

STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

Fertő / Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape

Transboundary property, Austria, Hungary

Inscribed on the World Heritage List under number C 772rev in 2001



November 2020

1. Executive Summary of the Report

The *Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape* is a World Heritage site with outstanding natural values and landscape diversity, which can be attributed to the encounter of different landscape formations. The determining element of the Site is Lake Fertő, which is of outstanding value as the westernmost steppe lake in Eurasia, as well as a biosphere reserve and gene bank. The groups of people who settled here and the population of diverse ethnic composition at the area, home to an extremely rich flora and fauna, have shaped the region harmoniously and in accordance with the landscape values through eight millennia.

The dynamics of the formation and changing of the Fertő landscape have always been greatly affected by human presence and the landscape-shaping effect of man. Thus, the appearance of bathing and recreational areas played a decisive role in the landscape-historical development of the Lake Fertő. While on the Austrian side of the lake there has been a balanced progress in this respect, on the Hungarian side, in like manner to recreational areas at a national level in multiple other places, obsolete infrastructure and building stock resulting from the stagnation of development after the 1980s and 1990s is prevalent. In order to dissolve the resulting landuse conflicts, the implementation of regional development programs are of paramount importance in Hungary.

The development of the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort and the realisation of the ECO-Centre planned on the Hungarian side of the Fertő are the fixing of many decades' long standing shortages of landscape-management works, with the primary objective of breathing new life into the bathing culture on the one and only Hungarian shoreline-section being directly connected to the Lake Fertő, and the rehabilitation of the area in order to make the natural fauna and values of the Site accessible, both to be achieved in a contemporary manner which is able to satisfy modern day needs in a superior way while remaining sustainable and still staying worthy of its title as World Heritage, at the same time taking into account the aspects of landscape and nature protection. In order to fully enforce all these aspects, the planning process was preceded and accompanied by careful expert work, which included an Environmental Impact Assessment of the project, a Natura 2000 Impact Assessment Documentation of the planned interventions, and also nature conservation and landscape protection assessments. Impacts on World Heritage values were assessed in a World Heritage Impact Assessment Documentation prepared in accordance with the ICOMOS Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural Heritage Properties.

However, over the past year several notifications have been received from third parties at the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, in connection with the planned development of Sopron Fertő Lake Resort, raising various concerns and objections to the Environmental Impact Assessment process, the transboundary effects of the investment, the Natura 2000 Impact Assessment Documentation, the Heritage Impact Assessment, as well as about the consultation with the Austrian party concerned and social participation.

Following consultations with the Austrian party, with the participation and approval of Austria to the procedure, in this State of Conservation Report, Hungary will present the investment and the related impact assessment documentations and supporting studies proving

the notifications are unfounded and unsubstantiated, clarifying the position of the States Parties on the claims made in the aforementioned notifications, in hopes to dispel the concerns of the World Heritage Centre about the damage made to the Outstanding Universal Value of the *Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape*. This Report, providing information on the Hungarian section of the World Heritage site, also demonstrates the commitment of the States Parties to the Convention, and to its provisions. States Parties both believe that the World Heritage sites have to be utilised, presented and developed in a sustainable manner or restored as needed, contributing to the public policy while preserving their outstanding universal and national values.

As presented in detail in this State of Conservation Report – in line with the evaluation of the World Heritage Impact Assessment documentation for the planned investment prepared in accordance with the ICOMOS Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural Heritage Properties – the impacts of the complex development of Sopron Fertő Lake Resort on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site are neutral, while at the same time it makes a paramount contribution to the maintenance and promotion of landscape and natural values.

States Parties make every effort possible in order to properly ensure - as set out in the Convention - that the developments shall not cause the decrease of the Outstanding Universal Value and its deterioration, and shall not endanger the authenticity and integrity of their properties. Furthermore States Parties ensure the access to the World Heritage values, the accessibility and entrance for visitors to the World Heritage sites. To this end, States Parties shall revise and prepare the joint new management plan for the *Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape* World Heritage site in close professional collaboration, ensuring both the more effective conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site and the compatibility of future developments with World Heritage considerations.

Based on the content of the hereby presented State of Conservation Report, States Parties trust that the World Heritage Centre's concerns will be eased about the notifications from third parties in connection with the development of the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort and the planned ECO-Centre regarding the completeness of the Outstanding Universal Value, and reassurance will be provided that the *Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape* is being preserved efficiently and is not in danger of losing its authenticity and integrity.

States Parties remain open for dialogue on their World Heritage sites.