Communicating
World Heritage

# A Guide

# for World Heritage Information Centres

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Cultural Organization

**German Commission
for UNESCO**

# Communicating World Heritage – A Guide for World Heritage Information Centres

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# Contents

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# List of abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **E** | |
| ESD | Education for Sustainable Development |
| **D** | |
| DUK | German Commission for UNESCO |
| **G** | |
| GAP | Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development |
| **I** | |
| ICCROM | International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property |
| ICIP | ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites |
| ICOMOS | International Council on Monuments and Sites |
| IUCN | International Union for Conservation of Nature |
| **O** | |
| OUV | Outstanding Universal Value |
| OWHC | Organization of World Heritage Cities |
| **U** | |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |

# About this guide

Imparting knowledge about World Heritage and its preservation is one of the central tasks to which all States Parties to the World Heritage Convention of 1972 have committed themselves. As a result, World Heritage communication plays a central role in the work of all those involved in World Heritage.

At the same time, this communication task poses many challenges: How can World Heritage communication succeed, particularly in the face of often-dwindling personnel and financial resources? How can the different stakeholders be involved? Which content should be communicated? Where can communication take place?

In their position at the interface of tourism planning, citizen involvement and communication strategy, World Heritage information centres[1] represent a proven instrument for communication to familiarise both international visitors and the local population with the topic of World Heritage.

In Germany, as in other countries, increasing numbers of World Heritage sites have decided to establish information centres, with their names varying from information centre or visitor centre to World Heritage House. Many German World Heritage sites therefore expressed the wish to discuss this topic within the framework of World Heritage management. Together with partners, the Division for World Heritage of the German Commission for UNESCO took up this idea and, in the form of workshops about World Heritage information and visitor centres, created a platform for the exchange of expertise, knowledge transfer and peer-to-peer learning. In 2017 and 2018, a total of five workshops with over 60 participants were organised in Hamburg, Wismar, Goslar and Bad Buchau.

This publication "Communicating World Heritage – A Guide for World Heritage Information Centres" presents the results of this exchange of experiences in a structured form, supplemented by selected information and case studies from World Heritage sites in Germany, which are used to illustrate possible means of realisation, challenges and good practice. The aim of this guide is to explore very pragmatic questions and potential solutions that should be considered when planning, establishing and operating information centres.

The guide is divided into four sections. The first section outlines the regulatory framework for World Heritage communication. In addition to the World Heritage Convention and the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, other international and national frameworks provide points of reference for designing information centres, for example, in terms of accessibility and Education for Sustainable Development. The second section focuses on fundamental decisions that must be made at the beginning of the planning phase. Here, project concepts, feasibility studies, choice of location and, above all, questions of financing are examined. The third section looks at the topic we have called "hardware", that is, building design, technical and other equipment, personnel and the physical accessibility of information centres. In the fourth and last section, the "software" is discussed. This comprises the content of communication activities, the definition of target groups and the methods to be used.

This guide does not claim to provide an exhaustive list of possibilities and solutions. Rather, it is a tool for practitioners in World Heritage management at a local and regional level and will be updated with future experience and findings.

1 This guide uses the collective term "information centres" to describe all types of local or regional centres for World Heritage communication, regardless of the names actually used for these centres.

How can World Heritage communication succeed, particularly in the face of often-dwindling personnel and financial resources? How can the different stakeholders be involved? Which content should be communicated? Where can communication take place?

# 1. Communicating World Heritage – regulatory framework and operational guidelines

# UNESCO World Heritage Convention

Communication is one of the central ideas of the World Heritage Convention of 1972, which puts communication on a par with the identification, protection and conservation of World Heritage sites as responsibilities of the States Parties (Article 4). In this context, communication signifies both an educational task and the activity of informing and sensitising stakeholders about the significance of preserving the Outstanding Universal Value of a specific World Heritage site and of World Heritage as a whole.

## Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), excerpts from the original text:

Article 4

Each State Party to this Convention recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage referred to in Articles 1 and 2 and situated on its territory, belongs primarily to that State. It will do all it can to this end, to the utmost of its own resources and, where appropriate, with any international assistance and cooperation, in particular, financial, artistic, scientific and technical, which it may be able to obtain.

Article 27

1. The States Parties to this Convention shall endeavour by all appropriate means, and in particular by educational and information programmes, to strengthen appreciation and respect by their peoples of the cultural and natural heritage defined in Article 1 and 2 of the Convention.

2. They shall undertake to keep the public broadly informed of the dangers threatening this heritage and of activities carried on in pursuance of this Convention.

# Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (2017)

In addition to the requirements based directly on the above Convention text, the regularly updated Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention contain statements about the five strategic objectives of the World Heritage Committee, known as the five "Cs" (credibility, conservation, capacity-building, communication, communities). Above all, the "communication" objective serves as our principal framework for communicating World Heritage as described below.

## Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, excerpts from the original text:

Paragraph 26 (4)

Increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through Communication.

In practice, this means it is expected that each site has a concept for appropriately communicating its OUV, its role within a global network of World Heritage sites and its connection with superordinate topics, such as sustainable development and climate change. It is up to the sites to choose how and by what means communication should take place. Each site is therefore free to use an information centre as a communication tool. Other methods of World Heritage communication may be, for example, educational and volunteer projects, information events for the public, communication via various media (including digital media) and activities for tourists. It is important here that a consistent narrative is employed by all stakeholders in all their methods and formats for communication and that contradictions in communication are avoided.

# Other selected international frame- work documents

International framework documents that go beyond the World Heritage context refer in particular to the right to participate in cultural life, as defined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[2] and in Article 15 (1) (a) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights[3] of 1966. The March 2011 report[4] of the independent expert in the field of cultural rights of the UNHCR explicitly addresses the right of access to cultural heritage. While these framework documents do not specifically examine the structuring of communi- cation activities, they do, among other things, stress the importance of accessibility to heritage for everyone, as well as the communities' role in interpreting heritage.

UNESCO fully subscribes to the objectives of the Agenda 2030. This also applies to the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, who adopted the Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention[5] in 2015. In consequence, World Heritage communication has the task of communicating and fostering sustain- ability in all its dimensions. Applying a holistic approach, this is doubly relevant for information centres. Firstly, the centres themselves must be built and operated in a sustainable way; and secondly, sustainability should be a central aspect integrated into communication work, both in terms of format and content. The UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development[6] and Germany's National Action Plan[7] provide orientation and points of reference for implementing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as part of World Heritage communication.

# Guidelines and publications

In addition to the international legal and regulatory frameworks named above, recommendations and guidelines are available on the topic of World Heritage com- munication.[8] Above all, the **ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites (2008)**[9] is worth mentioning in this context.

Seven principles for World Heritage communication are defined in this Charter – a document published by ICOMOS, advisory body to the World Heritage Convention on cultural properties, and its International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP):

- Access and Understanding
- Information Sources
- Attention to Setting and Context
- Preservation of Authenticity
- Planning for Sustainability
- Concern for Inclusiveness
- Importance of Research, Training and Evaluation

The principles are intended to support the understanding of World Heritage sites as places and sources of learning and reflection about the past and also as valuable resources for the sustainable development of communities and for dialogue between cultures and generations.

World Heritage communication is thus understood as an integral part of the pre- servation and management process.

As a guide for sustainable tourism, the **UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Toolkit**[10], developed as part of the World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism programme of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, provides helpful impetus for World Heritage information centres and for World Heritage communication in general. Among other things, it examines cooperation with local partners, commu- nication concepts and the management of visitor behaviour. Information centres and World Heritage communication in general play an essential role in enabling World Heritage sites to function in the interests of sustainable development. The toolkit shows ways in which this can succeed.

# 2.
# First steps before and at the beginning of the planning phase

# A communication concept as starting point

## Download

11  The study „Interpreta-tion of Sites of Memory", commissioned by the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO, was published in 2018 and offers speci-fic recommendations on communication activities and interpretation at Sites of Memory.
The study is avalaible for download on the website of the World Heritage Centre.

Once a World Heritage site has decided to set up an information centre, its realisa-tion requires thorough planning. Sufficient time for the initial planning phase should be included in considerations about the entire project lifespan right from the start.

All decisions about an information centre should underlie **a comprehensive com-munication concept** for the World Heritage site in question – as well as a tourism planning strategy – and such a communication concept should incorporate all the places and methods of communication as well as all stakeholders. The commu-nication concept depends greatly on the type of World Heritage site. For example, inaccessible heritage or sites that were places of repression or terror[11] must be approached in very different ways.

A consistent narrative for each individual World Heritage site presents a clear picture to the recipients and ensures that important messages are transmitted across all communication formats. In the best case, visitors commence their "visitor journey" at home, where they are addressed personally through different communication channels and experience their visit and the time after it as one rigorous, homoge-neous communication concept.

Ideally, the communication concept is an integral part of the site's management plan or system. Communication must be considered and planned within the management concept, as well as examined as part of regular assessments and, if necessary, adapted and developed further.

The involvement of a committee with a consultative role can be useful in providing support, including during the planning phase. It can be based on **advisory struc-tures** that already exist for site management and should comprise representatives with different and complementary expertise. By involving communication specia-lists, such a body can supervise the development of a communication concept as well as its implementation with regard to form and content.

## Excursus

## Museum versus visitor centre. Simila-rities and differences between the two institutions in con-nection with UNESCO World Heritage

## Terminology

Over the past 20 years, what are known as visitor centres or information centres have also established themselves in Germany, after first becoming common in English-speaking countries. Although the tasks, target groups and character of many such institutions are similar, there is no "standard" definition. However, visitor centres do usually differ from conventional museums. Unlike museums, they do not have scientific inventory management, depots, inter-museum loans or academic staff. Neither do visitor centres claim to present a topic comprehensively or as exhaustively as pos-sible. Rather, the idea of a visitor centre is characterised by communicating, as pleasantly as possible, individual succinct historical facts that will give visitors an overview and initial impression of the UNESCO World Heritage site.

## Trends

Setting up a visitor centre is currently on the agenda at many World Heritage sites. The main motivation, apart from business reasons, is often the desire to address a broad public using modern communication methods. The focus should be on the visitor. Ideally, different senses are stimulated thanks to a cleverly designed educational concept and visitors are thus motivated to learn more when they subsequently visit the site itself. The visitor centre therefore works mainly as a point of entry and a way of accessing further levels of detail at the site. In many countries, visitor centres have been set up also by other organisations, companies, and so on. Examples of this are the chemical company BASF's visitor centre in Ludwigs-hafen and the UNO visitor centre in New York.

## Download

12  See the ICOM defini-tion of museums at ⌨ https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/.

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| Specifi-cations | Visitor centre | Museum |
|---|---|---|
| Content | Selective, much reduced, exemplary, communicated mainly via media | Comprehensive, represen-tative, communicated using originals and media |
| Scope | General overview | General overview and details |
| Location | As near to the main stream of visitors as possible, as near to the World Heritage site as possible | Defined by other parameters |
| Definition / tasks | A visitor centre is a publicly accessible establishment with the character of an exhibition and is directly connected with a local point of interest or the immedi-ate surroundings. It often gives tourists and citizens a general overview and also provides a central starting point for guides or self-directed tours of the site. Visitor centres are usually directly connected to the cultural or natural heritage site. Information is usually imparted through an integ-rated permanent exhibition. The information material is analogue and digital and may comprise verbal information. | "… a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, rese-arches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of huma-nity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment."[12] |
| Communication | Designed to be understood quickly; short texts and media; interactive elements; no or limited opportunity for in-depth study | Opportunity for in-depth study |
| Academic work | Not permanent: for the underlying concept and for special activities (presen-tations, special exhibitions, guided tours) | Ideally, permanent: collection concept, inventory, research… |
| Target group | Guests, citizens, expert audiences | Special target groups with an interest in the subjects shown |
| Network | With elements of the local cultural landscape and possibly other cultural and natural properties | With other museums and cultural properties, e.g. though loans, joint exhibi-tions and projects |
| Additional services | Tourist information, possibly shop, café | Possibly shop, café |
| Primary visitor motivation | Gain an overview; infor-mation about the cultural or natural heritage site's offerings, structure and cha-racter; visitor centre is not the main aim of the trip; visit to special exhibitions | Subject-specific interest, familiarisation with a collection, opportunity to see originals |

## Looking ahead

Visitor centres will never be able to replace classical museums with specialised collections. However, they can complement them with low-threshold offerings and thus address parts of the population who do not visit museums. In combination with natural and cultural heritage sites, they offer a good opportunity to arouse interest as well as to broaden people's interests by summarising content and providing overviews. Through the communication of background information or the focus on specific details, visitors can experiment with and gain new perspectives. Above all, well-designed visitor centres are fun and enhance the visitor experience by communicating information using methods that are rich in variety. Visitors thus identify more easily with cultural or natural heritage. Because people are only prepared to protect what they know and value, visitor centres can make an important contribution to the long-term protection of our natural and cultural heritage.

Author

Matthias Ripp,
chairperson of the Wor-
king Group on UNESCO
World Heritage Historic
Centres within the
Association of German
Cities, and World
Heritage coordinator
in Regensburg

## Feasibility studies and concept studies

**Feasibility studies** and similar formats provide the opportunity to run through and weigh up alternatives early in the process of planning an information centre, for example, concerning location or materials. The following aspects are among those that should be included: target groups, function and tasks of the centre, anticipated visitor profiles and numbers, relevant stakeholders, potential effects on the regional economy, existing cultural, tourist and communication institutions, transport infrastructure and possible alternative locations. Furthermore, feasibility studies should explicitly examine possibilities for using renewable, environmentally friendly and regional building materials as well as look at opportunities for integrating environmentally compatible power generation into the building, and then calculate the costs and, if applicable, long-term savings. The use of solar or hydro power and energy-saving technology can, for example, not only contribute to minimising the centre's environmental impact but also be more cost-efficient in the long term.

Well-executed feasibility studies enable sound cost calculations that can be used for the planning process and, in particular, in negotiations with political decision makers and financial partners. In addition, they provide a starting point for communication with the public. Organisations can apply for subsidies, for example, from European Union funding programmes or local programmes such as the Joint Federal / Länder Task for the Improvement of Regional Economic Structures (GRW).

# Concept study for World Heritage information centres – development of tourism and productive use of the extensive UNESCO World Heritage site Mines of Rammelsberg, Historic Town of Goslar and Upper Harz Water Management System

Author

Dr. Manuela Armenat,
Foundation for the
World Heritage in the
Harz mountains

Between October 2014 and March 2015, a concept study was produced for the 200 km² UNESCO World Heritage site "Mines of Rammelsberg, Historic Town of Goslar and Upper Harz Water Management System", which examined setting up decentralised World Heritage information centres and assessing their scope of impact. The study was completed by a consortium of the companies dan pearlman Markenarchitektur GmbH and Erlebniskontor GmbH. The Foundation for the World Heritage in the Harz mountains coordinated the project and provided academic and scientific support.

The concept study, funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with around €150,000, aimed to determine the basic conditions for setting up the information centres and the financial and personnel requirements for realising these "gateways" into World Heritage. The results were presented to the public and the political decision makers at a big event. An information document supplemented the presentation and at the same time served as the basis for the subsequent acquisition of funding.

One challenge is the financing of such a study. In our case, we managed to secure European Union funding. Another challenge is the time frame required, which should not be neglected. Due to the funding regulations, we had a tight time schedule. The feasibility study was drawn up within six months. However, this is only possible if all parties work together in a purposeful, goal-oriented way. Depending on the scope of the feasibility study, we estimate that at least a year and a half should be scheduled for the entire process, including the clarification of financing, the involvement of the public and the inclusion of political stakeholders.

To ensure that the study's findings do not become obsolete, it is advisable to support the entire process on a political level and keep it in the public eye, while working to acquire funding at the same time. This is the only way to produce a feasibility study that will actually be used and not consigned to a drawer.



Figure 1: Presentation of the concept study
©Wetzel / Stiftung Welterbe im Harz

# Selecting the location

One crucial point in planning information centres is the **choice between one or several locations and the decision about their location**. In this regard, the following aspects should be considered:

- Location – Two factors are decisive for the information centre to be accepted by visitors: first, a central location, relative to both the World Heritage site and other well-known points (for example, the local tourist information office), and second, ease of access to the location (for example, by public transport).

- One central unit, several units or mobile units – Depending on the location, area covered and type of World Heritage site, a choice should be made about whether to have a single information centre, several centres (particularly in the case of serial sites or sites covering large areas), mobile units or even a combination of these. Decentralised information centres can have the advantage of enhancing the value of a wider region and thus contributing to regional development. In the case of several decentralised centres, the narrative presented about the World Heritage site should be consistent and can be supplemented with specific local features. Because visitors may only get to know one of the decentralised centres, it is important for them to be provided with fundamental content about World Heritage and an overview of the World Heritage site in question at each centre.

- Separate information centre or integration into an existing institution – Even before an information centre is set up, many places already have well-known museums, national park centres or other educational establishments related to the World Heritage site. It may therefore make (more) sense to integrate the World Heritage information offering into existing establishments or offerings, in order to use synergies and also avoid potential competition between these establishments and a separate information centre. In this case, however, it must be ensured that the content specific to World Heritage is communicated clearly. Trying out the cooperation over a restricted period of time is a worthwhile exercise before an information centre is finally established. It is wise to define the responsibilities of the individual cooperation partners precisely in a contract.

- World Heritage itself as the place of communication – Two of the advantages of setting up the information centre in existing buildings located in the World Heritage area or its buffer zone are the proximity to the World Heritage site and the integration of the building into the communication concept. New buildings, however, enable the construction to be better tailored to the planned content and the purpose of communication. If buildings are repurposed or built in the World Heritage area or in close proximity to it, steps should be made in advance to make sure the measures respect the authenticity of the World Heritage site and do not damage its (visual) integrity. Furthermore, the aspect of accessibility needs special attention here.

- Functions and tasks – Information centres can assume different roles: a central point where visitors can meet and from which they can depart to explore other spots, a museum, a place where local citizens can find information or a combination of these. Each site must decide for itself what focus its information centre should have and what combination of tasks it should perform. This fundamental decision will determine other needs with regard to design, communication formats and staff required. Depending on the functions that the information centre should fulfil – the provision of information material only, its own exhibition(s), event facilities – the demands on the space required will vary. That is why it is crucial to define the function of the centre at an early stage, before selecting the location.

- The "design for all" concept – This concept stipulates that, in the planning and design of products, services and infrastructures, efforts must be made to enable all people to use them without individual adjustments or special assistance. Specifically, this means solutions that are particularly user-friendly and can also be used if people have special needs, for example, related to age or a disability.

Case Study 2

## Visitor centre in a new building using the example of the UNESCO World Heritage site Messel Pit Fossil Site

Because of the presentation of the results of scientific research and spectacular fossil finds to the public, the population's interest rose significantly since the Messel Pit Fossil Site was listed as the first natural World Heritage site in Germany in 1995. This, and regular guided tours provided by the charitable organisation Welterbe Grube Messel gGmbH (WGM gGmbH) from 2004 onwards, confirmed that people wanted a visitor centre or museum on site.

In 2004, the federal state of Hesse started the planning and realisation of the visitor centre "Zeit und Messel Welten" (Time and the Worlds of Messel). The aim was not to build a new museum, but rather to create a meeting space where visitors could gain a deep insight into the site's development since its origins and the research work carried out there.

Figure 2: Simulation of the interior of the visitor centre
©Welterbe Grube Messel Archiv

The exceptional architecture was designed to fit the location and meet guests' expectations of "having arrived at the World Heritage site". The concrete building thus picks up on the layers of oil shale in which the fossils are encased at the Messel Pit, but turns them by 90°.

Experience gained from operating the centre:

- After initial criticism of the concrete architecture, its distinctiveness is now generally appreciated by the visitors too.

- Visitors are especially enthusiastic about the new, fascinating interactive elements created thanks to the generous support of the Hessian Ministry of Finance and the Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts.

- The equipment and media installations should operate using the best state-of-the-art technology available at the time of installation and withstand constant, year-round use for a number of years.

- In general operations, it is wise to secure medium-term and long-term follow-on funding to update exhibitions and technology – also because technology becomes outdated after just a few years.

- The fact that the centre is operated by a charitable limited liabilities company (gGmbH) is especially helpful when it comes to performing the tasks of a UNESCO World Heritage site. In other words, the organisational form fosters customer- and guest-oriented cooperation with stakeholders in the region and at an international level, enabling projects to be carried out that would otherwise not be possible and whose significance would otherwise go unnoticed.

Author

Dr. Marie-Luise Frey,
Managing Director
Welterbe Grube Messel
gGmbH

Figure 3: Wismar, visitor centre with World Heritage House and tourist information at Lübsche Strasse 23/23a, view from the front
© H. Volster

Case Study 3

# The World Heritage House in the Hanseatic city of Wismar – on the use of a monument as an information centre, taking the example of the UNESCO World Heritage site Historic Centres of Stralsund and Wismar

The national investment programme for UNESCO World Heritage sites 2009/10 was seen in Wismar as an opportunity to realise projects that, due to the amount of restoration work involved, could not be implemented or could only be partially implemented using the property's own resources. This included an ensemble of buildings at Lübsche Strasse 23 (€3.6 million funding, with 95% by the federal government and 5% by the city of Wismar), which is now the World Heritage House and tourist information point.

The complex on the Via Baltica trade route comprising two front buildings, a two-storey rear extension (known as a "Kemladen"), a courtyard and a garden is one of the oldest secular structures in Wismar, with a history of construction and use spanning over 700 years. It is a good example of the plot and building structure in medieval Wismar and of the typical Hanseatic "Dielenhaus", a residential and commercial building with a high lobby. It underwent characteristic restructuring phases and its restoration produced numerous historical finds.

The World Heritage House differs significantly in its concept from other exhibition spaces in the city. One of the guiding principles was to perceive the building itself as the most important exhibit. The World Heritage of Wismar is ingrained in this house, its substance and its features. Visitors should

be able to experience its diverse range of finds first-hand. At the same time, it represents many other monuments that are not accessible to the public. In selected areas, a "framed view" exposes original architecture from past eras.

The exhibition begins with the subject of World Heritage in general. There then follows a change of perspective to the uniqueness of Wismar as an inhabited protected area of historical value. The history of the city is not told chronologically, but rather using topics arising from the previous functions of the rooms in the "Dielenhaus". Together, they reflect the vibrant heritage of Wismar. This thematic approach traces an arc from the past to the future and raises the question of how we can handle this heritage responsibly.

The World Heritage House Wismar has been open to the public since 2014. With almost 60,000 guests per year, it is the first port of call for questions about UNESCO World Heritage. A clear advantage is the direct connection of the rooms with the tourist information point, which has the same opening hours 365 days a year.

Authors

Rita Gralow, Norbert Huschner, World Heritage House Wismar

# Operating concepts, cooperation partners and stakeholders

The selection of **governing structures and operating concepts** of the information centre is just as crucial as the decision about its location. This selection should be made as early in the planning process as possible in order to ensure long-term planning with the stakeholders involved. The choice of concepts will depend on the location selected, among other things, because the question of who will be responsible for running the centre will already be resolved if it is integrated into an existing institution, for example. In principle, a concept involving public institutions as governing bodies and operators (local governments, public museums, foundations and so on) is just as feasible as a concept envisaging ownership and operation by a privately owned organisation – or other combinations, such as common interest groups or public-private partnerships.

Regardless of the concept selected for governance and operation, it is paramount to ensure close cooperation with the offices responsible for protecting, preserving and managing the World Heritage site, should responsibility for this not lie with the operators of the information centre themselves. It is essential to coordinate the content communicated in the centre about the World Heritage site and its OUV to make certain that visitors receive correct information. The comprehensive communication concept already discussed serves as the framework here.

## Involvement of relevant stakeholders

The success of an information centre and, in particular, of the planning process is to a great extent dependent on the participation and acceptance of the project by a number of stakeholders. The World Heritage site's management plan should serve as the basis for **identifying important stakeholders.** Furthermore, the feasibility study should confirm this selection and add to it. Informing and **including the public and local stakeholders** is decisive and expected by UNESCO. The following (groups of) stakeholders are among those that should be involved:

- Public policy makers – It is advisable to establish contact with persons with political and financial decision-making powers at both a federal state and local level as early as possible. Long-term supervision of the project by designated contact persons simplifies coordination and enables direct communication between the most important stakeholders. Ideally, there should be continuous active political work, which will lead to the integration of World Heritage and World Heritage communication into regional strategies and funding programmes in the long term.

- Relevant experts or sectors – Information centres concern the sectors monument preservation, nature conservation and tourism. By combining subject-matter expertise, it is possible to create considerable synergies for successful communication. Here, too, it is advisable to involve all sectors at an early stage, not least to reduce the potential for conflict resulting from diverging interests. Among other things, this enables expectations about the planned information centre to be clarified, realistic assessments of the opportunities and limits of such a centre to be made, and a holistic strategy for the use of the centre in ways beneficial for monument protection, nature conservation and tourism to be devised.

- Local citizens – To assure broad acceptance of the project right from the start, continuous open communication with the local population is especially important. In addition to merely notifying the public of the project, this communication process has the potential to raise public awareness of the World Heritage site itself, its value and its fundamental principles and messages. Local citizens should have the opportunity to make their own suggestions and give the centre a function in their own social environment.

- Other stakeholders – Depending on the World Heritage site, cooperation with researchers, local (artisan) craftspeople and representatives of professions that used to be practised at the World Heritage site (for example, miners in the case of the Zollverein coal mine industrial complex in Essen) may be relevant.

Parallel with internal communication about and coordination of planning and setting up the information centre, a **communication process** aimed at the general public can already constitute effective World Heritage communication in itself. At the beginning of the planning process, it is therefore wise to also attach importance to the part of the process that happens before the information centre's completion and to shape it accordingly. Activities to keep the information centre in the public eye during the phase leading up to its opening can make a crucial contribution to the visibility and acceptance of the future establishment. Examples are:

- Information events about the planned information centre
- Series of events about World Heritage site(s) and World Heritage-related topics
- Themed guided tours, hikes, trips with a connection to the World Heritage site
- Setting up an information and guidance system at the World Heritage site
- Mobile information units
- Pop-up information centres

# UNESCO World Heritage and civic participation – the World Heritage pop-up visitor centre in the UNESCO World Heritage site
## Town of Bamberg

In December 2015, the municipal council of Bamberg passed a resolution to set up a World Heritage visitor centre in the river Regnitz accross the iconic Old Town Hall at the heart of the city. The development of such a building is a lengthy process that raises both technical and conceptual questions. To involve local citizens in this process, the Bamberg World Heritage Office installed a temporary visitor centre – a World Heritage pop-up visitor centre – in an empty shop building on the "Obere Brücke" (Upper Bridge), immediately adjacent to the Old Town Hall, and opened it from 29 May to 2 June 2017.

In the shop space covering 50 m², the Bamberg World Heritage Office presented the planned content of the visitor centre and its new corporate design. In addition to a small exhibition, there was a seating area with a stage for presentations and a kids' corner with touch-and-feel boxes and paper and pencils. Two sets of seating were placed in front of the shop so that visitors could sit and chat. Brightly coloured floor stickers near the pop-up visitor centre drew attention to the location. The team from the Bamberg World Heritage Office and the designers from the agency "h neun Berlin" hosted the five-day event and were available to discuss the new exhibition concept.

The World Heritage pop-up visitor centre's programme was structured with different formats tailored to the target audience:

**World Heritage for all generations**
In the mornings, kindergartens and school classes were invited to approach the topic of World Heritage together via play. For example, the children were given specially designed colouring pictures and paper templates.

**Science at lunch time**
At lunch times, students presented their research papers on cultural heritage and discussed them with the audience.

Figure 4: At the World Heritage pop-up visitor centre
© Bamberg World Heritage Office



Figure 5: Visitors to the World Heritage pop-up visitor centre
© Bamberg World Heritage Office

**World Heritage & me**
Every day, a professional photographer took photographs of guests at the pop-up visitor centre, along with a personal statement. The photographs were collected and displayed on a wall of the pop-up visitor centre and can still be found in a digital gallery.

**Lectures**
Every afternoon, one or two lectures were given by local experts about topics relevant to World Heritage.

The initiative was made possible thanks to the support of several Bamberg companies. In addition, a Japanese artist was invited to perform a concert, where she put local heritage into a global context.

What recommendations can we make to other World Heritage sites who also want to set up a World Heritage pop-up visitor centre?

- The location must be central. The entrance area must be visible, accessible and inviting.

- Many permits must be obtained in advance (for special use, advertising panels, the sale of refreshments, safety, and so on).

- A considerable amount of time and money is required for such an initiative. It is therefore worthwhile finding suitable partners to work with in realising the project.

- Free gifts such as decorative pins or notebooks can serve as a lasting reminder of the project.

**Author**

Patricia Alberth,
Head of the Bamberg
World Heritage Office

# The planning of financing

One of the challenging aspects in the planning phase of an information centre is **drawing up a financing plan.** This should contain reliable and durable calculations of both the **investment costs** and the **costs of day-to-day operations**, as well as a **financing model** that safeguards the centre's economic basis in the long term. The data gathered for several alternative scenarios in the feasibility study can and should serve as a basis of the financing plan.

Subsidies for setting up an information centre can, in part, be acquired through infrastructure funding programmes or regional investment programmes. With the exception of the National Investment Programme UNESCO World Heritage Sites of the then Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development, which provided subsidies to benefit all the World Heritage sites in Germany between 2009 and 2014, funding programmes are not usually specifically aimed at World Heritage sites. With this in mind, it may make sense to place the establishment of an information centre within the context of superordinate project objectives, such as the development of the regional economy through tourism. However, in such cases, the purpose of an information centre – that of World Heritage communication – should not be sidelined.

While it may be necessary in some cases to make adjustments at short notice to the calculation of the investment costs – for example, due to increased costs or the withdrawal of project partners – the **safeguarding of the long-term financing** of ongoing operating costs is frequently the bigger challenge. The need to continuously update and further develop the information centre should be borne in mind, and this – at least in part – should be included in the calculation of the ongoing operating costs. The points to be considered include:

- Updates of the communicated content – The communicated content must be updated regularly, particularly in view of the dynamic nature of the World Heritage List and subject-specific programmes as well as the need to regularly modify the basic information. These costs, including the resulting technical costs, should be incorporated into the calculations for ongoing operations and the financing model right from the start.

- The technologies, technical equipment and materials used – Depending on the communication formats and methods selected, materials and technologies may be subject to wear and tear or require regular maintenance. This should be budgeted for in the financing plan. Ideally, the feasibility study should contain calculations of the long-term costs for various alternatives, because they will, after all, determine whether or not certain materials, instruments or technologies can be used.

The **financing model** for long-term operations can comprise and combine various sources of financing, including models for public financing, income from sponsoring and from holding private events (such as conferences), cooperation with the private sector, donations or entrance fees. The best financing model for a given information centre depends on many factors, including the governing structures, the operating concepts and the integration of the centre into existing institutions, as already mentioned. However, the centre's size and functional scope, its communication offerings and the staff required are also important here.

Right from the start of the planning process, the issue of a **cost-effectiveness analysis** should be discussed constructively, notably with the political decision makers. Achieving break-even can be difficult for World Heritage information

centres, as well as for cultural and educational institutions in general. Particularly with regard to the States Parties' declared obligation to communicate World Heritage, all the stakeholders responsible for World Heritage sites should strive to produce a solution that is viable in the long term and that fulfils this duty to communicate.

Excursus

## Selected possible sources of financing for information centres (in Germany)

- EU subsidies, for example, Interreg funding for cross-border projects or financing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Creative Europe
- Infrastructure funding programmes of the federal states (Länder)
- The Joint Federal/Länder Task for the Improvement of Regional Economic Structures (GRW)
- German Federal Foundation for the Environment (DBU)
- German Federal Cultural Foundation (KSB)
- German Foundation for Monument Protection (DSD)
- Private-sector foundations
- Cooperation with local organisations in the private sector (including for tangible resources)

The individual financers' funding guidelines and programmes will determine whether the applications relate more to building measures or to content/form. If funding is approved, it must often be used for a specific purpose and the funded projects and measures must continue for a certain number of years.

In view of the demands placed by the funding institutions on applicants – which can be very exacting – it may make sense to closely support the applicant authority, through, for example, a specialist agency to secure and manage subsidies.

## Entrance fees

The fundamental question of entrance fees for planned information centres poses itself in connection with the financing model. As there are no rules, whether or not entrance fees should be charged and how high they should be is ultimately the decision of the centre's operators. However, it is advised to generally grant free entry, if possible, in view of the fact that World Heritage sites are the heritage of all of humankind and, as a result, all people should be able to access and learn about World Heritage sites.

Depending on the scope of the communication offering in the information centre, the operating costs, the operating concepts and the sources of financing available, a staggered concept for entrance fees is recommended. **Basic information** should definitely be accessible free of charge. For more comprehensive information and communication offerings, such as additional permanent exhibitions, multimedia installations and special exhibitions or guides, entrance fees may be necessary and appropriate. In some cases, a purely symbolic entrance fee can impart the message that World Heritage and the centre itself are something to be valued. **Social responsibility**[13] should be kept in mind for all the offerings for which entrance fees are charged. This means, for example, there should be reduced tariffs for families, educational institutions, pupils, students, benefit recipients and pensioners.

# Tendering process

The last step in the planning process is the public **invitation to tender** for the implementation of the project. It may make sense to divide the invitation to tender into two areas: firstly, the construction, conversion or renovation of the building and secondly, content-based design, including communication formats and methods. With regard to sustainability, certain aspects should be anchored into the invitation to tender for the construction, conversion or renovation of the building: namely, the environmentally compatible consumption of resources, the generation of renewable energy and/or energy-efficient installations and the use of appropriate materials. A carefully formulated and foresightful invitation to tender is an important instrument not only for setting up the information centre successfully but also for safeguarding its smooth running in the long term. It is therefore crucial for the centre to have a clear vision, embedded in a comprehensive communication concept, when the invitation to tender is issued.

# 3.
# Suggestions and considerations on "hardware"

# Structural design

Once the matter of where a given information centre will be located is settled, the next logical question involves how it should be designed in structural terms. The degree of freedom one has in this regard depends on whether the centre will be integrated into an existing institution, an existing building (which may be within the corresponding World Heritage site) or will be a new construction. When using buildings that have been designated as protected monuments, it is important to keep in mind that it must be possible to return the facility to its original state.

Structural designs depend on two fundamental aspects: the basic **functions** defined for the information centre in question (for more, see the section on choosing one or more locations) and the **profiles and numbers of visitors** it is expected to receive. The feasibility study should already offer projections regarding the latter. Here, the estimated volume of visitors is not the only deciding factor; further information and forecasts pertaining to the type of visitors expected are also key. Will they be individuals travelling on their own, or larger groups? What percentage will consist of families and children? Will visitors arrive by car or public means of transport? Will those interested come from the respective city or surrounding region, or be travelling from abroad? Meanwhile, additional questions arise depending on the type of World Heritage site at hand and where it is located. The basic **functions** defined for an information centre also influence its structural design, particularly in terms of the total area it requires and how the premises will be partitioned.

Taking the two aforementioned aspects as a starting point, the following points should thus be considered when planning the individual areas of an information centre. In doing so, accessibility for all should be factored into the planning and design of all the areas in and around information centres. For specific information on this subject, please refer to the corresponding sections.

- Entrance area – If possible, the size of an information centre's entrance area should correspond to the maximum number of expected visitors at any one time. Peak periods in connection with visitor groups or the simultaneous arrival of large numbers of individual visitors travelling by public transport should be given particular consideration. If visitor groups are expected at a high degree of frequency, separate entrance areas/points of sale and signed meeting points for groups are advisable. Measures to make the reception area and points of sale accessible – with height-adjustable counters, for example – should always be taken into account. If entrance fees are to be collected, additional space may be required for security equipment and provisions at the points of sale.

- Exhibition spaces – The size and partitioning of exhibition spaces depend primarily on the functions of the information centre. If temporary exhibitions will also be presented alongside a permanent exhibition, multiple separate spaces or tours must be planned with sufficient storage areas for the changing items on display. If the intention is to have areas of free access and others that are subject to entrance fees, those free of charge (which should at least provide some basic information) will need to be kept spatially separate from those subject to fees, and sufficient space may be required for the installation of entrance controls. Centres that are planning to offer guided tours of their exhibitions should ensure that there will be enough space for presentations during the tours. Depending on the target group and the types of visitors expected, seating (including mobile options) may be necessary. When planning an exhibition, its accessibility to children and people with physical disabilities is always an important factor to consider: Sufficiently wide hallways, information that is presented at lower heights and suitable methods of communicating knowledge are some examples of ways to provide for this aspect.

- Event spaces – If workshops, series of lectures or group-specific offerings, for school classes, for example, are planned, space will be required not only for the events themselves, but for the storage of furniture and technical equipment, too. These areas may also need to be outfitted with appropriate security provisions. Depending on the World Heritage site and the topics to be covered, special spaces for educational activities (labs or hands-on areas, for instance) may be advisable or desirable.

- Shops, cafés and restaurants – If spaces for selling food, beverages and/or other items are planned, further storage and working areas will be required, along with security equipment that will need additional space of its own.

- Recreation/rest areas – Families with children need places where they can play or relax, especially when they plan to spend a significant amount of time at an information centre.

- Staff areas – Based on the functions of the information centre and the staff it requires (be they employees or temporary freelancers), the provision of break rooms, change rooms, and a kitchen or similar area must be taken into account.

- Sanitary facilities – Such facilities should be quickly and directly accessible and capable of accommodating larger groups. The basic requirements include family-friendly features (such as baby-changing stations in facilities for both genders or additional sinks at a lower height) and accessibility to those with physical limitations.

- Parking/arrival – The arrangements made for parking will be determined by the types and numbers of visitors expected, as well as by the possible ways to reach the information centre by means of public transport. Parking spaces or bays where groups of visitors can exit and board buses should be provided. Considerations should always be made to ensure that large, accessible and family-friendly parking spaces are set aside for those who need them. Separate parking spaces for staff and features that encourage visitors to use environmentally friendly means of transport – bicycle stands or charging stations for electric vehicles, for example – are also desirable. Cooperations with private and public partners (especially local municipalities) are advisable in this regard.

## Case Study 5

## Success factors in establishing information and visitor centres – experiences from the UNESCO World Heritage site Old town of Regensburg with Stadtamhof

This site's World Heritage visitor centre opened on 28 May 2011. Rather than creating a new museum, the focus from the beginning of the planning process was on establishing an initial point of contact that would provide anyone interested with some initial information on World Heritage and Regensburg itself, along with related guidance.

### The Salzstadel

Regensburg's Salzstadel is ideally equipped to serve these purposes. Located along the Danube River near the Stone Bridge, this building can be found at the central junction of the two parts of the city's World Heritage site: the former Free Imperial City of Regensburg and the Bavarian Stadtamhof. The Salzstadel, a former salt storehouse, was built between 1616 and 1620. Its position on the Danube and above where the harbour canal once was resulted in problems with

Figure 6: The visitor centre of the World Heritage site in Regensburg
© Bilddokumentation Stadt Regensburg

its foundation. Shortly after the storehouse was finished, its middle section collapsed, leading to the inclusion of additional stone pillars during its reconstruction in 1620. One of the most prominent characteristics of the historically protected Salzstadel is this supporting structure, which is still recognisable today and served as a key point of reference in the design of the site's visitor centre. During the creation of the exhibition, the aim was to come up with a particular aesthetic that could coexist – rather than contend – with the Salzstadel's architecture.

Permanent exhibition

The visitor centre is built around a permanent exhibition that explains why Regensburg was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2006. It offers an overview of the city's development and insights into various circumstances and occurrences. The permanent exhibition thus presents an abundance of topics that are new and exciting, even for local citizens. The information within each subject area is separated into two levels: Along with facts of general interest, the exhibition "zooms in" on specific details and unique aspects.

Info point and event space

The visitor centre also houses an information point for tourists. The centre's event space, which is equipped with the latest media technology and can accommodate up to 50 people, can be booked for presentations and other occasions.

Based on the Regensburg experience, a number of parameters can be identified that are central for an information centre to resonate well with its guests:

- **Location:** A visitor centre needs to be easy to reach and, ideally, located near routes frequented by tourists. Since such facilities are associated with specific cultural or natural World Heritage sites, their success depends on having a clear spatial connection and being as visible and accessible as possible.

- **An interdisciplinary development team:** Setting up a visitor centre (and in particular, an integrated permanent exhibition) takes a broad range of skills and expertise that generally cannot be provided by individual experts. This is why collaborating across as many different disciplines as possible under clear, effective supervision is the best way to meet the complex and multifaceted requirements at hand.

- **Concentration on few educational subjects:** In light of recent findings in cognitive and motivational psychology, the maxim "less is more" is more relevant than ever. To enable visitors to gain an overview and internalise several key concepts, limiting the information on offer to just a few well-covered subjects is essential. While a visitor centre is not expected to be comprehensive or representative, it takes confidence to decide what can simply be left out.

- **A mix of methods:** The use of the same communication techniques on a lengthy tour will eventually result in bored visitors. An attractive mix of different methods is therefore necessary to rouse their curiosity and keep them as motivated as possible.

- **Information supplemented by a wide range of activities:** Insights from the psychology of learning show that people are best at recalling content they have experienced themselves. For visitor centres, this means that communication methods that enable guests to get involved are particularly suitable.

- **Changing exhibition content / supplementary special exhibitions:** Changing special exhibitions are a good way to tap into new target groups and encourage regular visitors' ongoing interest in a particular subject. The facility should, of course, take care not to lose sight of its actual main topic in the process.

- **A holistic approach instead of obligatory knowledge:** When designing a visitor centre, it can be helpful to put aside the idea of defining a fixed curriculum for the facility. The notion of "minimum knowledge" that every visitor should gain is not particularly constructive. Following a modular principle and developing corresponding offerings for different demographics is a more effective approach.

- **Content evaluation and adaptation:** It is important to respond to changing behaviours and/or profiles among a centre's visitors. This is why regular evaluations are required, along with any adjustments and additions that prove necessary as a result.

Authors

Susanne Hauer and Matthias Ripp, World Heritage Coordination Regensburg

# Scenography, technical equipment and exhibition furnishings

## Notes on selecting materials

To ensure the longevity of materials, it is a good idea to consider how they respond to cleaning, particularly in the context of historical materials and aspects that may be relevant with regard to monument preservation.

- While stone floors are the easiest to maintain, sealed wooden floors and flooring made of rubber or linoleum offer sensible alternatives. For hygienic reasons, porous types of stone (such as sandstone) and carpeted floors should be avoided.

- Using "decorator's varnish" (or latex paint) on walls makes it possible to clean off stains.

- Black and white surfaces and those made of glass can quickly start to look the worse for wear.

An overarching **narrative** (that is, a story or an idea) that provides a framework for the creative and content-related aspects of corresponding communication efforts, exhibition(s) and any events planned can serve as a starting point for an information centre's interior and exterior design. This design can incorporate the characteristics that constitute the OUV of the respective World Heritage site or the special attributes of the surrounding area and help present them in artistic ways. If an information centre is to be established within an existing building, the building's particular traits can help shape the overall vision for the centre from an early stage. It is also essential that considerations be made from the very beginning as to how the exhibition(s) can be turned into an experience everyone can access and enjoy.

As mentioned above, some of the information exhibitions contain will require regular updates. The same applies to technical components and other elements of design (especially those that are interactive) that are subject to physical wear, which must be factored into the centre's financial planning. **When selecting the materials and technologies to be used,** it is also a good idea to consider both how well they will stand up to frequent use and whether there will be easy, cost-effective ways to update them. Compared to more complex technologies, simpler equipment often offers the advantage of being more robust and easier to repair or replace when necessary. Here, it is important to keep in mind that components or materials that employees can update or repair themselves without having to consult specialised service providers will be less expensive in the long run. Materials that are environmentally friendly in terms of their procurement and usage (by virtue of their being renewable, for example) are preferable, provided that they are durable enough to support frequent use. When using certain technologies or media, efforts should also be made to ensure that there is enough space and proper ventilation in the facilities to avoid shortening the useful life of such equipment.

When commissioning the work required to create an information centre, it is advisable to select, if possible, service providers and subcontractors that will be able to **perform maintenance on the technical equipment** after the interior design and exhibition(s) have been completed in order to safeguard its continued compatibility.

# Internal and external signage

When designing an information centre's interior and exhibition(s), a clear and easily understandable system of **signs visitors can follow through the centre** is essential, especially if visits will be taking place without guides. This signage should be accessible to all visitors, which entails making use of universally understood symbols, employing communication methods that are also appropriate for the visually impaired and making information displays visible to children and people with walking impairments (by installing them at appropriate heights, for example). The signs should also clearly indicate any areas that are not accessible to all visitors.

Signage can also be installed in the immediate surroundings of an information centre, in particular if it is located within or directly adjacent to the respective World Heritage site. A uniform system that includes **info points** can serve as an ideal complement to the centre. Here, the key lies in following a holistic approach that is designed to enable visitors to develop an understanding of the signs displayed no matter where they start (at specific info points or at the information centre itself). Each point should indicate where to find further information, especially when the information displayed at various info points is interconnected. Besides enriching the visitor experience, this can help prevent disappointment among visitors and the communication of incomplete knowledge. If a system of info points is already in place before an information centre is established, it helps to analyse it and incorporate corresponding references into the information presented at the centre.

Along with info points, apps and similar digital formats can be used to create an information and guidance system within a given World Heritage site or in connection with its information centre.

A World Heritage information centre very rarely operates entirely on its own. Instead, it typically has a direct connection (with respect to the subjects covered and often in geographical terms, as well) to the World Heritage site in question and to related facilities, such as museums, national park centres, and tourist information points. If the information centre is not integrated into one of these facilities, it may still make sense to reference them as appropriate. Ideally, **a standard set of information** should be available at the centre and facilities like these in the form of flyers or uniform signage that guides visitors through the diverse range of activities on offer and invites them to experience the different facets of the respective World Heritage site.

To make sure that those interested in an information centre find their way there, it is a good idea to integrate a reference to the centre into the general signage displayed for visitors, particularly within the surrounding city. Restrictive guidelines on such signs can pose a challenge here, which is why it is necessary to work closely with the authorities and come up with creative solutions if and when required. An information and visitor centre can thus play a significant role in directing visitor movements. When planned accordingly along with the responsible entities, such efforts can have a positive (read: mitigating) effect on the strain visitors can otherwise place on the condition of preserved sites.

# Information centre personnel

High-quality communication and education offers go hand-in-hand with having **enough well-trained personnel.** However, **securing funding for staff-related costs** for the long term often proves considerably more difficult than, for example, acquiring one-time investments for the initial establishment of an information centre. Suitable long-term subsidies and support from political decision-makers are essential to engaging in communication efforts in a sustainable manner and thus in the spirit of the World Heritage Convention.

The personnel requirements of a given information centre are directly linked to its functions and presentation formats. Along with the qualified staff who handle the actual communication activities, employees involved in cleaning, security and other services must be factored into the centre's financial planning.

It can be helpful to fall back on freelancers for select engagements (guided tours, for example) and hire additional staff through the acquisition of project funding. It may also be possible to take advantage of synergies that reduce personnel requirements by cooperating with museums, national park centres, tourist information points and other established institutions. Here, it is prudent to enter into contracts that define the type and scope of the work each individual partner's employees are to perform.

Regardless of whether an engagement involves employees or freelancers, it is important and in the spirit of inclusive, **sustainable development** to ensure good working conditions and that the hiring process treats every applicant equally. This applies particularly to the hiring of people with disabilities. An information centre should welcome every opportunity to contribute to local or regional development as an employer.

To safeguard standards of quality in the context of communication and education activities, regular **personnel training** is advisable. A number of World Heritage sites in Germany have already reported on their experiences in training their communication staff (guides, for instance). The "Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide Training and Certification Programme for UNESCO World Heritage Sites", a project carried out by the UNESCO office in Bangkok, also offers orientation regarding personnel development. It also served as the basis for a training manual that is available online.

To ensure corresponding quality standards for freelancers and employees of external service providers, it is advisable to conduct **standardised quality audits and certification measures** on a regular basis. Unlike other nations, Germany does not have a standard form of certification for tourist guides that can be relied upon throughout the country. Cooperation agreements with external providers can serve as a contractual framework for quality audits and certification measures of this kind. If several providers of guided tours are available near a given information centre, it makes sense to assign responsibilities pertaining to such services within the centre and communicate them clearly to avoid conflicts (between private and public providers, for example).

Along with training on the topics to be communicated, courses on making sure that the centre is accessible to all should be conducted on a regular basis. Here, centres should cooperate with experts and local stakeholders, as well as those tasked with promoting inclusion at a municipal or regional level. Establishing the position of "accessibility officer" can also give an information centre an additional mark of quality.

# Accessibility for all

The chance to experience and explore cultural and natural heritage should be afforded to every interested individual. This includes people with various disabilities, be they related to motor skills, sight or hearing, or mental and cognitive faculties. Such considerations are based not only on Germany's "Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz"[14] (a law passed in 2002 that is designed to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities to participate in society), but also on the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,[15] which has been in effect in Germany since 2009. Here, attention should be paid to Article 30 of the Convention, which refers to the right to take part in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport on an equal basis. In addition, the Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention (2015) states that inclusion contributes to sustainable development.

## Accessibility as an integrative approach

In light of the fact that accessibility for all is especially likely to be unachievable in buildings and ensembles under monument protection (as well as natural reserves), it is particularly important that information centres enable everyone to have a barrier-free World Heritage experience. Here, an **integrative approach** should be followed to ensure that no one feels discriminated against as a result of their being subject to special rules or restrictions. Such efforts are all the more relevant when one considers that accessibility benefits not only those with permanent disabilities, but also families with prams, people with temporary limitations (due to accidents, for example) and the elderly. In addition, providing for accessibility is more than just a way to accommodate people with disabilities and uphold their right to equal participation in society; it represents another mark of quality for tourist destinations. Corresponding certification can be obtained through "Reisen für Alle" (Travel for Everyone)[16].

To enable visitors to experience information centres as they wish, barriers need to be eliminated or avoided from the start. Along with structural and sensory obstacles, this includes barriers that affect people's interactions with one another. An **accessibility management plan** can provide a helpful framework for coordinating individual efforts and carrying them out in sensible, coherent ways. To create a management plan of this kind – and in particular to take the requirements of barrier-free construction into account – it makes sense to involve experts specialised in this type of building in the planning process. Assembling a corresponding **committee of experts, consultants and representatives** of the relevant groups, including both during the planning phase and for the long term, can also be beneficial.

Engaging experts in barrier-free construction as early on as possible is advisable for financial reasons too. If renovations and modifications need to be made retrospectively, the costs often prove to be greater than what would have been required to incorporate aspects of accessibility into the plans from the beginning. Among other sources, a study conducted by ETH Zurich[17] in 2004 offers points of reference regarding the **costs of barrier-free construction and renovation.**

## Starting with information on accessibility

Making **information available on a centre's accessibility** is key in enabling and encouraging people with disabilities to visit it. This information needs to be clearly understandable, precise, accurate, and of course, accessible to all through the centre's website, flyers and other formats. If a given information centre is not or only partially barrier-free (or advance registration is required so that measures can be taken to accommodate corresponding visitors), clear mention should be made of this fact on the centre's website and in its print materials. When no reliable information is available, potential guests often decide not to visit a centre for fear of not being able to enter when they arrive. In this context, photos and other graphical presentations are of particular relevance, as they enable those interested to judge whether the centre in question will be accessible to them.

## Accessibility of the building and its interior

When **building an information centre and designing its interior,** the following aspects (among others) should be considered to make it barrier-free:

- Accessibility – Efforts should be made to ensure that the entrance area is as accommodating as possible to wheelchairs, walking frames, prams and other forms of assistance that have wheels. When creating an information centre within an existing building (which may also be under monument protection), it is not always possible to achieve comprehensive accessibility. In such cases, solutions that make at least some areas accessible are to be encouraged. These barrier-free areas should be used to present basic information on both the World Heritage concept in general and the specific site in question. This helps ensure that the essential aspects are communicated to all those interested. To provide for sufficient accessibility, features such as wide hallways, ramps (as an alternative to steps), even, non-slip flooring, hand rails, and spaces that enable visitors to move freely without stumbling over various hazards should be taken into account. Considerations should also be made as to whether the facility can be made accessible to guide dogs.

- Signage – The signs and other forms of guidance used at centres must be both recognisable and easy to understand for all visitors. This entails displaying information in a manner that makes it visible from all angles and heights and using different senses (in accordance with multi-sensory design). Guidance systems with tactile elements that are embedded into the floor offer a suitable complement to verbal signage, for example. Areas that are not or only partially barrier-free should be clearly designated, either by signs, reception personnel, flyers or some other means.

- Exhibitions – The multi-sensory design principle should also be observed in designing exhibitions. This means that visitors should be able to take in information using at least two senses (hearing, seeing, touching). It is a good idea to keep corresponding technical equipment and arrangements in mind when planning and designing the spaces and furnishings involved in a given exhibition. Systems that make it possible to adjust the height of the items on display and sufficient sources of natural or artificial light (for visitors with visual impairments) are sensible ways to make exhibitions accessible.

- External resources – Cooperations with healthcare suppliers, local associations of relevant groups and other stakeholders can lead to opportunities to obtain items like magnifying glasses, FM devices for the hearing-impaired and wheelchairs for visitors to borrow free of charge. In these cases, the storage space such items require must be taken into account.

- Service without barriers – Enabling visitors to experience an information centre without restrictions also requires corresponding services. Along with trained staff, the accessibility of these services is the most important aspect to consider. This includes having barrier-free sanitary facilities and height-adjustable counters

**Offering accessible information online**

- Provide detailed information to enable people with physical limitations to determine how accessible the facility in question is

- Web design: high-contrast layouts, options to enlarge fonts and further increase contrast; no serif fonts or italics

- Enable use of screen-reader functions for texts and alternative texts for images

**Download**

18 The brochure is available here in German.

19 The brochure is available for order here in German.

20 The manual is available here on the website of the Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing of Berlin: ✉ https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/bauen/barrierefreies_bauen/de/handbuch.shtml

21 The conference report "Barrierefrei im Baudenkmal" is available here in German.

in the entrance and ticketing areas (assuming points of sale or similar arrangements are planned). If an information centre offers food or beverages, provisions should be made to ensure that such areas are accessible to all; this may involve height-adjustable tables, fixtures along the edges of tables where visitors can place their walking equipment, areas with enough space for people with wheelchairs or prams and menus everyone can read.

- Events – If an information centre hosts presentations, workshops or other events, this is another area in which accessibility is desirable. The important aspects of holding barrier-free events, as well as checklists and practical tips on this subject, are covered in various related brochures, including those provided by Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband Landesverband Hessen e.V.[17] and Antidiskriminierungsbüro Sachsen e.V.[19].

Meanwhile, the city of Berlin's manual "Berlin-Design for all: Accessible Public Buildings"[20] offers more detailed information on these aspects in connection with both functional areas within a building and individual structural elements. "Barrierefrei im Baudenkmal", a conference report on barrier-free monuments from the German National Committee for Monument Protection (DNK)[21], also includes insights on this topic.

## Barrier-free travel

The accessibility of information centres depends not only on the extent to which their interiors are accessible, but also on the availability of barrier-free travel options. In addition to wide parking spaces located near the information centre, corresponding means of public transport are helpful. World Heritage sites and the operators of information centres are often unable to bring any direct influence to bear on this subject, which is why cooperating with the authorities responsible and associations of relevant groups is crucial. Among other aspects, such efforts involve making public transport stops barrier-free and providing for corresponding measures and information within the vehicles themselves.

# "Reisen für Alle" based on the example of the museum and visitors mine of Rammelsberg, part of the UNESCO World Heritage site Mines of Rammelsberg, Historic Town of Goslar and Upper Harz Water Management System

By its nature, a former industrial site is accessible in its own way – but for machines, not people! When work began on Rammelsberg's mining museum, the initial situation thus required infrastructural measures to accommodate visitors (whose numbers have since grown to over 100,000 each year). Take the site's sanitary facilities, for instance, where a wheel-chair-accessible toilet was installed during the construction effort. Another example involves a specially converted mining car that offers enough space for two people in wheelchairs to take part in the museum's underground tour.

While some specific measures can be planned in advance and carried out to ensure accessibility, others only present themselves as solutions retrospectively. In Rammelsberg, one such case relates to the inclined lift that was put back into service in 2014.

Originally used to transport material, it has been retooled to help people avoid the more than 250 uphill steps its route would otherwise require. The lift now enables visitors (including those in wheelchairs) to experience Rammelsberg's former ore dressing plant in all its glory.

Figure 8: The inclined lift
©Weltkulturerbe Erzbergwerk Rammelsberg Goslar GmbH



Figure 7: The converted mining car
©Weltkulturerbe Erzbergwerk Rammelsberg Goslar GmbH

This example shows that accessibility is not always something that has to be achieved; in many cases, it already has been – you just have to recognise it! This is where efforts need to be made to raise awareness and change mindsets among the people involved. If a door has no threshold, for instance, it is fully accessible to those in wheelchairs and can be designated as such. There are plenty of other examples that could be cited in this regard.

Participants should thus view the "Reisen für Alle" project not as a finite endeavour, but as an ongoing process – one made up of many different measures both large and small. It is a process that always needs to continue based on the feedback guests provide, even after certification is obtained.

Author

Dr. Martin Wetzel,
Scientific Assistant,
Rammelsberg Museum
and Visitors Mine,
a World Heritage site

# 4.
# Suggestions and considerations on "software"

# Communication content

Every information centre has a variety of content for communication at its disposal that is inspired, for example, by the special characteristics of the respective World Heritage site. The extent to which this content can be communicated also depends, however, on the size of the centre and the communication formats it has chosen to use. Temporary exhibitions, for instance, allow for more in-depth exploration of specific (niche) subjects.

## Fundamental communication content

**Fundamental aspects should always be communicated** and made available free of charge whenever possible. The bulk of this basic information is determined by the framework documents described above. The essential content to be presented includes:

- The concept of World Heritage – Upon its inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, every World Heritage site becomes part of an international network dedicated to solidarity and cooperation. Raising awareness of this network and helping people understand it (such as by presenting all the World Heritage sites around the world or select examples thereof) should be primary objectives of the communication efforts made at information centres. This also includes educating visitors about the World Heritage programme as a whole and promoting their understanding of the aims of the World Heritage Convention – that is, making a sustained common effort to preserve and protect the heritage that belongs to all of humankind. Ideally, doing so will help propagate a sense of responsibility for this heritage around the world.

- Core zone and surroundings – Graphical and cartographical presentations of a World Heritage site's core and buffer zones should acquaint visitors with the site's dimensions and location in relation to its urban environment or the surrounding landscape.

- Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) – This is the single most important pre-requisite of inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Accentuating the OUV ascribed to a World Heritage site along with the applicable criteria and the aspects of integrity and authenticity is thus one of the main tasks – and one of the more complex challenges – involved in communication efforts. Since it is safe to assume that most visitors will not be familiar with the technical terms used in the World Heritage Convention and the Operational Guidelines, it is important to formulate the Statements of Outstanding Universal Value in ways they can understand.

- Providing context – Despite its OUV, no World Heritage site stands on its own. There are always connections to other sites, be they geographical, temporal or thematic in nature. It therefore makes sense to point out these links as part of communication, such as by displaying all the other World Heritage sites in the region or across Germany or presenting sites that date back to the same historical period or the same year of inscription. The latter method and similar approaches are particularly helpful, as they make it possible to showcase the variety of the natural and cultural sites on the World Heritage List. In addition, many World Heritage sites fall into specific categories: urban, religious, maritime, modern, or industrial heritage, for example. It is a good idea to illustrate these thematic contexts and any related networks, such as the OWHC, or programmes from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to give people a broader understanding of the World Heritage sites they visit.

- Heritage in all its facets – In addition to the World Heritage Convention, there are other UNESCO conventions and programmes that deal with heritage and

diversity. Those worthy of particular mention include the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), as well as the UNESCO programmes Man and the Biosphere (1970), Global Geoparks (2015) and Memory of the World (1992). Thanks to their geographical or thematic proximity, World Heritage sites can offer good starting points for covering the other forms of UNESCO heritage recognised by these conventions and programmes. Ideally, this also leads to constructive opportunities to cooperate for all the parties involved.

Serial World Heritage sites, particularly those that are transboundary or transnational, face a distinct challenge in communicating the OUV of an entire site at all of its component parts – to the extent that these parts have their own information centres or similar facilities. Here, it makes sense for those responsible for the individual component parts to work together closely and devise an overarching communication concept based on a general underlying narrative that can nevertheless be used to accentuate local aspects.

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Case Study 7

## "Heritage of Mankind" – the introductory topic of the World Heritage exhibition in Stralsund, part of the UNESCO World Heritage site Historic Centres of Stralsund and Wismar

Since 2011, the Hanseatic City of Stralsund has maintained an exhibition that provides information on the UNESCO World Heritage programme; showcases World Heritage sites in Germany and around the world; and communicates Stralsund's World Heritage values through exhibits, videos, illustrations and photos.

An exhibition space entitled **Heritage of Mankind** serves as a prelude to five galleries. In accordance with the exhibition's approach, it gradually proceeds from the big picture to a focus on Stralsund by starting with an international perspective. This is meant to show visitors that being included on the World Heritage List signifies that a cultural or natural heritage site is of outstanding value. All of humanity has an interest in protecting locations like these.

### Interior concept

The exhibition space is divided conceptually into four square areas that represent the four quadrants of the earth. The choice of lines of latitude and longitude as a referential basis was prompted by the desire to avoid an over-representing of the number of sites on a certain continent (Europe, for example).

The globe in the middle of the space symbolises the importance of heritage around the world. On a screen, visitors can proceed through four presentations featuring photos from each hemisphere. When a presentation begins, blue LEDs light up on the globe to mark many of the more than 1,000 World Heritage sites. The idea to light up only the sites located in the chosen hemisphere could not be realised for technical reasons. Annual updates were not considered either due to the related costs and effort.

Text panels answer a number of key questions, including: What is UNESCO, and what purposes does it serve? What is

Figure 9: Locating sites on the globe: Stralsund's World Heritage
exhibition conveys the Hanseatic City's significance for humankind
© Hanseatic City of Stralsund

the basic concept behind the World Heritage Convention, and whose responsibility is it to protect the heritage of humanity? What is the World Heritage List, and what can be granted World Heritage status?

In each corner of the room, a display case exhibits souvenirs from the respective hemisphere. Many of these items were provided by citizens of Stralsund, whom the curators called upon to contribute during the planning phase.

The walls feature arrangements of the names of World Heritage sites, some of which are well-known and others less so. These are also grouped by hemisphere, and a conscious effort was made to include examples from all three categories (cultural, natural and mixed sites).

Overall, the curators' sought to present the fundamental knowledge visitors would need about the World Heritage programme in order to better understand Stralsund's special status as a UNESCO World Heritage site during the rest of their visits.

**"Less is more" presents a challenge**

In planning the exhibition, the curators faced a challenge: How could they use its 100 square metres of space to be both as detailed and as concise as possible in presenting the complexities of Stralsund's historic centre as a UNESCO World Heritage site? The knowledge available needed to be boiled down to a few core themes. The curators decided that the exhibition's design and the written style of the information presented would be crucial, which was why they did their best to create texts that would be easy to understand. The centre's guest book and the feedback provided by visitors during their tours have shown that this exhibition succeeds in conveying the key messages defined in the exhibition concept.

**Bibliography**

The following book was helpful in creating the text panels of the exhibition: Ewelyn Dawid and Robert Schlesinger (ed.): Texte in Museen und Ausstellungen. Ein Praxisleitfaden. Bielefeld, second edition (2012), ISBN 3-89942-107-8.

**For further information, please visit:**

✉ https://www.wismar-stralsund.de/en/experience_world_heritage/visitor_centres/

**Author**

Steffi Behrendt, World Heritage coordinator, Department for Culture, World Heritage and Media (Hanseatic City of Stralsund)

# World Heritage & Global Geoparks: Communication, education and cooperation based on the example of the UNESCO World Heritage site Messel Pit Fossil Site

At the request of the Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts, Welterbe Grube Messel gGmbH (WGM) – the non-profit organisation that oversees the Messel Pit – has worked closely with the Bergstrasse-Odenwald Nature Park (which was designated a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2015) since commencing operations on 1 October 2003. The sites have a strong thematic connection due to the Messel Pit's OUV as a fossil deposit on land.

Through various EU cooperation projects, contributions to the geopark ranger programme, joint events and offerings and the development of educational media, these two locations have worked together to accomplish much since 2003. In 2004, trained geopark rangers began leading tours into the Messel Pit, which prompted WGM to start training its own World Heritage guides. Specialists from the Bergstrasse-Odenwald Global Geopark as well as the relevant research institutes also collaborated on developing a concept for the Messel Pit's World Heritage visitor centre.

Given her then employment in the Vulkaneifel, now also a UNESCO Geopark near Germany's western border, the managing director of WGM is one of the founding members of the European Geopark Network since it was founded in 2000. She brought its network partners together with those of the Bergstrasse-Odenwald Global Geopark upon her arrival at the Messel Pit. The World Heritage site has taken part in European Geoparks Week every year since, and other cooperations have also arisen. The Geopark, meanwhile, joins forces with other colleagues in Germany to hold Geotope Day every September; it named the Messel Pit its Geotope of the Year in 2010. The Messel Pit further strengthened its collaboration with the Bergstrasse-Odelwald Global Geopark through a training programme for tour guides from the Global Geoparks in Lesvos (Greece) and Hong Kong (China). In addition, the World Heritage site lent its expertise to the Hong Kong Global Geopark when it designed its visitor centre. The Messel Pit and the Bergstrasse-Odenwald Global Geopark then forged an international cooperation with the Naturtejo Global Geopark (Portugal) to hold a series of events at the Messel Pit's visitor centre in 2016. A visit to Portugal followed in 2017.

This cooperation has benefited both sides in their common efforts to promote tourism and engage the public. The World Heritage site and Global Geopark completed a tour book project in 2009 and designed a set of geo-themed playing cards in 2013, both of which were presented in joint appearances at the international tourism trade show ITB Berlin. In the area of youth education, geopark rangers hold "geo-workshops" for children at the Messel Pit.

Finally, its connection to the Bergstrasse-Odenwald Global Geopark has given WGM the opportunity to cooperate with the Peking Man site, a UNESCO World Heritage site in China. The organisation is planning to attend celebrations set to mark the 100th anniversary of this World Heritage site's discovery. Plans and preparations have been or are currently being made for further cooperations involving exchanges, one of which brought a group of Chinese and Japanese guests to Germany in September 2018, and other educational projects.

**Author**

Dr. Marie-Luise Frey, Managing Director, Welterbe Grube Messel gGmbH

## Education for Sustainable Development –
## part of communicating World Heritage

On the basis of the global Agenda 2030 and the aforementioned policy document, **sustainability** is one of the fundamental aspects that needs to be communicated. In doing so, the facets of sustainability can be presented either as separate educational units or as content that has been integrated into other units. The following questions offer reference points that can be used to determine which aspects should be covered with regard to sustainability and sustainable development:

- What is the connection between environmentally compatible habits and the long-term preservation of the World Heritage site at hand (or such sites in general)? What dangers does a lack of sustainability pose to World Heritage sites, and how can they be mitigated or prevented through conscious lifestyles and actions?

- What lessons and insights can be derived from a World Heritage site and its history in connection with preserving nature and fostering a society of peaceful coexistence?

- To what extent does recognition as a World Heritage site – that is, the granting of special protection to a specific area – promote sustainability?

- How can visitors help protect and preserve a World Heritage site through their actions? In what ways can they engage in sustainable behaviour, be it in their travel, consumption habits or actions on-site?


Figure 10: An external view of the Wadden Sea Conservation Station on Hooge
©Wadden Sea Conservation Station

**Further information (in German)**

https://www.schutz station-wattenmeer.de/ seminarhaeuser/hooge/

**Author**

Rainer Borcherding, Wadden Sea Conservation Station

Besides addressing topics related to sustainability, the informative offerings available through Hooge's conservation station encourage participants to get actively involved in completing its educational modules. ESD focuses on many key competencies, and taking environmental factors into account at every level of daily life is one of the primary goals this facility seeks to achieve within the Wadden Sea World Heritage site.

**Case Study 9**

# Holistic implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) – the Wadden Sea Conservation Station on the island of Hooge, part of the UNESCO World Heritage site Wadden Sea

The remote island of Hooge lies in the part of the Wadden Sea World Heritage site that belongs to Schleswig-Holstein. The homes of the 100 people who live there are built on man-made hills, or "Warften". One known as the Hanswarft keeps the Wadden Sea Conservation Station dry when the tide comes in. This station houses a national park information centre, accommodation for seminar participants and a team of volunteers led by a station manager, who give guests the chance to experience nature all year round through sea excursions, bird-watching tours and educational events on marine conservation.

Hooge's conservation station has been recognised as an ESD partner of the German state of Schleswig-Holstein since 2005. The holistic nature of Education for Sustainable Development is fundamental for the facility's educational approach. The facility runs on a combination of geothermal, solar thermal and photovoltaic energy, and it obtains the equipment and consumable supplies it needs from environmentally friendly producers. Inside the station's seminar building, signs that remind its visitors to be mindful of their consumption of water, electricity and paper adorn the walls, light switches and other appropriate areas. The guest toilet features a "global trade" theme. The guest rooms, meanwhile, are named after biosphere reserves in Germany, which they also showcase with posters and information material. The groups that come here for seminars are encouraged to buy their provisions on the island to support its local farmers and small food market. The latter also serves a social purpose as a place where people can meet. In cooperation with the local church community, the station also runs a small "world shop" that promotes the concept of fair trade on Hooge.

## Spaces for intercultural learning and dialogue

Upon their inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, all cultural and natural sites become part of a programme founded on the concepts of international cooperation and intercultural understanding. This means that World Heritage sites and by extension, their information centres have a responsibility to acquaint visitors with the programme's focus on fostering international solidarity through their communication. A wide range of reference points for presenting **World Heritage sites as places for intercultural encounters and exchanges** are provided by the sites themselves. This is because most of them have witnessed exchanges of culture, nature or the history of ideas; have contributed to such exchanges; or are engaged in dialogue that continues to this day. Incorporating these perspectives into the subject matter to be communicated is just as worthwhile as presenting the existing partnerships, be they with World Heritage sites abroad or other places of cultural or natural interest. Themed tours,

workshops and presentations serve particularly well as opportunities not only to communicate intercultural aspects, but also to enable participants to experience them. Further explanations and case studies can be found in the section on communication formats and methods.

The content presented – be it fundamental in nature or on a specific topic – should be tailored to visitors' interests and designed to facilitate an emotional connection to World Heritage. Here, the aim is to engage people as much as possible in a variety of ways **to which they can relate.** It is also important that visitors be able to decide what they want to focus on within the content communicated. This helps to avoid overloading them with information, which can cause their interest to wane.

## Legal issues

The aforementioned necessity to update certain content at regular intervals – the overall number of World Heritage sites, for example – is important not only from a financial perspective, but also for legal reasons. If an information centre relies on external service providers to produce its texts and graphical displays, it is prudent to establish contractual provisions stipulating that the respective World Heritage site or the operators of the information centre will hold the **rights to such content**. This ensures that updates or changes can be made to the texts whenever required without any legal concerns.

# Target groups for communication

The manner in which content is prepared and different communication methods are chosen also depends to a large extent on the people for whom these efforts are designed. The **visitor profiles** mentioned previously, which should ideally be based on a **feasibility study,** can provide key information in this regard. Regular surveys, based on visitor questionnaires, for example, should be conducted to review and add to these profiles as necessary.

The target groups that should always be taken into account when planning and preparing content include the following:

• Local citizens – World Heritage is also local heritage. Taking this sentiment into consideration in communication and education activities does more than benefit the local population. When these residents feel a sense of responsibility for their World Heritage site and have a basic understanding of the World Heritage concept as well as of the principles it entails, it is easier to manage the site. Moreover, placing a location's own heritage in an international context can open up new perspectives, promote interculturalism and raise awareness of global relationships. It therefore makes sense to analyse how an information centre might be able to reach out to the respective local population as a specific target group.

• Policy makers – The key people involved in making political decisions in this area generally have other frames of reference than the idea of World Heritage. This is why it is tremendously important to communicate the overall World

Heritage concept and the spirit in which the World Heritage Convention was established, along with the aims of the surrounding programme.

• Domestic and international guests – Since it is safe to assume that these groups will arrive with different understandings of history, geography and sociocultural affairs, communication that caters for international visitors may differ from that which focuses on those from Germany. This should be kept in mind when preparing information, especially for guided tours. Domestic and international visitors alike should have the opportunity to develop a sense of responsibility for our shared heritage and an understanding of both the European and more global aspects of World Heritage sites.
The languages in which information should be communicated (besides German and English) also depend on the international visitor profiles expected at the specific site in question. Since the staff at a given information centre will not always be able to accommodate all the language-related needs of its guests, audio guides or new media can be helpful.

• Children and families – Making an information centre a child- and family-friendly place involves more than its interior and structural design. Offerings designed specifically for children and families enable young visitors to take part in developing an understanding of World Heritage and the particular World Heritage site.

• People with disabilities – Accessibility for all must be taken into account and implemented not only through structural measures, but also in the formats and methods used to communicate content. Among other considerations, this means using simple language and designing the information on offer to be inclusive. Further details on this subject are covered in the corresponding section.

• Expert audiences – The significance of visitors with specialist konwledge (students, researchers and those in professions related to the site, for example) depends on the World Heritage site in question. Specific communication activities may be desirable to enable guests like these to explore the site and aspects relevant to World Heritage on a deeper level.

Groups of guests require different communication efforts than those visiting a site on their own. This needs to be taken into account when selecting communication formats and methods. Room sizes and other spatial conditions also have an influence on how large groups can be, the choice of formats and the time required for guided tours.

# Communication formats and methods

Information centres can make use of a variety of communication formats and methods. The formats, methods and resources chosen will in turn influence both the number of staff members required and the special qualifications they should have, which ultimately affects a centre's operating costs, as well. The section below presents some of the **communication formats and methods** that can be employed:

- Orientation systems and signage – In addition to helping people find their way, systems like these can be of considerable assistance in communicating World Heritage. This is all the more applicable when they make it possible to present information at a series of decentralised locations of particular interest. For more information, please refer to the section on internal and external signage.

- Site layouts / models – Layouts or models of a World Heritage site provide visitors with an overview and offer opportunities to illustrate individual aspects. This applies in particular to site characteristics that are nearly impossible to see or comprehend up close, such as road networks, urban layouts or geographical features. Furthermore, models appeal to both the visual and tactile senses, which makes them suitable for barrier-free communication. If visitors will have the option to touch a model, the materials used to construct it should be hard-wearing.

- Permanent exhibitions – Regardless of its size and scope, a permanent exhibition is at the heart of every information centre. This is why these exhibitions also serve as the places where the fundamental and essential aspects covered previously should be communicated. While it applies to all exhibitions, the need to design these spaces to be as inclusive and accessible as possible is especially important in the case of permanent exhibitions.

- Special exhibitions – When feasible from a spatial and financial perspective, special exhibitions can make a desirable complement to an information centre's permanent exhibition. Besides enabling a centre to offer more in-depth information on specific topics directly or indirectly related to the respective World Heritage site, such exhibitions present a chance to cooperate with researchers, local artists and associations, other World Heritage sites or similar entities. In this way, information centres can position themselves more clearly as places that foster social interaction and as members of the stakeholder communities pertaining to their sites.

- Educational offerings – Guided tours, workshops and other offerings related to permanent and, if applicable, special exhibitions make it possible to communicate more detailed information in various ways, especially in connection with specific target groups. In particular, children and other young visitors often take a greater interest in interactive components, which also have a longer-lasting effect. Furthermore, they offer certain advantages in terms of being accessible to everyone, yet also appealing to visitors with specialist knowledge. In most cases, guided tours and similar services cannot be made available free of charge due to the trained staff they require. That said, socially minded offerings – those made possible by cross-subsidies that support families, socially disadvantaged groups or education in general, for example – should be encouraged whenever feasible. Depending on the scope and variety of the educational content available, it may make sense for information centres to engage freelancers. To ensure the quality of the communication work performed by employees and volunteers, standards of content and professionalism and regular training are advisable. For more information on this topic, please see the section on personnel.

All the materials centres use as part of their various methods and formats should meet certain sustainability criteria; they should be made of renewable substances, procurable from regional providers, reusable and eventually recyclable, for example.

**Digital means of communication** can be offered as a complement to the information presented on-site, including both before and after guests visit a World Heritage site or its information centre. While they are no substitute for the direct, hands-on experience, these offerings do present many advantages, particularly in catering for visitors who would otherwise be unreachable due to various impediments, language barriers or other factors.

Sites with **cafés or restaurants** can tie them into their communication efforts or use them for communication purposes as part of a holistic approach to Education for Sustainable Development. Offering foods and beverages from the surrounding area, for example, not only furthers the concept of sustainability; it is also a way to showcase a site's local and regional heritage.

# Accessibility for all

Physical accessibility is just one key component of barrier-free communication at information centres. Communication formats, methods and content also need to be adapted accordingly. An **inclusive approach** should be followed in these formats and methods to help ensure that no one feels marginalised. Meanwhile, many offerings that are barrier-free (or close to it) appeal to a variety of target groups. Families and older visitors often opt for barrier-free guided tours, for instance, and information presented in simple language is suitable for children and non-native speakers.

**Simple language** is generally a good way to facilitate intellectual accessibility. It involves observing the following basic criteria: short sentences, one idea per sentence, no nested sentences, no foreign or technical terms, no abbreviations, numbers presented as digits (not words). When writing texts in simple language or foreign languages, the involvement of experts is essential.

The use of illustrative, explanatory presentations; sign-language videos and audio offerings; tactile means of communication (such as 3D relief models) and similar features is also helpful in ensuring accessibility for all. As in the case of orientation systems and signage, the **principle of multi-sensory design**, that is, communicating information through at least two senses, should be followed here too.

# Publication Data