance of private buildings are the responsibility of the owners. The public authorities' authorisation and advice system enables limited amounts of financial aid to be provided for private individuals. A private company also offers assistance for restoration.

Some 5% of the municipal budget is earmarked for the restoration of public buildings, in particular St Jacob's Church and the fortifications. Joint financing arrangements (region, government) are sought systematically for each

project. Since 1995 a foundation has been assisting with the conservation of St Jacob's Church.

The Office has a team of professionals in the fields of conservation and architecture, at national level. Its regional unit, and more particularly the District Renovation Office, has two art historians, two architects specialising in the restoration of ancient buildings, an urban planning specialist, and an archaeologist. Many professionals and craftsmen in the building sector and other associated trades frequently work with them.

The Chamber of Renovation Experts awards professional qualifications for the restoration of ancient monuments and works of art.

The State Archives at Levoča have a team of fifteen people.

The municipal departments have engineers and technicians who work in the fields of urban development, planning, and building maintenance.

Effectiveness of current management

ICOMOS considers that the management of the property is effective and sufficiently professional. Some points should, however, be given particular attention:

- There is a need to consolidate the funds necessary for a thorough restoration of St Jacob's Church and the conservation of its interior heritage (particularly the works of Master Paul)
- A plan for the reception of visitors and the economic development of the property needs to be drawn up.

In its reply dated 26 February 2009, the State Party provided funding guarantees for the *Let's Restore our Houses programme*.

ICOMOS considers that the management system for the property is appropriate and that the Management Group functions effectively at the level of the entire property. ICOMOS considers that the property management plan is proceeding well and that it should be published without delay. Regarding its application to the historic town of Levoča, there is a need to consolidate the funds for the conservation of St Jacob's Church and for a plan for the reception of visitors and the economic development of the property.

6. MONITORING

The built structure is monitored by the study programme of the Regional Monuments Office that is currently in progress and which has resulted so far in the precise mapping of the historic plots of the town and a publication that is in preparation. It should then enable the installation of in-depth individualised data-sheets for monitoring the conservation of each building.

ICOMOS considers that the architectural and urban monitoring is generally satisfactory. However, the monitoring of the interior of St Jacob's Church and of the works of Master Paul must be reinforced.

7. CONCLUSIONS

ICOMOS recognises the outstanding universal value of the old town of Levoča and of the works of Master Paul in Spiš, as an extension of the site of Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments.

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the extension of Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments to include Levoča and the works of Master Paul in Spiš and become Levoča, Spišský Hrad, and the associated cultural monuments, Slovakia, be approved on the basis of *criterion (iv)*.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Levoča, Spišský Hrad and its associated cultural monuments demonstrate outstanding universal value:

- The castle of Spišský Hrad, the town of Levoča, the associated sites in Spišské Podhradie, Spišská Kapitula, and Žehra constitute a remarkable group of military, urban, political, and religious elements, of a type that was relatively common in medieval Europe, but of which almost none have survived in such a complete condition with equivalent integrity.
- It is one of the most extensive groups of military, urban, and religious buildings from the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance in Eastern Europe, the Romanesque and Gothic architecture of which has remained remarkably intact in Spišský Hrad, Spišské Podhradie, Spišská Kapitula, and Žehra, together with the urban plan of Levoča.
- It is a group belonging to the same Saxon colonial settlement in the Middle Ages, of which it illustrates the material and cultural successes. It testifies to its role as a political, religious, and cultural centre of the first order over a long time-span in Eastern Europe.

Criterion (iv): Levoča, Spišský Hrad and the associated cultural monuments of Spišské Podhradie, Spišska Kapitula, and Zehra, extended to Levoča and the works of Master Paul in Spiš, constitute an outstanding example of a remarkably well preserved and authentic group of buildings which is characteristic of medieval settlement in Eastern Europe, in its military, political, religious, mercantile, and cultural functions.

The integrity and the authenticity of the property nominated for extension are acceptable.

The protection of the property and the management plan and its practical organisation are adequate. However, they need to be strengthened and improved in certain respects and the management plan needs to be published.

ICOMOS recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- Publishing the management plan for the whole of the property and providing a copy in one of the two working languages of the Convention as soon as it is available.

ICOMOS further recommends as regards Levoča that:

- Special attention should be paid to monitoring the atmosphere in St Jacob's Church, because of the fragile state of conservation of the polychromatic wooden works of Master Paul, and if necessary to providing ventilation and regulating visits;
- Consolidation of financial resources is needed for the works required to renovate and maintain St Jacob's Church;
- The traffic and transport plan should be strengthened, in order to ensure better expression of the outstanding universal value of the property and improved conditions for visitors;
- The tourist accommodation inside the property and the buffer zone should be analysed, and that specific directives should be considered to control its development and recommend rules of good practice;
- In connection with the management plan the policy for receiving visitors and for the economic development and interpretation of the property should be made more specific;
- The municipal fire-fighting plan should be strengthened by means of a detailed intervention scheme for the historic town.



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



General view of Levoča - north-east



The square



Burgher houses alignment



Altar of St Catherine - mid 15th century