



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

A. Jakšto St 4, LT-01105 Vilnius, tel: (+370 5) 266 35 39, fax: (+370 5) 266 36 63, e-mail: info@am.lt http://www.am.lt

Ms Mechtild Rössler  
Director, UNESCO World Heritage Centre

20-11-2017 No. (12-6)-D8- 7716

CC:  
Permanent Representation of the Republic of  
Lithuania to the UNESCO

World Heritage Centre  
UNESCO  
7, Place de Fontenoy  
75352 Paris 07 CEDEX 07  
France

**REGARDING THE PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE STATE PARTY –  
LITHUANIA**

Dear Ms Mechtild Rössler,

We enclose herewith the Progress Report on the implementation of the World Heritage Committee's Decision 40 COM 7B.53 and agree to make a full report available for public access and to be uploaded on the official website.

Please, accept the assurance of my highest consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Martynas Norbutas  
Vice-minister

**Progress Report from the State Party – Lithuania to the World Heritage Centre on the implementation of the World Heritage Committee’s Decision 40 COM 7B.53**

**2017**

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

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

1. Executive Summary of the report

Responding to the World Heritage Committee’s Decision 40 COM 7B.53, Lithuania would like to ensure that no final decision regarding the development of a deep sea port and/or a deep sea outer port at Klaipėda (the external port) will be made until all required documents have been drawn up and the World Heritage Centre informed.

Regarding deepening of the navigation canal and reconstruction of the port gate, preparatory works and scientific research necessary for Environmental Impact Assessment of deepening of inner navigation canal of Klaipėda Port up to the depth of 17,0 m, deepening of the external navigation canal of Klaipėda Port up to the depth of 17,5 m and reconstruction of hydraulic structures that form the port entry gate are currently performed. It is forecasted that the process of Environmental Impact Assessment will be completed at the end of 2018.

The establishment of the regulations of Klaipėda Port area activities and the main trends of Klaipėda Port development for 15 years prospective period will be set out in the General Plan of Klaipėda Port. It is planned that the General Plan will be approved at the beginning of 2018.

Regarding a deep sea outer port at Klaipėda (the external port), no final solutions associated with construction of the external port have been accepted. The parameters and a planned position of structures forming a complex of the external port have not been specified yet.

Lithuania wishes to reconfirm that there is no any proposal for the construction of the suspension bridge. 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.

It should be noted that at state level, responsible authorities ensure integrated management of the Curonian Spit. Integration of sectoral policies is ensured through complex territorial planning. The potential impact on the property of projects is assessed prior to their development, giving one of the major priorities to environment protection. Each project is carefully treated from the environmental perspective and discussed with stakeholders, including the public, before decision on investment be made. It is our strategic goal and principle.

2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

1. In paragraph 6 of the Decision 40 COM 7B.53 regarding the development of a deep sea port and/or a deep sea outer port at Klaipėda.

Lithuania provides official information about the main Klaipėda Port development plans and project documents under the preparation.

1.1. Regarding the deepening of the navigation canal and a reconstruction of Klaipėda Port gate.

Preparatory works and scientific research necessary for Environmental Impact Assessment (hereinafter- EIA) of deepening of the inner navigation canal of Klaipėda Port up to the depth of 17.0 m; deepening of the external navigation canal of Klaipėda Port up to the depth of 17.5 m and reconstruction of hydraulic structures that form the port entry gate are currently performed. The limits of deepening of the inner and external navigation canal of the Port and the stages of implementation, technical parameters and a planned position of hydraulic structures that form the Port entry gate, and a type, parameters and a planned position of environmental preventive measures required for implementation of these development projects will be determined during EIA. An assessment of impact of implementation of the Port development projects on valuable properties of cultural heritage objects, including Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park (hereinafter –the KNNP), will be performed during the process of EIA. The services of EIA are performed by international company with many years of experience in the field of execution of such services. It is forecasted that the process of EIA will be completed at the end of 2018.

1.2. Regarding the General Plan of Klaipėda Port territory (land, inner water area, external harbour and related infrastructure) (hereinafter – the General Plan of KSS).

The purpose of preparation of this territorial planning document is to establish the Regulations of the Seaport area activities and the main trends of Klaipėda Port development for a prospective period of 15 years. It is planned that the General Plan of KSS will be approved at the beginning of 2018. No final decisions, connected with essential Klaipėda Port development projects, which might effect the Outstanding Universal Value of the Curonian Spit, will not be taken by approving the General Plan. All necessary evaluation procedures according to the national legislation will take place in due course.

1.3. Regarding a deep sea outer port at Klaipėda/an external port (hereinafter – the external port).

Please be informed that no final solutions associated with construction of the external port at Klaipėda have been accepted. The parameters and a planned position of structures forming a complex of the external port have not been specified currently. It should be noted that the external port does not fall into the territory of the KNNP. Please also be informed that the Decision 40 COM/7B.53 that was adopted during the 40th session of the World Heritage Committee, on the basis of which all documents of assessment of an impact of implementation of the external port on cultural heritage values will be submitted to the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, will be executed prior to acceptance of the final decisions related to approval of the documents of implementation of the external port.

2. In paragraph 7 of the Decision 40 COM 7B.53 regarding the Management Plan for the entire property.

The Curonian Spit was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2000 as a cultural landscape and a transboundary site situated in both - the Republic of Lithuania and the Russian Federation. Following para 108 of the Operational Guidelines of the Convention, an appropriate management plan should be devised for each nominated property specifying how the Outstanding Universal Value of the property should be preserved.

Currently, considering different legal systems, the institutions of the Republic of Lithuania and the Russian Federation are deliberating the possibility of developing two separate but similar in a content and in measures interrelated strategic plans, in which the management of the Curonian Spit, the actions for the preservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and responsible institutions are defined as well as means of information exchange and other relevant issues are provided. The Draft of the Management Plan for the Lithuanian part of the property has been prepared in a view of the decisions and recommendations of the World Heritage Committee, the recommendations of the Advisory Mission carried out in 2013 and the recommendations of the Reactive Monitoring Mission carried out in 2015 and bears in mind challenges and threats that the Curonian Spit have been facing in the last decade.

In February 2016 in Neringa municipality, the Ministry of Environment organized public discussions dedicated to the Curonian Spit's future vision. The expected vision was developed in the light of consultations with the representatives of Neringa and Klaipėda municipalities, private stakeholders and local community. All stakeholders had expectations that during the upcoming 10 years, the Curonian Spit should become an example as an internationally protected area in the Baltic Sea region, where the inherited historical residential environment and way of life is cherished, local communities are actively involved in the governance, etc. Another task of the meeting was to invite local people and institutions to participate in preparation of the Management plan. Participants of the meetings were introduced to the draft of the Management plan and had an opportunity to express their visions, concerns and participate in the formulation of solutions.

It should be noted that at state level, responsible authorities ensure integrated management of the Curonian Spit. Integration of sectoral policies is ensured through complex territorial planning. The potential impact on the property of projects is assessed prior to their development, giving one of the major priorities to environment protection. Public participation in decision-making at an early stage of policy formulation and project assessment is ensured through the process of strategic environmental assessment and EIA. Public participation during the whole territorial planning process is also ensured by the Law on Territorial Planning and by the Regulations on Public information, Consultation and Participation on Decision-Making in Territorial Planning.

Additionally, in the field of nature and culture heritage protection, the KNNP administration continues active cooperation and sharing information on the key issues, ongoing projects and new publications with Kurshskaja Kosa (Curonian Spit) National Park administration (Russian Federation).

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

Currently, the above mentioned issues are not identified.

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, 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.

In 07-06-2017, Mayor of Neringa municipality informed the UNESCO World Heritage Centre on a planned new construction of the Sea Therapy Centre in the UNESCO World Heritage area – the Curonian Spit. Lithuania would like to underline that the above mentioned project has been discussed at municipal level only. The project of the Sea Therapy Centre wasn't approved at national level.

The Municipality of Neringa provided information about the near future plans to start designing works for the small boats and yacht harbor in Juodkrantė. A High-voltage line cabling project has been planned as well.

According to the paragraph 5 of the Decision 40 COM 7B.53 regarding the construction of a suspension bridge from Klaipėda across the lagoon to the Spit, Lithuania wishes to reconfirm that there is no any proposal for the construction of the suspension bridge. Lithuania would like to underline that the discussion on the suspension bridge was a public dispute in mass media only, thus no decisions on the construction of the suspension bridge were taken and no actions needed to be stopped in this respect. 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.

We would like to assure you that 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 decision on investment be made. It is our strategic goal and principle.

#### Other relevant information:

The KNNP administration, as one of the governing bodies in Lithuanian part of the Curonian Spit, has been implementing some national and international projects related to protection and maintenance of natural and cultural heritage.

In 2015-2017, the KNNP administration together with partners implemented project "Restoration and preservation of biodiversity important open habitats in Natura 2000 sites" (EEA grants). The project was dedicated towards restoration and sustainable management of open type sandy habitats. The main works included deforestation of overgrown meadows and grey dunes, introduction of sheep grazing in the area, involvement of local communities towards project goals via eco-friendly beekeeping and herbalism practices. All activities were implemented according to the KNNP Management Plan (2012) and the Forest Management Plan for 2013-2020 (2013). After the completion of the Project, the main challenge for the KNNP administration and Kretinga State Forest Enterprise is the maintenance of good conditions of open habitats and support activities for local beekeepers and farmers. Because of lifestyle changes and dominance of tourism service as a main activity of locals, the cattle grazing has completely disappeared from the Curonian Spit. A sustainable cattle grazing is very important aspect to maintain good conditions of Natura 2000 habitats.

Since November 2016, the KNNP administration has started implementing EU Structural Funds project "Maintenance of the Baltic Sea Coast (coastal fore-dune ridge) of the Curonian Spit". The project focuses on the implementation of special coastal protection measures determined in Coastal Zone Management Programme for 2014-2020 (2014). The coastal fore-dune ridge is one of Outstanding Universal Value elements as well as a very important coastal protection unit and a very valuable Natura 2000 habitats area. The works that will be carried out during the implementation of

the project will continue the tradition of more than 100 years of coastal fore-dune formation and maintenance. Only natural materials such as brushwood, wood, clay or gravel will be used for recreation infrastructure during the implementation of the project. It is expected that the project will be completed in 2021.

The KNNP administration in cooperation with Klaipėda University has launched the project “The use of active barriers for the nutrient removal and local water quality improvement in Baltic lagoons – LiveLagoons”. In order to decrease pollution discharges to the Baltic Sea, innovative small-scale green technologies to trap and remove nutrients from the Curonian Lagoon beaches will be introduced during the Project.

The KNNP administration as a partner is participating in Interreg South Baltic Programme project “Development of UNESCO Natural and Cultural assets – DUNC”. The implementation of the project will be launched at the end of 2017. During the project it is expected to develop strategies, action plans and concept for three focus areas - stakeholder dialogue, product and service development and governance. The project will focus on UNESCO sites but all the results and outputs will be applicable as a model for the other sites as well.

State Service for Protected Areas under Ministry of Environment together with the KNNP administration has launched a new EU Structural Funds project “Implementation of nature conservation measures in the Natura 2000 area”. The project outlines two tasks - the protection of sandy dunes in Nagliai and Grobštas Strict Nature Reserves from overgrowing and regulation of invasive species *Rosa rugosa* population in coastal part of the National Park area. It is expected that in three years woody vegetation and shrubs will be removed in the area of 677 ha dunes and *Rosa rugosa* bushes – in the area of 18 ha. The Nature Research Centre developed management plans for invasive species such as *Robinia pseudoacacia*, *Prunus serotina*, *Sarothamnus scoparius* and *Acer negundo* and in the next few years some measures for their regulation in the KNNP area will be implemented.

State Service for Protected Areas under Ministry of Environment together with the KNNP administration are in the preparatory phase for the other EU Structural Funds projects implementation when National Park’s Nature school will be established and a new Visitor Centre will be constructed, an information infrastructure will be renewed, a historic forest park will be restored in Juodkrantė.

The construction of the Visitor centre is planned in the Amber Bay area in Juodkrantė. In 2015, Lithuania informed World Heritage Centre about initiatives to rebuild former Amber Bay Excavation Company “Stantien&Becker” buildings that were situated in Amber Bay in the second part of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Planning process will be completed at the end of this year. Historical and archaeological researches, EIA and Heritage Impact Assessment were carried out during the planning process. From Amber Company establishment till now the urbanistic structure of Amber Bay surroundings changed significantly. Taking this into account, the KNNP administration decided to scale down previous plans and convert only the warehouses and workshops left from the Soviet time era (they are State property) into National Park Visitor Centre. This will help to create possibilities for recreation and education, to represent the history of Amber Excavation Company and cultural landscape changes. All planned changes are in line with the KNNP Management Plan (2012).

Promoting intangible cultural heritage, the KNNP administration has organized several international symposiums, published a series of brochures and books. The book “Curonian Spit as the voice of conscience. A book about the values in the hands of two states”, written by philosopher A. Juozaitis. In 2004-2009, he worked as the Cultural Attaché at the Lithuanian Consulate-General

in Kaliningrad. He is well aware of Russian and Lithuanian sites of the Curonian Spit. The book was published in Lithuanian and English and widely presented in Vilnius, Klaipėda and Curonian Spit settlements.

In 2016, "Guide to the Curonian Spit National Park" was published in English and Lithuanian. The book presents the most valuable elements of nature and culture, landscape, historical facts and offer special education tasks.

In 2017, the KNNP administration together with partners implemented the project "Looking for a wonderful land. The route of cultural tourism from the Nida artists' colony to Pranas Domšaitis".

In 2016, the KNNP administration celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the National Park. The scientific conference "Curonian Spit landscape changes" was organized for this occasion. The conference addressed topical issues of the Curonian Spit landscape changes and protection, discussed the challenges arising from the implementation of nature management and forest management plans, identified the priorities of the activities and proposed solutions for emerging conflicts. The abstract of conference is available in the KNNP internet site <http://www.nerija.lt/lt/news/show/1260349268>. On the occasion of the KNNP anniversary, other events - lectures and quiz for Neringa high school pupils „Curonian Spit landscape peculiarities and changes" and photos exhibition "Between the waters and the sand" were organized.

In August 2017, Nida Art Colony of Vilnius Academy of Arts in collaboration with the KNNP administration and the Faculty of History of Vilnius University organized the summer school "Cultural Landscapes". The main objective of the Summer School was to facilitate capacity-building activities related to UNESCO World Heritage issues. The cultural landscape theory was introduced by P. Laureano, the President of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). The general principles of interpretation and communication of cultural heritage such as public understanding, conflict resolution and the visitor experience were reviewed by the international communication experts S. Cross Fahi and P. H. Phillipson. Dr. A. Vaivade from the Latvian Culture Academy presented the theory and concepts of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Vice President Cl. Arokiasamy, International Scientific Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage of ICOMOS, provided examples of international practices.

In 2017, the KNNP administration together with Nida Tourism Information Centre, in order to promote intangible heritage, organized an international folklore festival. In order to encourage local inhabitants and visitors to learn more about the Curonian Spit, the KNNP administration organizes many educational events during the year.

In 2017, the KNNP administration initiated preparation of Recommendations for preservation and restoration of gray and white dunes landscape in Nagliai and Grobštas Strict Nature Reserves and Parnidis Landscape Reserve. The main task of the programme was to identify sand dune conditions, changes, dynamics and possible scenarios and to propose specific measures for landscape preservation.

The KNNP administration continues to work with volunteers, actively involving them in restoration of open habitats and maintenance of recreational infrastructure. At the same time the KNNP administration seeks to maintain close contact with local people, local authorities and research institutions. For this purpose Joint Council of the KNNP and Scientific Advisory Board were established. Local municipalities are members of Joint Council and have an opportunity to get acquainted with the KNNP administration activities, to submit their proposals and consider any other issues. The Scientific Advisory Board provides an advice on the landscape protection and maintenance, biodiversity and cultural heritage, recreation, organization of environmental education

and publicity, spatial planning, social and economic issues. The Joint Council and the Scientific Advisory Board have their meetings a few times per year.

The administration of the Municipality of Neringa informed the Ministry of Environment about the plans, using the EU Structural Funds support, to manage the Urbo Hill in Nida with a purpose to highlight its natural and cultural values.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

State Party – Lithuania agrees the full Report to be uploaded for the public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System – <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc> .

6. Signature of the Authority

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.