

Report on the state of preservation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site

**Auschwitz Birkenau,
German Nazi concentration and extermination camp (1940-1945)
(Poland) (C-31)**

1. Executive Summary of the report

This report presents the current state of conservation of Auschwitz Birkenau, German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945) and its surroundings. It covers the period from the last report submitted to the World Heritage Centre, i.e. from November 2017 to early November 2019. The report addresses issues identified in the decision of the World Heritage Committee no. 42 COM 7B.27, i.e.:

1. The State Party was pleased to receive congratulations of the World Heritage Committee on the provision and implementation of the "Conservation Strategy for the World Heritage Site of Auschwitz Birkenau, the German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945)" and declares its continuation.
2. Preparations for the construction of the S1 expressway and the south ring road of Oświęcim have entered the next phase. In 2018, as part of the development of the Programme Concept for the construction of an express road from the Kosztowy II junction in Mysłowice to the Suchy Potok junction in Bielsko-Biała, together with the Oświęcim ring road, a heritage impact assessment (HIA) was carried out concerning the Auschwitz Birkenau World Heritage Site, in accordance with the ICOMOS guidelines of January 2011. The analyses carried out in this document of the specificity of the value of the site, the individual attributes of value and the functioning of the site in the system of protection, management and presentation show that the potential impact of the investment on the fundamental features and values of the world heritage site will be negligible, subject to effective limitation by minimizing mechanisms.
3. The 2016 "ICOMOS Technical Assessment" pays particular attention to the implementation of the strategy's guidelines, emphasizing the key role of cooperation between all stakeholders in protecting the site. The WHC/ICOMOS advisory mission should be primarily devoted to this issue, as understood by the State Party.
4. The main manager of the World Heritage property Auschwitz Birkenau, German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945) – the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim operates in accordance with the legal acts governing its existence and operation. Its main goal is to commemorate and document the extermination and martyrdom of victims of the Nazi German concentration and extermination camp. As part of this mission, the Museum

is a body responsible for the protection and conservation of parts of the area of the former Auschwitz concentration camp, on which it was built, together with all the buildings, equipment and collections. The third part of the World Heritage Site – the mass grave of inmates is located within the area and in charge of the Commune of town of Oświęcim. Auschwitz Birkenau, German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945), a World Heritage property, is located in a complex area which includes objects closely related to the history of the place, constituting an important element of the historical landscape. The "Conservation strategy for the World Heritage property", whose conservation guidelines show the direction of action in this area, is a useful document for the conservation and management of the area. Measures are also taken to protect the surroundings of the World Heritage site by "Auschwitz Birkenau Nearby Memorial Sites" Foundation, Memorial Museum of the People of the Land of Oświęcim, as well as City and Municipality of Oświęcim authorities.

5. The State Party wishes to comply with the decisions of the World Heritage Committee and has sent an official invitation to this effect for the WHC/ICOMOS advisory mission connected with the meeting of the international expert group to the World Heritage Centre. Currently, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland is conducting organizational arrangements related to determining the date and scope of the Terms of Reference of the mission.

2. Response to the decision of the World Heritage Committee

In June 2018, during the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee in Manama, Bahrain, the Committee adopted a decision on Auschwitz Birkenau (No 42 COM 7B.27).

This report presents the current state of preservation of Auschwitz Birkenau, the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp (1940-1945) and its surroundings. It includes the period from the last report submitted to the World Heritage Centre, i.e. from November 2017 to early November 2019. The responses were formulated on the basis of information received from the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (PMAB), the City of Oświęcim, the Municipality of Oświęcim, the Foundation of Memory Sites near Auschwitz Birkenau and the Memorial Museum of the People of the Land of Oświęcim and arranged in accordance with the recommendations and questions contained in the decision:

Re. 3. Conservation strategy

The State Party was pleased to receive congratulations of the World Heritage Committee on the provision and implementation of the "Conservation Strategy for the World Heritage Site of Auschwitz Birkenau, the German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945)" and declares its continuation (see point 6).

Re. 4. The position of the State Party explaining the current situation related to the planned construction of the S-1 express road and the south ring road of Oświęcim

The previous report of 2017 informed that on 30.06.2016 the Regional Director of Environmental Protection - Katowice Branch - issued a decision on the environmental conditions for the construction of the S1 express road from the Kosztowy II junction in Myslowice to the Suchy Potok junction in Bielsko-Biała according to option E, together with the ring road of Oświęcim included in this option (the environmental decision was reported in more detail in the 2016 report). Several appeals have been made against this decision to the General Directorate for Environmental Protection, which is currently pending before the appeal body. The decision on environmental conditions is therefore not yet final, and the General Director for Environmental Protection has made it immediately enforceable.

In 2018, as part of the development of the Programme Concept for the construction of an express road from the Kosztowy II junction in Myslowice to the Suchy Potok junction in Bielsko-Biała, together with the Oświęcim ring road, a heritage impact assessment (HIA) was carried out concerning the Auschwitz Birkenau World Heritage Site, in accordance with the ICOMOS guidelines of January 2011. "The Heritage Impact Assessment Report - Auschwitz Birkenau Nazi German Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945) for the investment: Construction of the S-1 expressway from the Kosztowy II junction in Myslowice to the Suchy Potok junction in Bielsko-Biała, together with the ring road in Oświęcim" constitutes appendix 1. The analyses carried out in this document of the specificity of the value of the site, the individual attributes of value and the functioning of the site in the system of protection, management and presentation show that

the potential impact of the investment on the fundamental features and values of the world heritage site will be negligible, subject to effective limitation by minimizing mechanisms. The demonstrated absence of direct conflicts with the physical form of the site and the possibility to minimize indirect effects on the substance ensure that the outstanding universal value of the site will not be endangered.

In the nearest future, the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways plans to announce a tender under the "Design and Build" system.

Re. 5. The sphere of building dialogue with authorities and local communities

The 2016 "ICOMOS Technical Assessment" largely refers to the "Conservation Strategy for the World Heritage Site" carried out by the National Heritage Board of Poland in 2013. It pays particular attention to the implementation of the strategy's guidelines, emphasizing the key role of cooperation between all stakeholders in protecting the site. The WHC/ICOMOS advisory mission should be primarily devoted to this issue, as understood by the State Party.

Bearing in mind the specific nature of the world heritage site and its particular sensitivity, the mission should address the complexities of building dialogue and understanding among all stakeholders.

Re. 6. Site management system

The main manager of the World Heritage Site Auschwitz Birkenau, the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp (1940-1945) is the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim (PMAB), which administers the former camps of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The role and purpose of the PMAB, in accordance with the legal acts regulating its existence and functioning, is to commemorate and document the extermination and martyrdom of the victims of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp. As part of this mission, PMAB is the body responsible for the protection and conservation of parts of the area of the former Auschwitz Concentration Camp, on which it was built, together with all the buildings, equipment and collections. The Museum takes care of the site in accordance with the legal regulations in force in Poland and in cooperation with the Monuments Inspector of Małopolska Region and the International Auschwitz Council. The Museum maintains correct and close relations with local authorities, representing local communities, ensuring the good of the World Heritage site in the context of its surroundings.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (Museum), the manager of the World Heritage property has been carrying out extensive conservation work in the former camps for many years, as reported in previous reports.

The project for the conservation of two prisoner brick barracks in section BI is nearing completion. In June this year, the first one was made available to visitors. In the completed complex conservation works, the Museum's conservation rules, developed in accordance with international conservation standards, and which for many years have determined the nature and manner of conservation work on the site, have been implemented in practice. The preserved brick barracks

show how the principle of protecting authenticity, treated as a superior principle in the Museum, can decide on the manner and outcome of conservation work. In the works carried out, the original substance of the monument was preserved to the maximum extent possible, and thus also the associated value of the monument. The works also showed how to protect the historical, typical for the period of the camp's functioning, aesthetics and form of the objects, to ensure the continuity of their historical, documentary and universal value and to ensure its educational impact. According to the standards developed by the Museum, the manner in which the work is carried out consists of specific phases. Particular emphasis is placed on the recognition of objects and the phase of research preceding the work. In carrying out the work, any intervention shall be limited to the minimum necessary for technical and safety reasons, focusing mainly on conservative and technical maintenance, with particular emphasis on preventive action. All activities are documented on an ongoing basis in accordance with the current standards of conservation documentation, extended in the necessary scope to include documentation prepared using various technologies, such as laser scanning, photogrammetric or film technique and 3D modelling and the use of BIM technology.

The Museum is actively involved in educational activities, taking care to constantly broaden the awareness of the historical value and cultural context of the site. The work on the opening of the seat of the International Centre for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust is nearing completion. From 2020 the Centre will operate in the building of the so-called Old Theatre, located in the immediate vicinity of the former Auschwitz I camp. The new seat will be another meeting place for educational activities using the resources and potential available to the Museum both in the field of historical research and access to new technologies as communication tools.

Another investment in the Museum, connected with the Museum's educational mission, is the creation of a new Visitor Service Centre. The process of selecting a contractor and commencing construction of the Centre has begun. If this happens, the construction of the centre will start in 2020. Its construction will allow to move the tourist services outside the World Heritage site. The architectural assumptions of the Centre's structures have been designed in such a way that their form has no impact on the reception of the site and its outstanding universal value, in line with the strategy of protecting the site.

Detailed information about the PMAB's activities is published annually in the Annual Reports.

The third component included in the World Heritage Site - the grave of 700 people murdered in the last days of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, is located within the area and under the control of the City of Oświęcim.

Auschwitz Birkenau, the German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945), a World Heritage Site, is located in a complex area which includes objects closely related to the history of the place, constituting an important element of the historical landscape. The "Conservation Strategy for the World Heritage Site", whose conservation guidelines point to the direction of action in this area, is a useful document for the conservation and management of the site (see Re. 3).

Measures are also taken to protect the surroundings of the World Heritage Site.

The "Auschwitz Birkenau Nearby Memorial Sites" Foundation, operating since 2013, aims to preserve the majority of the remains and buildings of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp complex, located outside the boundaries of the PMAB, which can still be saved, and restore their statute of historical and educational sites, thus allowing them to exist in the public space as Memorial Sites. It is a local foundation operating in Brzeszcze and Oświęcim, whose aim is to save items, objects, and artefacts associated with the former Nazi German concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz Birkenau and its sub-camps, which are currently in the hands of private individuals. It is responsible for the care of the areas of sub-camps, farms, and companies operating in the KL Auschwitz administrative system, which after the liberation of the camp became part of public or private space and remain so to this day. The Foundation strives to make them exist in the public space as Memorial Sites and to complete the image of the scale on which the death factory in KL Auschwitz operated. It also wants to broaden the knowledge about the history and system of sub-camps of Auschwitz Birkenau and pass it on to the society.

One of the buildings that was handed over to the Foundation is the building of the former camp SS Kitchen/Canteen (the original name of the building that functioned during the occupation was Kameradschaftsheim der Waffen SS KL Auschwitz). The building of the SS Kitchen/Canteen is inseparably connected with martyrdom and the prisoners of the former Nazi German concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz Birkenau. It was built with their efforts and their hands, and during its operation it was the place of their slave labour. The building is owned by the State Treasury, and in January 2017 it was handed over to the "Auschwitz Birkenau Nearby Memorial Sites" Foundation. Due to the large size of the building, the scale of the damage, as well as the large scope of work required, it is essential that the work is carried out in several stages. The non-profit foundation is undertaking numerous activities that would allow it to raise funds for the implementation of these works and restore this building to the historical and educational space.

In 2017, thanks to a subsidy obtained from the Monuments Inspector of Malopolska Region in Krakow, the necessary building documentation (building project) was prepared, which allowed for the execution of works involving the repair of the roof truss and the reconstruction of a fragment of the roof of the western wing of the SS Kitchen/Canteen. These were the priority and most urgent works to be carried out at this stage, given that in 2014, one of the trusses in the west wing roof was damaged and fell inside the building together with part of the roof, thus exposing the building to precipitation. In the next year, i.e. in 2018, thanks to a subsidy obtained from the Malopolska Voivodship Heritage Protection Officer, a construction design was prepared for the project including the "Renovation of the 'SS Küche' building, located on plots of land No: 1895/46, 1895/41, 1691/4, 2884/2 in Oświęcim at 2 Kolbego Street, Oświęcim District, Malopolska Voivodship, investment unit: 121301_1, Oświęcim – city, area: 0001 Oświęcim", thus obtaining all the necessary conservation and construction permits required by law to carry out work on the entire building of the SS Kitchen/Canteen. Also in 2018, a subsidy was obtained from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage to carry out work to dismantle and secure a part of the main hall together with the stage and the cellar under the stage. The works included the dismantling of approx. 24 metres of the longest wing of the building (the southern wing), which has a total length of about 50 metres. Another subsidy is a subsidy obtained this year (2019) from the Monuments

Inspector of Małopolska Region, which allowed for the dismantling of the front wall with another 10 m long fragment of the south wing and securing the second part of the main hall. This time, the disassembly works covered the next 10 m from the longest wing of the building, it was a continuation of the disassembly works commenced in 2018. The planned reassembly of the dismantled and preserved elements of the building, i.e. the 24 m of the longest wing of the building, will be carried out in 2021, as far as the Foundation's financial resources will allow (all the works that are being carried out and are planned to be carried out at the building must be implemented in stages to maintain the stability of the building and due to its huge cubic area, as well as the conservation recommendations).

In 2019 the Foundation managed to obtain a subsidy from the budget of the Małopolska Voivodship - from the measure Preservation of the historic monuments of Małopolska 2019 - 2nd call for the protection of a part of the building through an intervention replacement of the roof covering of a part of the roof with a surface area of 530 m². This work will be completed by the end of 2019. The planned works are to protect part of the building (part of the roof) from precipitation.

The aim of all the works undertaken by the Foundation is to preserve the material cultural heritage by carrying out appropriate conservation and construction works. The poor condition of the SS Kitchen/Canteen building requires immediate intervention and actions to secure and strengthen the building. The planned works are aimed at the protection and preservation of the largest possible original historical mass of the building, due to its exceptional historical and cognitive value, associated with martyrdom and the prisoners of the former Nazi German concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Other objects that have recently been under the Foundation's care are: the "Fünf Kartoffellagerhallenn" (potato warehouse) and the "Krautsilo" (fermentation building), built in 1943-1944. The buildings are located in the immediate vicinity of KL Birkenau in the "Judenrampe" area, about 500 m from the KL Birkenau gate. The objects are the property of the Municipality of Oświęcim, and on 22 February 2019 were handed over to the "Auschwitz-Birkenau Nearby Memorial Sites" Foundation for an indefinite period. Both buildings, like the building of the SS Kitchen/Canteen, are inseparably connected with martyrdom and the prisoners of the former Nazi German concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz Birkenau. Despite the catastrophic technical condition of both buildings, described as "emergency bad", it is worth preserving them in their original mass, regardless of the costs needed to secure, repair, rebuild and maintain them. At present, the "potato warehouse" and the "fermentation building" are in partial ruin, threatened by a building disaster. Lack of repairs and fire destroyed the structure and roof covering on a significant area. Some of the structural walls are in a catastrophic state. The remains of the roof structure and coverings remain in the current technical condition, constituting a great threat to tourists who, despite their technical condition, visit these facilities. Despite the poor technical condition of the buildings, the Foundation's objective is to restore the buildings to their original condition while maintaining as much historical mass as possible, in accordance with the opinion of the commission of constructors that was organized in the building. In the summer months of this year, thanks to the support of volunteers from Poland and abroad, the first "potato warehouse" area was cleared of rubbish.

At the beginning of this year, an application was submitted to the Monuments Inspector of Małopolska Region for documentation, technical and conservation expertise of historical buildings

located in the complex of camp buildings at KL Auschwitz STAGE A: FUNF KARTOFELLAGERHALLE – “potato warehouse” building, STAGE B: Krautsilo “fermentation building”. The subsidy has been awarded and its implementation is currently being completed. Based on the completed building design for both facilities, the Foundation will apply for a conservation permit and a building permit later this year in order to be able to meet the challenge of rebuilding both in their original state.

In view of the fact that in 2020 the Head of the Oświęcim Municipality plans to complete the construction of a road that will run directly next to the “potato warehouse” and “fermentation building”, thus redirecting and intensifying tourist traffic in the area, the repair of both facilities is a priority.

In addition, as part of its activities to date, in January 2014, the Foundation received a plot of land for 25 years free of charge from the authorities of the Brzeszcze Municipality, on which there is a historical bathhouse building and a lighthouse, which are the remains of the former Jawischowitz sub-camp of KL Auschwitz Birkenau. The objects in question remain in their original locations from the period of camp activity, which significantly influences their unique and cognitive character for the history of the Jawischowitz sub-camp. In July 2014, the authorities of the Brzeszcze Municipality handed over to the Foundation free of charge another plot of land together with the building of the former school in Bor, for a period of 25 years. In April 1942, a sub-camp Auschwitz Bor/Budy was established in this area, and in June 1942, the Women's Penal Company was established in this building. In October 1942, about ninety female prisoners, mainly French Jews, were brutally murdered in the above-mentioned building. Between 1943 and 1945, a branch of the women's concentration camp Frauenkonzentrationslager KL Auschwitz-Birkenau operated in this building. Both buildings have been initially prepared for the reception of visitors, and there are historical expositions that can already be seen. In addition, the building also became the seat of the Foundation. Both buildings are located in close proximity to the main camp, i.e. at a distance of 4 and 8 kilometres.

In its further plans, the Foundation intends to take care of other objects or remnants of the Auschwitz KL complex. All the above buildings that the Foundation takes care of constitute a material piece of evidence which reflects the scale and organization of the camp and the subordination of the entire technical infrastructure for the purpose of the extermination of the population in the occupied areas. Every effort should be made to ensure that the last material traces of the subordination of Brzezinka, Oświęcim and the surrounding areas (including, Brzeszcze, Pławy, Harmęże, Babice) to the functioning of the Auschwitz complex do not disappear and thus do not cause impoverishment and falsification of knowledge about the scale of the Nazi regime and the precisely planned extermination of occupied nations across Europe. The authenticity of the preserved structure of objects, the enormous cubic area of the buildings (SS Kitchen/Canteen or the potato warehouse), act on the imagination, becoming a silent witness of events of scientific and educational value.

Another institution recently established in the protective zones of the site is the Memorial Museum of the People of the Land of Oświęcim. The Museum is a cultural unit established by the Oświęcim District, co-managed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The building of the former food warehouse, the so-called “Lagerhaus” (historical buildings of the State Tobacco Monopoly), has been designated as the Museum's location. The object of the Museum's activity

is to present the centuries-old history of the Oświęcim Land through the prism of the fate of its inhabitants, with particular emphasis on the period of World War II and the aid they provided to the prisoners of Auschwitz Birkenau concentration camp. This task is to be carried out by adapting the "Lagerhaus" building to the needs of the Museum and by creating a permanent exhibition. Funds for this purpose were granted by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage in the form of a targeted subsidy. In October 2018, an open tender for design works was announced, which resulted in the signing of a contract with a selected company in January 2019. On 30 September 2019, an application for a building permit was submitted to the District Office in Oświęcim. After obtaining the building permit, at the beginning of 2020 it is planned to announce a public contract for construction works related to the renovation and modernization of the building. At the same time, work is in progress on the permanent exhibition's artistic design. The completion of the investment project entitled "Adaptation of the building for the needs of the Memorial Museum of the People of the Land of Oświęcim together with the construction of a permanent exhibition" is scheduled for the end of 2021.

In addition, in the area of the silence zone and the protective zone of the World Heritage Site under the jurisdiction of the City of Oświęcim, the following investments have been made in recent years to protect, commemorate, and make available the world heritage site:

- construction of the Park of Peace and Reconciliation in the area of Kamieniec Street (on the right bank of the Soła River). This park complex is connected with the planned construction of a footbridge connecting the banks of the Soła River at the level of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum;
- "Zasole" Park at Więźniów Oświęcimia and Obozowa Streets. In this park, the City of Oświęcim is currently implementing a peace project under the name "Avenue of the Trees of Memory", which involves the successive planting of trees from places around the world where humanity was particularly affected by the cruelty of war. The park is planned to be extended to include another part in the coming years;
- reconstruction of the sidewalk at Obozowa Street, located directly at the Monument of the "Common Grave of approx. 700 prisoners of the Auschwitz extermination camp murdered in the last days of the camp's operation";
- reconstruction of Orłowskiego and Obozowa Streets (investments carried out by the District with the financial participation of the City of Oświęcim).

The Municipality of Oświęcim, on the other hand, within the framework of the long-term Government Programme entitled: "The Oświęcim Strategic Government Programme - Stage V 2016-2020" implements road investments located in the immediate vicinity of the World Heritage Site, i.e.:

- construction of a road to release traffic (embranchment of Ofiar Faszyzmu Street, district road K1877) situated in the foreground of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Brzezinka. Construction works were commenced in 2018 and are in progress. The task is to be completed in 2020;
- construction of a new access road to the Judenrampe and "potato warehouse" (extension of Kombatantów Street), connecting Ofiar Faszyzmu Street with Piwniczna Street in Brzezinka. The task is to be started and completed in 2020.

Re. 7. WHC/ICOMOS advisory mission

The State Party wishes to comply with the decisions of the World Heritage Committee and has sent an official invitation to this effect for the WHC/ICOMOS advisory mission connected with the meeting of the international expert group to the World Heritage Centre. Currently, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland is conducting organizational arrangements related to determining the date and scope of the Terms of Reference of the mission.

Re. 8 Further implementation of the recommendations of the 2013 expert group

The scope and progress of the implementation of recommendations has been described in points 4-6 of the report.

3. **Other current issues related to the protection of the property, identified by the State Party that may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.**
Not identified.
4. **In accordance with the provisions of section 172 of the Operational Guidelines, please describe any potential substantial renovation works and/or construction works planned within the area of the property, the buffer zone and/or corridors or other areas which may have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Property, including the authenticity and integrity thereof.**
Not identified.
5. **Public access to the Report on the state of preservation.**
The State Party hereby consents to the publication of the full version of the report on the World Heritage Centre website.
6. **Signature of the authority**

dr hab. prof. IH PAN Magdalena Gawin

