

POLAND

Auschwitz Concentration Camp

Brief description

The fortified walls, barbed wire, platforms, barracks, gallows, gas chambers and cremation ovens show the conditions within which the Nazi genocide took place in the former concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest in the Third Reich. According to historical investigations, 1.5 million people, among them a great number of Jews, were systematically starved, tortured and murdered in this camp, the symbol of humanity's cruelty to its fellow human beings in the 20th century.

1. Introduction

Year of Inscription

1979

Agencies responsible for site management

- Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum
Więźniów Oświęcimia 20
32-603 Oświęcim
e-mail: muzeum@auschwitz.org.pl
Web-site: www.auschwitz.org.pl

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria

C (vi)

ICOMOS evaluation

ICOMOS recommends the inclusion of this property on the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion VI.

VI. Auschwitz-Birkenau, monument to the martyrdom and resistance of millions of men, women and children, is not a historical museum in the usual sense of the word; it bears irrefutable and concrete witness to one of the greatest crimes which has been perpetrated against humanity; the example, by excellence, which undeniably elucidated an essential aspect of that historical phenomenon which is Hitlerism. The Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau, through its numerous activities (films, lectures, publications, expositions, etc...) has brought to the public the political, historical and psychological processes [that gave] rise [to] the establishment and utilisation of the extermination camps of the Third Reich. Moreover, its organizers

are in hope that this project, supported by such terrible proof, will contribute to the maintenance of world peace.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1978): There was then some discussion as to the desirability of limiting the number of sites that could be nominated by each country onto the World Heritage List to two on this first occasion only, in view of the fact that the total number of nominations was not large and some States had put forward several nominations. The Bureau agreed that on this first occasion in order to have a reasonably balanced List, States should be limited to two nominations each, which could either be all cultural or all natural or a combination of both, and that any sites deferred to 1979 for this reason, which otherwise clearly met the criteria, should be placed on a waiting list.

The only State affected in this way on this occasion was Poland, which had nominated three cultural sites which clearly qualified for inclusion.. Auschwitz, Cracow and the Salt Mines. The ICOMOS representative was therefore asked to prioritise the three sites from an expert viewpoint. ICOMOS proposed, and the Bureau accepted, that the Salt Mines was the most important site, followed by Cracow and Auschwitz in that order. It was therefore agreed that the Auschwitz nomination would be deferred.

Session (1979): The Committee decided to enter Auschwitz concentration camp on the List as a unique site and to restrict the inscription of other sites of a similar nature.

- No information available if Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value
- Need to seek a decision from the Committee on changes to the statement of significance
- Name of the site is not adequate; change required

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone has been defined; no information if it is adequate; Need to seek a decision from the Committee on changes to the buffer zone

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Act dated 2.7.1947 on commemorating the martyrdom; Act dated 9.12.1957 on detailed delimitation of the boundaries of the areas of the Memorial to the Martyrdom of the Polish Nation and Other Nations in Auschwitz; Act dated 7.5.1999 on the protection of the areas of former Nazi death camps; Local Spatial Development Plan for a part of the Zasole and Stare Stawy settlements in Oświęcim, including the area of the Auschwitz Holocaust Memorial together with its protective buffer zone; Act dated 21.11.1996 on Museums (Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 5 item 24 as amended); Act dated 23.7.2003 on the Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments (Journal of Laws No. 162 item 1568 as amended)
- Protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed

- CCTV Monitoring of the site
- Increase of funding for conservation

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Symbol of the death camps in the world

Management/Administrative Body

- Steering group since 31/01/2005
- Site manager/coordinator with responsibilities added to an existing job
- Levels of public authority primarily involved with the management of the site: national, regional, local and the "International Auschwitz Council"
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- No management plan; preparation will be completed in 04/2007
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Funding provided by Ministry of Culture subsidies; own income of the Museum; non-refundable grant from the German Lands; non-

refundable grant from the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, USA; non-refundable grants from the governments of Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg; Foundation for the Memory of the Victims of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp in Oświęcim; Financial Committee of the International Auschwitz Council; World Heritage Fund

- Extra funding through World Heritage status: Financial assistance for the organization of the International Consultative Meeting of Experts on the Spatial Management of the Area Around the Former Camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau as a UNESCO World Heritage Site held in Oświęcim and Bielsko-Biała from 2 to 3 June 1998, and the Expert Meeting on the Management Plan of the Auschwitz-Birkenau World Heritage Site and its Surroundings with participation of International Experts held in Kraków and Oświęcim from 13 to 15 May 2004
- Funding is insufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 251

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, management, promotion, interpretation, education, visitor management

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Postgraduate Museology Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow; Mycology courses in Wrocław; Accounting and management courses in Cracow; Courses in education and teaching about Auschwitz; Language courses; Specialist training

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 573,563 in 2004 (on the basis of registration of organised groups and guide services provided; it is also possible to visit the Museum without a guide, therefore the real number of visitors is higher than the figure indicated by the statistics)
- Visitor facilities: parking space in Oświęcim for 41 coaches and 70 cars, in Brzezinka for 21 coaches and 35 cars; public conveniences; tourist information centres and group traffic control rooms in Oświęcim and Brzezinka; a bookshop, a flower shop, souvenirs, currency

exchange bureau, a bar, a drinks stand, a food stand, a waiting room, a cinema; guest houses for 92 people

- Visitor needs: extension of the car park in Brzezinka, which in the summer season cannot hold all the coaches and cars

10. Scientific Studies

- Historical research
- Scientific research does influence the management of the site

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention emblem not used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage site among visitors, local communities, businesses and local authorities
- No special events concerning World Heritage status
- Web site available: www.auschwitz.org.pl
- No involvement of the local population in management of the site in connection with delivering social or other benefits

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Bureau sessions: 20th (1996); 21st (1997); 22nd (1998); 23rd (1999); 24th (2000); 25th (2001)
- World Heritage Committee sessions: 20th (1996); 22nd (1998); 23rd (1999); 24th (2000); 25th (2001); 26th (2002); 27th (2003); 28th (2004); 30th (2006)

Conservation interventions

- Most important conservation works carried out since 1979: Renovation of roofs, window woodworks, wall paintings; Conservation of camp fences and concrete slabs fence, of camp fence posts and warning posts, of camp gates, of wooden barracks; Revealing of ca. 3 500 meters of camp roads; Extensive renovation of the fire-bathing pool; Reinforcement of a fragment of ruins of furnaces and walls of the undressing chamber in crematorium II, of the walls of the undressing chamber in crematorium III, of ca. 50 barrack chimneys;

Conservation and renovation of the "New Laundry" barrack, the "Camp Kitchen" barrack, the "Package room", the big "Black Barrack" and the small "Black Barrack", the building of the "Camp Smithy", of the building of "Camp Sauna", of "Blockführerstuben", of watch towers, of rail tracks and siding, of the tanks of the camp waste treatment plant; Permanent conservation of movable collections, of archived documents, of greenery and trees

- Present state of conservation: adequate

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure, environmental pressure; natural disaster(s), visitor/tourism pressure
- A risk threatening mainly Birkenau, are ground movements caused by coal mining activity; a protective pillar has been created and no excavation is carried out beneath the Museum area, but the ground movements still occur

Measures taken

- A real threat to the buildings and structures is the risk of fire; elaborated fire prevention measures were installed
- Particularly important buildings such as the archives and the collection storage buildings are protected with an electronic anti-burglary system

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- Twice a year the Conservation Committee inspects the objects, describes the changes and issues recommendations. All movable collections and archives are covered with permanent monitoring. Security monitoring consists mainly of a fire warning system, anti-burglary system and access control system

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, management and education
- Strengths of management: The inscription of the area of the former concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau on the World Heritage List as the only site of this type in the world has been fully justified and has been gaining in significance. Former prisoners, witnesses of the past, pass away, there are fewer and fewer of them left. The site of the former concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau remains the only evidence of the genocide committed in that place. The global situation, terrorism, armed

conflicts, all that makes Auschwitz an even more telling symbol, which can be noticed in the growing interest of people in the world in the martyrdom not only of the Jewish people, but of people of all religions and nations. "Auschwitz" has been an inspiration for a number of peace initiatives, movements for tolerance, fight for human rights and dignity. Since the inscription 26 years ago, none of the objects has been destroyed, to the contrary, thanks to great international assistance, the condition of many buildings, structures and collections has improved. The collection storage conditions have also improved as have the existence conditions of many buildings. The inscription on the List, made the provision of the Act of 2 July 1947 "to preserve for ever" even more real, and the responsibility to implement it lies not only with the Polish State but also with other Nations

- Weaknesses of management: no management plan

Future actions:

- An integral management plan has being developed which will include all UNESCO requirements