

STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape

Transboundary property, Austria, Hungary

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



February 2022

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 land use 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 sole area designated for tourism purposes of the Hungarian side of the Lake 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, and the rehabilitation of the area used for the same function as the investment 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 process was preceded and has been accompanied by careful expert work and by a widespread involvement of the stakeholders. Environmental Impact Assessment, Natura 2000 Impact Assessment Documentation, and also nature conservation and landscape protection assessments were completed. 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. Consultations were held with the Fertő-Hanság National Park on several occasions, the Hungarian Ramsar Committee and the Hungarian organization of ICOMOS were also consulted.

However, several notifications have been received from third parties at the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, in connection with the 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, in the State of Conservation Report submitted on the 27th of November 2020, Hungary presented in detail - on more than 640 pages - the investment and the related impact assessment documentations and supporting studies proving the notifications

are unfounded and unsubstantiated. None of the expert examinations indicated potential threat to the Outstanding Universal Value.

The Technical Review prepared by ICOMOS on the State of Conservation Report was answered in December, 2021 giving more information and clarifications on the issues raised by the advisory body and presenting that the cooperation between the States Parties has been exemplary over the past year, the preparation of the joint Management Plan is proceeding at a good pace and within a strong professional framework, the nature conservation management of the area assessed in the State of Conservation Report is progressive, and the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site is ensured as well. Austria and Hungary are committed to continue this work and to further strengthen the safeguarding of their common heritage.

In order to create a new platform for professional dialogue on the state of conservation of the property an online meeting took place on the 23rd of February 2022 with the participation of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS International, IUCN, Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the States Parties of Austria and Hungary during which an exchange of expert views has started.

This joint Report, providing comprehensive information on the state of conservation of the World Heritage site, including the presentation of the growing effectiveness of the regulatory environment in both country and the balanced partnership and cooperation of the competent authorities, also demonstrates the openness for dialogue and the commitment of the States Parties to the Convention, and to its provisions. Austria and Hungary both believes that the World Heritage sites have to be utilised, presented and developed in a sustainable manner, contributing to the public policy while preserving their outstanding national and universal values. Thus 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.

Based on the content of the hereby presented joint State of Conservation Report, States Parties trust that the World Heritage Centre's concerns will be eased 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.