

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/AS/EG/1661/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 20 December 2021

H.E. Ms Jolanta Balčiūnienė
Ambassador, Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of Lithuania to
UNESCO
Maison de l'UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
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World Heritage List 2022

Modernist Kaunas: Architecture of Optimism, 1919-1939 (Lithuania) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the revised *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have been requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2022. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “Modernist Kaunas: Architecture of Optimism, 1919-1939” was carried out by Mr. Oskars Redbergs (Latvia) from 20 to 25 September 2021. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

On 12 October 2021, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, justification of criterion (ii), boundaries and buffer zone, protection, management, and development project. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 12 November 2021 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2021, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2022. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2022.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on 26 November 2021 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting.

While the ICOMOS Panel considered that “Modernist Kaunas: Architecture of Optimism, 1919-1939” might have the potential to meet the requirements for Outstanding Universal Value, this has not yet been demonstrated.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

Conceptualization of the nominated property

The proposed Outstanding Universal Value that has been put forward by the State Party has been developed around the idea that the nominated property reflects in an exceptional way the process of urbanisation and modernisation of the capital of the newly independent Republic of Lithuania during the interwar period, which was marked by the spirit of post-war optimism and post-independence nation-building. The ICOMOS Panel debated extensively the way in which the proposed justification for inscription has been framed based on this premise and in the context of the presented geo-historical background. The explanations provided on how the nominated property conveys the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are not specific enough and some are based on attributes that cannot be easily grasped. An approach to the property focusing on its tangible characteristics might assist in elucidating what made Kaunas stand out compared to other cities from the same period throughout the world.

While the way the nominated property is framed in the nomination dossier raised issues among the ICOMOS Panel members, there are interesting elements in the nomination that could be further explored. The ICOMOS Panel has particularly noted that the urban dimension of the nominated property could be further elaborated on. The ideas and solutions of the modern town planning, implemented in Kaunas during the interwar period as part of the effort to create a modern city for the needs of a new capital and the growing multicultural population, would merit exploration with regard to the processes applied and their outcomes.

In order to have a better understanding of the way in which Kaunas was developed and the specific conditions and design inspirations that underpinned the transformation and expansion of the city, the ICOMOS Panel would be interested in receiving more information about the history of town planning in Kaunas and the related socio-political context of the development of the city. The Panel members are seeking, for instance, information on the ideas and concepts that influenced the form and design of the city, the rationale behind the decisions taken and the people who took them. The ICOMOS Panel would be interested in understanding better how the different plans, on the basis of which Kaunas steadily changed, were developed, to what extent they were implemented, and why the approaches changed in the process.

Furthermore, it would be useful if the State Party could provide more information on how this project of construction of Kaunas was managed through the two interwar decades, who was involved in it and responsible for decision-making, the regulations and specific requirements or conditions that applied, as well as the sources of resources, including financial means, used to build the city.

Protection and management

The ICOMOS Panel studied the documentation provided by the State Party related to the varied development projects in progress and planned within the nominated property and in the buffer zone. The Panel members expressed concerns about the potential risks that some of these development projects may pose to the preservation of the character of the nominated property, and its potential authenticity and integrity. In view of that, the ICOMOS Panel would appreciate if the State Party could provide information regarding the status of the Heritage Impact Assessment mechanism, and whether it is embedded in the management system of the nominated property.

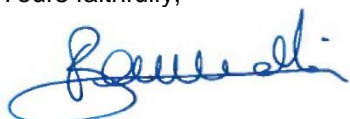
We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation process.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above information by **28 February 2022 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational*

Guidelines for supplementary information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So we kindly ask to keep your response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation process.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin
Director
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania
 Secretariat of the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO
 Kaunas City Municipality Administration, Division of Cultural Heritage
 UNESCO World Heritage Centre