

**Republic of Austria**  
**SOC / DSOC Report 2019**  
**Historic Centre of Vienna (C 1033)**

**Executive Summary**

First, the State Party wants to point out its main and most urgent concern: The "Historic Centre of Vienna" has to remain on the World-Heritage-List.

In Decision 42 COM 7A/18 the World Heritage Committee noted with satisfaction the three-stage process proposed by the State Party last year. This effort of the State Party led to an in depth discussion involving the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS International and a sober consideration of the situation and to the definition of a "roadmap" with the goal to remove the World Heritage property "Historic Centre of Vienna" from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

The three-stage process is by now completed. From our point of view there is no doubt that the findings of the whole process are of crucial importance regarding any further procedure concerning the Historic Centre of Vienna.

The Federal Minister for the EU, Arts, Culture and Media, Gernot Blümel underlined the importance of the Mission and the HIA by immediately calling on the Mayor of Vienna. The Federal Minister requested a commitment by the City of Vienna that "the project Heumarkt Neu, as it currently stands, will not be implemented" and that the City commits itself to implement the Advisory Missions recommendations in general – a mandatory commitment by the City that the results of HIA and Advisory Mission Report are taken seriously.

Further, a finding issued by the Federal Administrative Court on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2019 concludes, "The project due to its mass and height will constitute a major threat for the historic skyline that UNESCO considered essential for the outstanding universal value. This also leads to a major disturbance of the authenticity and integrity of the World Heritage property and hence contradicts the criteria for the nomination." Depending on the steps following, the current project could be halted for years.

Unfortunately, the State Party has to point out, that neither the commitment to refrain from implementing the project "Heumarkt Neu" in its current form, nor the commitment to implement the Advisory Missions recommendations in general can be found in the Mayors answer.

Taking this into account the Federal Minister for the EU, Arts, Culture and Media, Gernot Blümel wants to note that all further steps towards a desired state of conservation shall be taken to preserve this unique cultural heritage for many generations to come.

## Response to:

Decision 42 COM 7A/18. The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/18/42.COM/7A,
2. Recalling Decisions **40 COM 7B.49** and **41 COM 7B.42**, adopted at its 40th (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016) and 41st (Krakow, 2017) sessions respectively,
3. Also recalling the concerns expressed by the 2012 mission regarding the critical level of urban development reached since inscription and its cumulative impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, the need for new tools to guide the development process towards sustainable development that protects the attributes of the OUV, and the specific recommendations of the 2015 mission to the property;
4. Welcomes the process put in place by the State Party together with the City of Vienna, ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre in order to establish a clear milestone plan for addressing the Committee's decisions;
5. Also welcomes the completion of the study on historic roof constructions in the Historic Centre of Vienna by the Federal Monuments Authority in collaboration with the City of Vienna, which will contribute to the conservation of this important attribute of the property, as highlighted in the 2012 and 2015 mission reports;
6. Notes with concern that legal approval was given in June 2017 for the "Intercontinental Hotel – Ice Skating Club – Vienna Concert Hall" project by the Vienna City Council, and that construction work is proposed to start in spring 2020, subject to a 'clarification of whether the 2017 modifications to the project are sufficient to retain the authenticity of the property', even though the Committee has advised that this project in its current form would adversely affect the OUV of the property; and that a political decision allowing the Wien Museum and the Winterthur Building projects is expected in spring 2018;
7. Requests the State Party to halt any further approvals for high-rise projects, and the implementation of already approved projects, pending the adoption of the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and corrective measures by the Committee;
8. Notes with satisfaction the three-stage process proposed by the State Party, to address the substantive threats posed by current planning instruments and new developments at the property that led to Danger listing; and also requests that the State Party ensure that an outcome of the three-stage process is an agreed DSOCR and a related set of corrective measures and timeframe for their implementation, addressing decisions **40 COM 7B.49** and **41 COM 7B.42**, and the recommendations of the 2012 and 2015 missions, for adoption by the Committee;
9. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2019**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd session in 2019;
10. **Decides to retain the Historic Centre of Vienna (Austria) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

## **Responses:**

### To § 1 to 4 and 8:

As agreed with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS International in 2018 the State Party of Austria implemented a three-stage process to address the substantive threats criticized by the World Heritage Committee in its latest decisions as well as by ICOMOS International in the mission reports of 2012 and 2015.

Step 1 was an independent expert workshop in March 2018. The State Party submitted the results to the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS International and published the expert reports via the website of the Federal Chancellery: [https://www.kunstkultur.bka.gv.at/prufungen-studien-monitoring-berichte#UNESCO\\_Expert\\_Workshops\\_2018](https://www.kunstkultur.bka.gv.at/prufungen-studien-monitoring-berichte#UNESCO_Expert_Workshops_2018)

Step 2 provided for the elaboration of a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) concerning an in depth survey of the “Intercontinental Hotel – Ice Skating Club – Vienna Concert Hall” project against the backdrop of the general development of the property since its inscription in the World Heritage list in 2001. In preparation for the HIA, a comprehensive scoping report was compiled in early summer 2018. Material collection, inquiries and status quo surveys took place in close cooperation with the authorities of the City of Vienna and the representatives of the “Heumarkt Neu” developer. Based on the scoping report, the elaboration of the HIA started in late summer 2018. It also included consultations with the authorities of the City of Vienna, with representatives of the developer and the civil society, as well as with independent experts.

Step 3 placed parallel to the final work-stages of the HIA. A top-level Advisory Mission therefore visited the Historic Centre of Vienna from 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018. The mission constituted the third and last step of the whole process. It took place on personal invitation by the Federal Minister for EU, Arts, Culture and Media, Gernot Blümel UNESCO ADG-Culture Ernesto Ottone Ramirez, Chief of Europe-North America Unit of the World Heritage Centre Isabelle Anatole-Gabriel, ICOMOS World President Toshiyuki Kono, and the technical expert of ICOMOS International, Nicholas Clarke, represented UNESCO and ICOMOS. The mission agenda covered all items designated critical according to the latest committee decisions and mission reports, respectively the general condition of the property, the developments on Karlsplatz and the “Intercontinental Hotel – Ice Skating Club – Vienna Concert Hall” project. The assessment comprised on-site inspections, presentations and discussions with authorities, developers and representatives of the civil society.

The “three-stage-process” has been completed. The results of the HIA and the Mission Report were published by the Federal Chancellery ([https://www.kunstkultur.bka.gv.at/prufungen-studien-monitoring-berichte#UNESCO\\_Expert\\_Workshops\\_2018](https://www.kunstkultur.bka.gv.at/prufungen-studien-monitoring-berichte#UNESCO_Expert_Workshops_2018) ). HIA and Mission Report 2019 are also available via the website of the World Heritage Centre (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1033/documents/> ).

The findings of the whole process constitute the bedrock for the further procedure concerning the Historic Centre of Vienna.

### To § 5:

In the course of the Advisory Mission in November 2018, the international experts visited the Federal Monuments Authority Austria headquarter, where they participated in a presentation of the study on historic roof constructions (roof cadastre). The Advisory Mission stated that the roof cadastre presents a detailed picture of the status of roof structures of the Historic Centre of Vienna. The Federal Chancellery currently discusses the possibility to amend the roof

cadastre by including steel and composite roof constructions with the experts of the Federal Monuments Authority Austria. The working group for the elaboration of the future management plan shall take into account all other recommendations related to roof conversions in the Historic Centre.

To § 6:

Concerning the *Heumarkt Neu project*, the legal situation currently stands as follows: The adoption of the new zoning plan by the Municipal Council of Vienna in 2017 provides a legal frame for the planning of the current project. The developer applied for building permission on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Currently it is not possible to grant this permission or to proceed with the approval procedure due to a survey set off by the Austrian Federal Administrative Court examining the necessity of carrying out an environmental impact assessment.

The finding issued by the Federal Administrative Court on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2019 concludes, “The project due to its mass and height will constitute a major threat for the historic skyline that UNESCO considered essential for the outstanding universal value. This also leads to a major disturbance of the authenticity and integrity of the World Heritage property and hence contradicts the criteria for the nomination.”

The finding is not yet valid in law as the parties involved (the litigant parties) have the opportunity to raise an objection against it within six weeks after receipt. The representatives of the developer already announced to appeal against the finding.

Due to an amendment of the federal legislation concerning environmental compatibility in 2009, this federal law ensures that large-scale infrastructure developments have to be assessed with regard to their compatibility with the World Heritage status by carrying out an Environmental Impact Assessment prior to any building permission. This regulation applies to the entire federal territory and thus comprises the World Heritage property “Historic Centre of Vienna”. The fact that the Austrian Federal Administrative Court considers such an assessment necessary for the “Intercontinental Hotel – Ice Skating Club – Vienna Concert Hall” project highlights the importance of the issue on federal level. If the case were devolved to the Higher Administrative Court due to a revision, the current project could be halted for years.

Concerning the development of *Wien Museum / Winterthur Building*, the State Party wishes to note that reports provided by the City of Vienna on the projected developments were submitted to the World Heritage Centre prior to the Advisory Mission as well as subsequent to it responding to the questions that have arisen during the mission. The Advisory Mission assessed the projects and the area and noted, “The design for the museum and park have developed in a very positive direction and recommends that a full Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is no longer required”.

To § 7:

As of yet, neither further approvals for high-rise projects affecting the World Heritage property Historic Centre of Vienna nor applications for approvals are known to the Federal Chancellery.

The status on the area of the "Hotel Intercontinental – Vienna Ice-skating Club – Vienna Concert Hall" remained unchanged compared to the State of Conservation Report 2018. No further legal steps towards an implementation were taken. Please also note paragraph six.

## Report on Progress towards a Desired State of Conservation

*The results of the HIA and the Mission Report* provide a clear vision about the overall state of conservation of the Historic Centre of Vienna and the lacks of safeguarding measures, i.a. a management plan and adequate legal provisions as well as about the actual impact of the “Heumarkt Neu” project on the OUV of the property. Concerning the “Heumarkt Neu” project the Mission Report concludes that the “project conclusively threatens the conservation and value of the property.”

Nevertheless, the report also emphasises positive developments, such as the state of conservation of the fabric of the property that has “in general benefitted from the City of Vienna’s monuments repair fund and the economic growth of the City of Vienna. This is especially evident in the facades of the buildings in the medieval core of the property.” The design of the projected extension of the Wien Museum in general also was assessed positively.

The recommendations of the Mission Report together with the ones stated in the HIA constitute the basis for stipulating the cornerstones for the way towards a desired state of conservation of the property. The respective action points are included in an updated road map comprising the concrete measures to be taken with the aim to achieve a desired state of conservation within the timeframe proposed by the Mission Report and the HIA.

Concerning a development project in Schwarzenberg Garden in the area of the so-called “Belvedere Stöckl”, the State Party wishes to note that information about the project was provided to the World Heritage Centre by the State Party and by ICOMOS Austria. The Advisory Mission assessed the area in November 2018. The Mission Report 2019 noted the “degraded character” of the area and recommended i.a. the elaboration of a long-term vision and an integrated spacial conservation plan for the gardens and the palace.

The Schwarzenberg Family Foundation, representing the owners of Schwarzenberg Palace and Garden, is in close contact with the Federal Monuments Authority, ICOMOS Austria and the Federal Chancellery and wishes to state, that such an integrated garden / palace conservation plan already exists. As the assessment of the Schwarzenberg Garden by the Advisory Mission mainly referred to the project “Belvedere Stöckl” unfortunately there was no opportunity to a presentation and an in depth discussion of this planning tool. The preservation plan is continually adapted in consultation with the Federal Monuments Authority and currently i.a. foresees to implement measures to meet the challenges related to climate change. The Federal Chancellery thus commissioned ICOMOS Austria to provide an information including an outline of the planning tools and assessing the impact of the current projects on the OUV of the property in due time. The elaboration of this information shall take place in close cooperation with the Federal Monuments Authority and the representatives of the owners and the project developer.

Concerning the projected extension of the *Wien Museum on Karlsplatz*, some requests remained addressing the final design for the entrance solution and the materiality of the new upward extension of the Wien Museum. These have to be carried out in accordance with the permission for the alteration issued by the Federal Monuments Authority including the following important issues:

- Junction between façade and roof (jetty): The detail of the historic façade (including the “dental ornament”) constituting the upper border of the façade and the junction to the new terrace has to be designed in line with the historic layout and needs predefinition by the Federal Monuments Authority

- Connection between new glass entrance and historic building: the detail has to be designed in line with the historic façade and needs predefinition by the Federal Monuments Authority
- Stone Elements, Windows, Portals, Doors, etc. shall be designed following the design of the historic building.
- The historic equipment has to be documented (position, material, construction, dimension, colour etc.) to ensure a proper relocation.
- New equipment has to adapt to the historic stock: this applies specifically to the historic railing in the stairwell and on the terrace.
- Lettering, information boards etc. need a predefinition by the Federal Monuments Authority
- Technical infrastructure and facilities: the implementation has to be based on the principle of a minimal loss of historic substance and needs predefinition by the Federal Monuments Authority.

The complete conversion of the museum will take place under supervision of the Federal Monuments Authority.

The currently most important recommendation is a two years moratorium for all planning measures jeopardising the OUV of the World Heritage property, first of all suspending any other planning measures for the planned “Heumarkt Neu” project and using the period of the moratorium to explore possible World Heritage compatible alternatives for the current “Heumarkt Neu” project.

The State Party immediately responded to the mission report in a press-conference to underline the importance of the Mission and the HIA. Federal Minister Gernot Blümel further called on the Mayor of Vienna requesting a clear position of the City of Vienna concerning the results of the Mission Report, most respectively a commitment that “the project Heumarkt Neu, as it currently stands, will not be implemented” and that the City commits itself to implement the Advisory Missions recommendations in general.

The Mayor put on record that “in the upcoming months manifold discussions with all stakeholders, i.a. with the developer, will take place to find out, whether and which possibilities exist to develop the project in the interest of a better compatibility with the World Heritage”. During the two years moratorium, the City of Vienna will “work on the recommendations of the Advisory Mission report” and develop a management plan for the World Heritage property by involving independent scientists and experts, for example from Vienna’s Technical University and from ICOMOS Austria. The City of Vienna stated, “It is the intention to adopt this management plan together with an amendment of our building regulations with the aim to implement the protection of our World Heritage in all future planning processes. The development of a management plan might require up to two years, the working team includes independent scientists and experts, for example from Vienna’s Technical University and from ICOMOS Austria.”

Further the representatives of the City of Vienna stated, “All in all, the Heumarkt project is intensely discussed and developed and we are working on a lot of tasks, so that there is definitely no reason to believe that any construction measures might start on this area within the next two years.”, and “Finally, taking all these facts into account, the City wants to emphasize that they appreciate the recommendation for a two years moratorium which they are determined to observe. That will help to find an adequate solution to develop the project Heumarkt in compliance with the World Heritage.”

Unfortunately, the State Party has to point out, that neither the commitment to refrain from implementing the project "Heumarkt Neu" in its current form, nor the commitment to implement the Advisory Missions recommendations in general can be found in the Mayors, answer.

Taking this into account the Federal Minister for the EU, Arts, Culture and Media, Gernot Blümel wants to note that all further steps towards a desired state of conservation shall be taken. We will cooperate with all parties, including administrative units, experts and stakeholders involved in the respective items addressed by the Mission Report and the decisions by the World Heritage Committee. This also includes the experts of the Austrian ICOMOS committee. To conclude this report the States Party wants to point out that we are willing to exhaust all measurements needed, including legal steps to reach its main concern: The "Historic Centre of Vienna" must remain on the World-Heritage-List to preserve this unique cultural heritage for many generations to come.

An updated road map outlining the concrete actions points constitutes an integral part of this report.

Annex: Road Map; Letter of the Federal Minister, Gernot Blümel (18<sup>th</sup> March 2019); Letter of the Mayor, Michael Ludwig (8<sup>th</sup> April 2019); Statement of the First President of the Viennese State Parliament, Ernst Woller

Vienna, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2019

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