

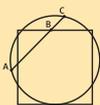


International conference

50 Years of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in Europe Achievements and Challenges

**Organizers: the Polish ICOMOS Committee & the International Cultural Centre
Kraków, 8–10 June 2022**

30
YRS
ICC



INTERNATIONAL
CULTURAL
CENTRE

The importance of the UNESCO World Heritage movement extends far beyond the monuments and sites inscribed on the list.

50 Years of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in Europe Achievements and Challenges

The year 2022 sees the 50th anniversary of the adoption by the UNESCO General Conference of the Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Over the course of that half-century, this project has proven to be the greatest global success of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The countries of Europe were among the first to ratify the convention, and 3 of the first 12 assets inscribed on the UNESCO list in 1978 were in Europe, one of them being Kraków. Today, of the more than 1,100 world heritage assets it protects, almost 40 per cent are European. This means that hundreds of Europe's most precious cultural assets have been recognized as global heritage, and nearly 1,000 more are on their countries' tentative lists. This reflects the extensive scale of European countries' active participation in the World Heritage system, and has ensured that Europe's most valuable heritage has the status of UNESCO World Heritage.

But the importance of the UNESCO World Heritage movement extends far beyond the monuments and sites inscribed on the list. One notable achievement of the convention is its reach: it has been adopted by more states than are members of the UN. From the perspective of protection of all heritage, what is of greatest significance is improving methods for analysis and forms of protection of World Heritage assets, and disseminating these best practices as broadly as possible. This applies to heritage value assessments, authenticity and integrity analyses, and many solutions employed in heritage management, such as risk assessments, monitoring, and cooperation with stakeholders. The World Heritage standard for such measures is implemented in the protection of other monuments and sites, since the specialists who deal with these issues are active in many countries, and transpose these solutions into national heritage protection systems. The UNESCO World Heritage movement has become an important factor in the development of world conservation theory and practice.

The UNESCO World Heritage List also has a major role to play in propagating the idea of heritage protection. The UNESCO list is an extremely widely recognized brand. Heritage and its protection is perceived as a source of pride, an important facet in identity, and a considerable economic contributor. Monuments and sites inscribed on the list are tourist destinations for millions. All this means that heritage protection is now a standard element in the executive strategies of both central governments and local authorities.

The successes and significance of the UNESCO World Heritage programme are such that the movement's future is of considerable significance. There is now a need for holistic reflection in order to recapitulate its achievements, assess its present state, and formulate prognoses and tasks for the future. Of no less importance is the issue of transposing these experiences into other areas of heritage protection.

Revisiting Europe's experiences to date and reflecting more broadly may be productive for the further development and improvement of the World Heritage system.

The themes for the conference 50 Years of the World Heritage Convention in Europe—Achievements and Challenges will be covered in 6 sessions, to address the following issues:

🕒 **The achievements and experiences of the World Heritage Convention in Europe.**

🕒 **Experiences and problems of European cities inscribed on the World Heritage List.**

🕒 **The WHL — trends and obstacles.**

🕒 **Potential for application of experience gleaned from the WHL system in national heritage protection systems.**

🕒 **Need for modifications to the WH system arising out of European experiences — what can Europe offer the WHL?**

🕒 **Cooperation with the Visegrad Group as an example of regional concern for WHL sites.**

(Each session to comprise 3–4 20-minute papers).

The conference will be held in Kraków, whose historic centre was the first European city to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, one of the 12 nominations with which the list was launched in 1978. The International Cultural Centre has been active in international dialogue on cultural heritage since the memorable CSCE symposium in Kraków in 1991. Kraków was also the host city for the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee at which the need for inclusion of the civil society in cultural heritage protection systems was first articulated.