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Protection and management of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Krakow – historic center of the city

In September 1978, during the Washington DC session of the United Nations Committee for Education, Science and Culture, the World Heritage List was officially established, under the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention adopted in Paris in 1972. Among the first 12 sights entered on the UNESCO List were as many as 2 sights from Poland – the historic center of Krakow – the only European example of municipal buildings and the Salt Mine in Wieliczka.

This internationally unique distinction was awarded to the area of 170 ha in the former capital of Poland, covering the following urban units: the mediaeval town of Krakow located in 1257 and the Okół settlement acceded to it in 1300 within, the borders marked by the Krakow Planty Park established in the early 19th century where the city walls used to stand. The UNESCO area also includes the Wawel Hill together with the Royal Castle and Cathedral as well as the former town of Kazimierz with its suburb of Stradom, situated south of the located Krakow, founded in 1335 with a separate ‘Jewish Town’.

The decision to enter Krakow on the List was an unusual honour for Krakow which emphasised its importance to the cultural heritage, at the same time it provided a strong impetus to begin the great work of renovation and revalorisation, continued to this day. Due to political situation of that time, much of the city’s historic structure was neglected and seriously degraded. Entering Krakow on the List became an impulse to establish the Public Committee for the Restoration of Krakow Heritage (SKOZK) in the same year – a prestigious organisation, gathering representatives of many different circles involved in heritage protection. The Committee, whose members work on voluntary basis, allocates funds provided by the National Fund for the Revitalisation of Krakow Monuments, obtaining millions of zlotys from the budget of the Chancellery of the President of Poland. Members of SKOZK nominate monuments and buildings for renovation, allocate funds, monitor and evaluate the results of restoration works.

This model of the Committee’s operation under the auspices of subsequent Presidents of Poland has proved successful for over 35 years. Throughout its activity, SKOZK received over PLN 400mln from the National Fund which was used to partially or fully renovate over

300 historic buildings and monuments in Krakow, almost 200 of which are located in the area entered on the UNESCO List. The Wawel Hill with its Royal Castle and Cathedral is the most important beneficiary of the Fund. Thanks to this financial support of the National Fund numerous churches and monasteries, university buildings and synagogues have regained their shine. Several dozen palaces, urban residences, city houses and public utility buildings have also been renovated.

Krakow was one of the first cities in Poland to benefit from opportunities brought to local governments by the Act of 23 July 2003 on the protection and guardianship of monuments. In 2005 the City Council adopted a resolution, which allowed the allocation of funds from the city budget towards the maintenance and repair of monuments which are not solely municipal property. In the 9 years of the programme 141 subsidies were granted (including 28 for works on movable monuments) for a total amount of nearly PLN 14mln. Subsidies are granted in the amount up to 50% of total cost, which encourages owners to become financially involved and supports them in expensive restoration works.

The area of Krakow entered on the UNESCO List is also protected by the Polish law. This area, of particular importance to our heritage has been subjected to monument protection measures provided by the Law.

Firstly, urban arrangements of the Old Town and Wawel Hill as well as Kazimierz and Stradom are registered in the register of historic monuments. It should be noted that they are one of the first entries in the register made in 1933 and 1934 which confirms the value of these areas to cultural heritage. Entries of remaining parts of Kazimierz and Vistula embankments were added later. Moreover, most buildings and historic arrangements located in the area have been listed in the register of monuments, or records of monuments.

The significance and value of the area listed by UNESCO has been additionally emphasized by the President of Poland who recognised it as a Historical Monument in 1994, which is another form of protection of monuments by Polish law. The protected area is wider than the UNESCO area; it covers the city within its 19th century borders, together with its outskirts of Wesoła, Piaski and former towns of Kleparz and Podgórze.

Protection of urban arrangements is also reflected by local spatial plans. There are presently two spatial plans for the UNESCO area and their character is mainly protective: 'Old Town' for the city within Planty Park and Wawel Hill and 'Vistula Embankment' for areas along the river. The main urban planning document i.e. the Study on conditions and directions of spatial development of the City of Krakow was updated in 2014. It considered the world heritage area to be a protected area of cultural values, where actions should be

focused mainly on protection and exposure. The passing of the new Study made it possible to intensify works on new plans, first for the UNESCO area, i.e. for Kazimierz and Stradom. Preparatory works are presently being carried out in order to initiate the planning procedure.

In 2011 Krakow's historical center was the first historical one in Poland in which the Culture Park was introduced - an additional legal tool, regulating the principles of using public space, including the Old Town within the Planty Park and Wawel Hill. The objective of the Park is to protect cultural landscape by managing the area and regulating the principles regarding construction works, commercial activity and services, or placement of advertisements. The Culture Park controls chaotic signboards spoiling the public space of the historic city quarter. Visible results encouraged the city authorities to introduce this form of protection and management in other culturally significant areas of the city.

In accordance with the recommendation of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee for Krakow, the Office of the Chief Conservator created a buffer zone of 1057 ha, adopted during the 34th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee held in Brasilia between 25 July -3 August 2010. The zone was marked out in order to protect the area entered on the UNESCO List, and in particular to protect the profile of this part of the city. Protection of the outline is no less important than protecting individual objects in the listed area and its buffer zone. The view of the outline of the historic city center is protected, in particular the dominant Wawel Hill, the towers of St. Mary's Church and City Hall, as well as the churches of Kazimierz. Protective stipulations of the buffer zone are gradually introduced by subsequent spatial management plans; they have also been included in the Study.

In the past few years a lot of effort has been made to introduce order in public space, particularly within the city location borders of 1257. Renovation and revalorisation works were carried out mainly in main city squares, i.e. the Main Market Square, Mały Rynek Square, Szczepański Square, Wszystkich Świętych Square. It was also a unique opportunity to conduct archaeological works on unprecedented scale, which resulted in a series of extremely interesting discoveries, throwing new light on the history of changes and city development.

Street surfaces in the Old Town have been renovated. Last year the so-called University quarter was renovated which coincided with this year's celebrations of the 650th anniversary of the Jagiellonian University - the oldest one in Poland and one of the oldest universities in Europe.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the city has been making efforts in order to give the status of a historic monument to the center of Nowa Huta - the largest urban spatial creation of the post-war period in Poland and the best example in Eastern Europe. Granting it

the status of a monument will be the first step in our aspiration for Nowa Huta to be entered on the UNESCO List. First steps have already been taken, as Nowa Huta has already been submitted as a candidate for the national tentative list.