



‘GDYNIA MODERNIST CITY CENTRE’ AS A POLISH CANDIDATE FOR THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST. PROSPECTS AND CONCLUSIONS

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ABSTRACT: In 2025, during the 47th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Paris, Poland presented the nominated property for inscription on the World Heritage List: "Gdynia. Early Modernist City Centre". In accordance with the recommendation from the ICOMOS Evaluation, the nomination requires supplementation and the provision of certain clarifications. Nevertheless, the overall positive assessment of its Outstanding Universal Value, as well as its state of conservation and protection, provides grounds to expect that Gdynia's nomination will be resubmitted to the World Heritage Committee at its next session in 2026 and stands a strong chance of being inscribed on the WHL.

Such an outcome would represent a major success, crowning the consistent efforts undertaken in Gdynia for over 20 years, encompassing the protection, revalorization, and promotion of its local heritage. However, the inscription of the Gdynia Centre on the WHL would signify, above all, the recognition of the universal value of a great achievement of reborn Poland: the construction of Gdynia.

In the article, the authors, as individuals directly involved in the preparation and nomination process of Gdynia for the WHL, present the related activities, as well as the conditions and conclusions that can be drawn from this undertaking.

KEY WORDS: modernism, Gdynia, WHL UNESCO, Gdynia City Centre, World Heritage List

1. Introduction

The UNESCO World Heritage List, established under the 1972 Convention, is a globally recognized and prestigious register of cultural, natural, and mixed sites. These sites are designated as heritage of universal significance through a highly formalized procedure involving expert assessment and the international decision-making body of the World Heritage Committee¹.

Currently, 17 sites from Poland are inscribed on the World Heritage List, encompassing cultural, natural, and mixed properties. The most recent Polish property to be independently inscribed on the WHL is the Krzemionki Prehistoric Striped Flint Mining Region, added to the List in 2019². Since then, despite various discussions and even an attempt related to the inscription of the Gdańsk Shipyard³, the number of such sites in Poland has not increased.

In July 2025, during the 47th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Paris, a new nomination submitted by Poland was presented: the "Gdynia. Early Modernist City Centre". In accordance with the recommendation of ICOMOS, UNESCO's advisory body, certain issues presented in the nomination dossier require further clarification and supplementation. Consequently, the Gdynia nomination will be re-submitted to the World Heritage Committee, most likely at the subsequent session in 2026.

The preparation of the nomination was initiated by the Gdynia City Council. Upon its completion, the dossier gained the support of central authorities and advisory bodies. This initiative culminated in a consistent policy, pursued by the local government since the beginning of the 21st century, of researching, promoting, and protecting the city's modernist architecture, with a particular focus on the modernist city centre.

This article, which presents the process of the Gdynia Centre's nomination for the WHL, is based primarily on the research and professional experience of the authors. For years, as municipal heritage conservators, they have been involved in the protection and conservation of, among other sites, the Gdynia Centre complex, and have participated in activities related to the successive stages of its safeguarding.

2. The Gdynia City Center – A Heritage Site and a Monument of History

Gdynia Early Modernist Center, a candidate for the UNESCO World Heritage List, is an exceptionally young monument, as it was shaped according to urban plans, the first and most important of which was created in 1926. The city center layout planned at that time, with certain modifications, was largely implemented and remains fully functional to this day.

¹ Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, The General Conference of UNESCO adopted on 16 November 1972 the Recommendation concerning the Protection at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage.

² Current and detailed data can be found on the following pages: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/pl> and <https://nid.pl/swiatowe-dziedzictwo/>

³ Gdańsk Shipyard – the birthplace of “Solidarity” and the symbol of the Fall of the Iron Curtain in Europe: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7962/>

The city center area became a conservation protection zone relatively recently. The first legal act protecting the city center as cultural heritage was the Local Spatial Development Plan for the Gdynia City Center, adopted by the Gdynia City Council in 1994. This document established conservation protection for the city center, also encompassing the adjacent districts of Działki Leśne and Kamienna Góra⁴. However, this plan lost its validity in 2003, and at that time, the conservation protection also ceased to apply.

Since 2000, the City of Gdynia has undertaken systematic actions related to the protection of its cultural heritage. On the initiative of the then Deputy Mayor, Marek Stępa, the position of the Municipal Conservator of Monuments was established in Gdynia. Based on an agreement between the Governor of Pomeranian Region and the Mayor of Gdynia, this official assumed part of the competences of the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments for the territory of Gdynia. Architect Robert Hirsch was appointed as the first Municipal Conservator of Monuments.

One of the most important initiatives of the Gdynia municipal government at that time, related to heritage protection, was initiating cooperation with provincial authorities, including the Office of the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments in Gdańsk, with the aim of entering the city center area into the register of monuments⁵. After coordinated preparations and agreements on delineating the area's boundaries, the procedure for entering the urban layout into the register was initiated. The entire administrative undertaking, considering the complexity and large area of the complex, was carried out very swiftly. In 2007, the Gdynia City Centre's historical urban layout was entered into the register of monuments, thus granting it permanent conservation protection, which remains in force today.

The particular role of Gdynia in 20th-century Polish history and its symbolic significance for the state reborn after the partitions gave rise to the idea among researchers and enthusiasts of the city to strive for Gdynia to obtain the status of a Monument of History⁶. The local authorities of Gdynia decided and undertook to fulfill the required conditions. One of the most difficult to meet was the preparation and adoption of local spatial development plans for the entire city center area entered in the register of monuments. Thanks to the consistency of the city authorities and the engagement of relevant units, particularly the Spatial Planning Office of the City of Gdynia, in subsequent years the heritage area was almost entirely covered by the provisions of the local plans. In 2012, documentation for nominating the monument for recognition as a Monument of History was prepared, following the template required by the National Heritage Institute. After submission, an inspection was conducted by an expert from the National Heritage Institute, Mr. Mariusz Czuba, which concluded with a positive assessment. In May 2014, the National Heritage Board at the Ministry also issued a

⁴ Bańkowska, B. (2018). Pierwszy powojenny Plan Śródmieścia samorządowej Gdyni. *Studia Komitetu Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju PAN*, 188, 134-146.

⁵ The proceedings regarding the entry of the monument into the register were conducted on behalf of the Voivodeship Monument Protection Office in Gdańsk by Ms. Jolanta Barton-Piórkowska, Deputy Head of the Office, who was also involved in establishing protection for other historic monuments in Gdynia, including the Gdynia Główna railway station, the complex of the Fleet Command and Navy Barracks in Oksywie, and the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

⁶ Sołtysik, M. J. (2006). Śródmieście Gdyni jako Pomnik Historii. *Rocznik Gdyni* 18, 16-30.

positive opinion on Gdynia's nomination. In February 2015, based on a Regulation by the President of the Republic of Poland, the Gdynia city center officially joined this prestigious group⁷. Currently (November 2025), the list of Monuments of History comprises 133 sites, but it is worth emphasizing that at the moment Gdynia received this distinction, the list, including the Gdynia city center, contained only 60 entries. The protection boundaries, established in the decision for entry into the register, were also adopted as the boundaries of the Monument of History.

The recognition of the City Center as a Monument of History was a major event in Gdynia. President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski unveiled a special commemorative plaque on the City Hall building. At the time, it seemed that this was the highest distinction this historic urban complex could achieve.

3. The Path to Candidacy for the UNESCO World Heritage List

In 2015, following the successful completion of the process to designate the urban layout of the city center as a Monument of History, the subsequent objectives considered by those involved in heritage protection in Gdynia were related to selecting and preparing another historic complex for recognition as a Monument of History⁸. No one even mentioned candidacy for the World Heritage List. This was likely a consequence of the well-known, unsuccessful attempts within the Tri-City area to inscribe various sites from Gdańsk onto the WHL⁹. In the context of the failures of historic Gdańsk, the young heritage of Gdynia seemed to have no chance.

However, this local reticence and assessment were unfamiliar to foreign experts. The opinion that Gdynia should apply for WHL inscription was expressed by international specialists in modernism who had the opportunity to become well acquainted with the city during the series of international scientific conferences "Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdyni." Particularly instrumental were Dr. Jeremie Hoffmann, Director of the Conservation Department from Tel Aviv-Yafo in Israel, and Professor Edward Denison from the Bartlett School of Architecture in London.

As early as 2013, during the international conference "Greening the White City" in Tel Aviv, attended by a delegation from Gdynia, Dr. Jeremie Hoffmann expressed the view that Gdynia should seek WHL inscription¹⁰. He also presented, prepared ad hoc on a tablet, his concept for presenting Gdynia's genesis as a city built from the ground up, analogous to the narrative of Tel Aviv's foundation and the special role of planner Patrick Geddes, who developed the first city plan presented in 1925. This made a strong impression on us, the guests from Gdynia, but also seemed rather unrealistic at the time. Yet, there were many similarities between the cities, as

⁷ Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland of 23 February 2015 on recognizing "Gdynia – the historic urban layout of the city centre" as a Monument of History.

⁸ In light of the approaching centenary of the Regaining of Independence, the preparation of a nomination dossier concerning the historic complex of the former Fleet Command and Naval Barracks in Oksywie was considered.

⁹ Gawlicki, M. (2017). Gdańsk na liście światowego dziedzictwa UNESCO – 20 lat starań i niewykorzystanych szans. *Ochrona Dziedzictwa Kulturowego*, 4, 63-72.

¹⁰ The conference "Greening the White City", 2-3 May 2013, was held as part of the event Discovering the White City - A Weekend of Architecture & Art, 2-4 May 2013.

Gdynia's first urban plan was created in 1926, around the same time as Tel Aviv's first plan.

It is therefore not surprising that during the 4th conference "Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia" in 2014, attended by distinguished guests, the Mayor of Gdynia, Wojciech Szczurek, and Deputy Mayor Marek Stępa, asked the panel of experts for their opinion on the rationale for pursuing the inscription of Gdynia's city center on the WHL. Professor Jacek Purchla, then Chairman of the Polish National Commission for UNESCO, recalls this in a 2019 article dedicated to modernism on the UNESCO World Heritage List: "During the 4th International Scientific Conference >>Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia. Architecture of the 20th Century and Its Valorization<< in September 2014, the Mayor – full of enthusiasm – asked me about the possibility of inscribing Gdynia on the UNESCO World Heritage List... I admit, I threw cold water on the Mayor's enthusiasm then." From today's perspective, it can be stated that Polish experts were rather skeptical, especially compared to their foreign counterparts.

The topic of Gdynia's potential WHL candidacy emerged more officially in 2018¹¹. During a debate titled "Conservation of Modernism: The Practice of Utopia"¹² at the Gdynia City Museum, the Deputy Minister of Culture and National Heritage, Magdalena Gawin, stated that it was worthwhile to undertake efforts for Gdynia to be inscribed on the WHL. In response, Deputy Mayor M. Stępa revealed that the City Hall was already working on this topic but had not publicized it until then. He also thanked the General Conservator of Monuments for the declared support.

A likely consequence of this meeting, among other factors, was the preparation, on the Deputy Minister's order, of an appropriate nomination and Poland's submission in 2019 to the UNESCO Tentative List¹³ of a property defined as: "Modernist Centre of Gdynia – the example of building an integrated community."

It is worth mentioning that during the work on Gdynia's nomination, various options were considered. In 2019, during the international conference "Modernism for the Future. Interpretations" in Kaunas, an idea emerged for a joint WHL candidacy of two modernist cities, Kaunas and Gdynia, which was thought to facilitate inscription. A proponent was, for example, Professor Michael Turner from the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, who presented such a concept in a working discussion. However, Kaunas was already at a very advanced stage in preparing its own nomination, which, as we know, ended successfully with its inscription on the WHL in 2023¹⁴.

¹¹ Gdynia's candidacy for the UNESCO World Heritage List even became a subject of political declarations at the time. In 2018, one of the candidates in the Gdynia mayoral election presented it as one of his campaign pledges. <https://gdynia.naszemiasto.pl/kandydat-na-prezydenta-gdyni-marcin-horala-chce-wpisanie/ar/c1-4842242>

¹² The debate "Conservation of Modernism: The Practice of Utopia" took place as part of the "Exercises in Modernity" project at the Gdynia City Museum. The event was organized by the Pilecki Institute and the City of Gdynia. Representing the City of Gdynia were Deputy Mayor M. Stępa and Municipal Monument Conservator R. Hirsch.

¹³ Each State Party submits to the List properties of outstanding universal value that it intends to nominate for inscription on the World Heritage List.

¹⁴ Modernist Kaunas: Architecture of Optimism, 1919-1939, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1661/>

4. Development and Processing of the Gdynia Application

Following Gdynia's inclusion on the Tentative List, the substantive team at Gdynia City Hall continued its analytical work. This work focused on selecting a specific narrative and demonstrating the values most likely to persuade an international audience, as well as defining the boundaries of the area proposed for inscription¹⁵.

During the development of the nomination dossier, it was decided to emphasize the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the urban design of Gdynia's city centre. Consequently, the name of the property on the UNESCO Tentative List was modified. The unique value of the ensemble, which has no equivalent worldwide, was underscored and documented. In 2022, the nomination title was changed to "Gdynia. Early Modernist City Centre". This change resulted from extensive discussions, analyses, and the understanding that presenting the value of a candidate property appropriately is of utmost importance. It was also clear that Gdynia's significance as heritage within Poland differs from its significance on the international stage, where Polish monuments are not widely known. Therefore, the arguments intended to convince foreign experts needed to be tailored accordingly.

The final version of the core nomination documentation was prepared in accordance with UNESCO guidelines by a team of authors from the Faculty of Architecture at Gdańsk University of Technology, including the long-time researcher of Gdynia's architecture, Prof. D.Sc. Ph.D. Eng. Arch. Maria Jolanta Sołtysik, and the Gdynia City Hall¹⁶. Foreign experts Jeremie Hoffmann, Edward Denison, and Guang Yu Ren participated as consultants, although collaboration was somewhat complicated at the time due to pandemic-related restrictions.

The main sections of the Dossier present: the identification of the nominated property; its description; the justification for inscription; the state of conservation and factors affecting the property; protection and management; monitoring; documentation; and other relevant information. The annexes include, among other items, photographs of selected parts of the candidate property and the applicable legal protection documents. The final application was signed by the representative of the General Conservator of Monuments of Poland, Bożena Żelazowska, on January 26, 2024, and subsequently submitted to UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris.

¹⁵ By Order No. 6823/23/VIII/P of September 19, 2023, the President established the Team for the Protection and Promotion of Gdynia Modernism. Subsequently, by Order No. 343/24/IX/0 of the President of the City of Gdynia dated September 17, 2024, the Team for Coordinating the City of Gdynia's Activities Related to the Protection and Management of the Property "Gdynia. Early Modernist City Centre" was established, with the following composition: First Deputy Mayor of Gdynia – Oktawia Gorzeńska – Chair of the Team, Municipal Monument Conservator – Robert Hirsch – Team Member, Head of the Foreign Cooperation Unit – Joanna Leman – Team Member, Head of the Office of the Municipal Monument Conservator – Celina Łozowska – Team Member.

¹⁶ Sołtysik, M. J., Hirsch, R., Stępa, M., Co-authors: Denison, E., Guang Yu Ren, Limańska-Michalska, A., Łozowska, C., Orchowska-Smolińska, A., Rybiński, M. (2023). *Gdynia Early Modernist City Centre*. Nomination Dossier.

It is worth emphasizing that the final substantive content of the Dossier was largely based on the authors' prior research. The section concerning protection and management presented the results of actions taken in Gdynia over the last 20 years. Most data regarding legal protection and revitalization were collected and compiled specifically for this documentation by individuals who handle these matters daily and possess the relevant expertise.

In accordance with the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines, comparative studies of the candidate property with other similar ensembles were developed. The selection of examples for comparative analysis was closely consulted with the aforementioned experts, particularly with Prof. E. Denison. For comparison, other modernist properties already on the World Heritage List were chosen from the following cities: Asmara, Ljubljana, Kaunas, Tel Aviv, Ivrea, Berlin, and Dessau-Weimar-Bernau (as Bauhaus sites). Further groups selected for comparison included cities built in a later phase of modernism, such as Brasília and Chandigarh, and modern port cities—Dalian, Le Havre, Mumbai, Rabat, and Shanghai. The comparison also included two examples of Polish urban designs: Stalowa Wola and Nowa Huta in Kraków.

Extremely significant for the evaluation procedure was the finding in the Evaluation (i.e., the expert assessment of the application), which stated that the presented comparative studies demonstrated that such a work is not represented on the World Heritage List¹⁷.

5. Management Plan for the Nominated Property

A mandatory strategic document for properties nominated for or inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List is the Management Plan. This is a management tool designed to ensure the protection and maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) as well as the attributes that underpin the integrity and authenticity of the site¹⁸.

The Management Plan provides a detailed description of the property nominated for the WHL. It describes the protection and management system, identifies threats and monitoring tools, defines areas of cooperation with stakeholders, and formulates conclusions and recommendations for further actions. An important part of the Management Plan is the characterization of the attributes and other elements that determine the integrity and authenticity of the property. These include: the function of buildings, the principle of functions arrangement in individual buildings, the function of individual public spaces, the function of courtyards and similar urban spaces,

¹⁷ <https://whc.unesco.org/document/221034>

¹⁸ As noted by A. Fortuna-Marek and A. Siwek in their article concerning action plans as an element of the World Heritage site management system (Fortuna-Marek, A., Siwek, A. (2015). *Plany Działania - jako element systemu zarządzania miejscem światowego dziedzictwa. Rozważania na przykładzie Krakowa i Drewnianych Kościołów Południowej Małopolski. Wybrane zagadnienia zarządzania dobrami UNESCO w Polsce*, B. Szmygin (Ed.), Warsaw, p. 76) "(...) the plan is a document characterized by a significant degree of generalization. In the sphere of practice, it therefore requires supplementation in the form of action plans, which constitute short-term, detailed records of implementation plans pertaining to the sectors of activity outlined in the management plan. Only a management plan linked with a system of action plans creates a structure of documents constituting a universal compendium (...)."

the urban structure, the urban landscape, the structure of streets and squares, the buildings structure, the parcel structure, small architectural elements in public spaces, the relationship between built environment and the sea, the seaside walking and viewing area, the buildings structure on the South Pier, the spatial functionality of the Pier and the Sailing Basin, the shape of buildings, architectural composition, façade colours, the character of architectural details, and façade materials of the buildings.

The final version of the currently binding Management Plan for Gdynia is the result of several years of expert studies. The development of the document included city-wide public consultations aimed at gathering residents' opinions on the proposed provisions. As a result, only minor points of the Management Plan were modified or detailed. Additionally, the previously designated boundaries of the buffer zone were reviewed, and areas under the jurisdiction of the Port of Gdynia were partially removed from it.

Regardless of the outcome of the ongoing WHL inscription procedure, the Management Plan "Gdynia – Early Modernist City Centre. Management Plan for the years 2024–2029"¹⁹ has been adopted as a binding strategic document of the City and is being implemented in stages. Recommendations identified during the preparation of the Plan as the most significant for the property's attributes have already been largely implemented, less than two years after its adoption.

6. The Evaluation Process of the Nominated Property

In accordance with the evaluation process for nominated properties, following the submission of the nomination dossier, a date was set for the ICOMOS expert's evaluation (field) mission, which took place from August 26 to 28, 2024. The ICOMOS representative was Prof. Dr. Joerg Haspel from Berlin. The mission in Gdynia was organized by the Gdynia City Council and the National Heritage Institute of Poland in Warsaw. The assembled guests were welcomed by Aleksandra Kosiorek, Mayor of Gdynia. Issues of heritage conservation were also presented and discussed by the Municipal Conservator of Monuments, Robert Hirsch, while Gdynia's spatial planning policy, presented by Director Iwona Markesić from the Gdynia Spatial Planning Office. In addition to representatives of the City of Gdynia, the meeting was attended by representatives of the National Heritage Institute, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Polish National Commission for UNESCO, the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments in Gdańsk, as well as co-authors of the nomination dossier.

On the following day, the ICOMOS expert conducted a field review of the boundaries specified in the nomination and the property's spatial area. Selected monuments within Gdynia's city centre were presented, and meetings were held with representatives of the local community who are particularly engaged in heritage protection. In the final part of the mission, the expert formulated several questions, which were answered in detail the following day. Upon completion of the expert mission, a report for ICOMOS was prepared by the expert.

¹⁹ Resolution No. LX/1837/24 of the Gdynia City Council of January 24, 2024 on the adoption of the program "Gdynia Early Modernist City Center. Management Plan for 2024-2029".

Subsequently, in a letter dated September 27, 2024, ICOMOS presented a preliminary report resulting from the analysis of the nomination dossier and the assessment of the expert from the evaluation mission in Gdynia. The report stated that, as of its preparation date, it had not been sufficiently demonstrated that the nominated property possesses the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) justifying inscription on the World Heritage List. Furthermore, a series of questions were raised concerning, among other issues, the preserved chronological layers of the urban layout, typology, stylistic range, function and chronology of buildings, their state of preservation, conservation protection, and planned investments.

In response, a supplementary document titled "Gdynia Early Modernist City Centre. World Heritage List 2025. Annex - Additional Information"²⁰ was completed in October 2024. Subsequently, on November 25, 2024, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel was held in Paris, attended by a Polish delegation to answer questions from ICOMOS experts. In its advisory opinion dated December 20, 2024, ICOMOS again presented a number of additional questions; however, thanks to the detailed supplementary information provided in the October 2024 document and the explanations given during the November panel, it no longer directly questioned the justification for nominating the property to the WHL.

The issues raised in the opinion required further analysis and the preparation of special explanatory panels. A document completed in February 2025 was produced, titled "Gdynia Early Modernist City Centre. World Heritage List 2025. Response to the letter from ICOMOS dated 20 December 2024" and was submitted to the World Heritage Centre (WHC) in Paris²¹.

7. Final Recommendations and the 47th Session of the World Heritage Committee

The 2025 ICOMOS evaluation report on the nominated property concerning Gdynia formulated a recommendation, commonly referred to as a REFERRAL, stating: "ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of Gdynia. Early Modernist City Centre, Poland, be referred back to the State Party." This ICOMOS recommendation was adopted by the World Heritage Committee through a vote during its 47th session in Paris on 12 July 2025²². In its report, ICOMOS also outlined 4 main and 7 additional recommendations. The four principal recommendations address the following issues:

²⁰ Hirsch, R., Łozowska, C., Skrzypkowska, L., Leman, J., Sołtysik, M. J., Cooperation: Małszycki, D., Szerle, M., Markesic, I., Trusiewicz, Z. (October 2024). *Gdynia Early Modernist City Centre. World Heritage List 2025. Annex - Additional Information*, Republic of Poland - Municipality of Gdynia.

²¹ Hirsch, R., Łozowska, C., Sołtysik, M. J., Skrzypkowska, L., Leman, J., Cooperation: Szerle, M., Markesic, I., Trusiewicz, Z., Korzekwa, J. (February 2025). *Gdynia Early Modernist City Centre. World Heritage List 2025. Response to the letter from ICOMOS dated 20 December 2024*, Republic of Poland - Municipality of Gdynia.

²² Evaluations of Nominations of Cultural and Mixed Properties. ICOMOS report for the World Heritage Committee 47th ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee, Paris, France / 6-16 July 2025

- Re-examining the boundaries of the nominated property and considering an extension to include three adjacent, small fragments.
- Clarifying the rationale for the boundaries of the buffer zone and considering its extension to include the suggested coastal areas and the Kamienna Góra massif.
- Demonstrating that the buffer zone is adequately protected.
- More precisely specifying how the key attributes substantiate/support the proposed Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

The seven additional recommendations address issues such as: introducing key indicators for the management plan, verifying the condition of inner courtyards within building blocks, creating an inventory of interiors accessible to the public, developing a conservation strategy for gable-roofed houses, presenting documentation from the consultation and participation process, developing and implementing a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) mechanism for development proposals, and informing the World Heritage Centre of the intention to undertake or authorise all major projects which may affect the proposed OUV.

An important proposal from ICOMOS, adopted by the World Heritage Committee, is the suggestion to change the property's name to **Gdynia Modernist City Centre** (instead of Early Modernist).

In accordance with a prior decision by the General Conservator of Monuments Bożena Żelazowska, the above recommendation formulated by ICOMOS was accepted. It was established that the Polish side intends to prepare clarifications and supplements addressing the ICOMOS opinion. Consequently, due to the decision of the National Heritage Board, the Polish representatives did not undertake actions during the Paris session to garner support for the Gdynia nomination and, through voting, secure its inscription on the World Heritage List. This would have been entirely feasible, considering that numerous other properties which received REFERRAL, DEFERRAL, or even NOT INSCRIBE recommendations were inscribed, as illustrated in the summary provided in Table No. 1.

Tab. 1. Properties from Europe nominated for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, presented at the 47th Session of the World Heritage Committee in July 2025, indicating the ICOMOS recommendation and the final decision taken

Id. NO	Official name as proposed	State Party	ICOMOS recommendation	WHC decision
1	Megaliths of Carnac and of the Shores of Morbihan	France	Inscription	Inscribed
2	The Palaces of King Ludwig II of Bavaria: Neuschwanstein, Linderhof, Schachen and Herrenchiemsee – From Dreams to Reality	Germany	Inscription	Inscribed
3	Rock Paintings of Shulgan-Tash Cave	Russian Federation	Inscription	Inscribed
4	Møns Klint (natural site)	Denmark	Referral	Inscribed
5	Minoan Palatial Centres	Greece	Referral	Inscribed
6	Art and Architecture in the Prehistory of Sardinia – The domus de janas	Italy	Referral	Inscribed
7	Álvaro Siza's Architecture: A Modern Contextualism Legacy	Portugal	Deferral	Deferred
8	Gdynia. Early Modernist City Centre	Poland	Referral	Referred

The recommendations outlined in the evaluation of the nominated property and adopted during the 47th Session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee pertain to matters strictly related to the organization and management of the Gdynia City Centre. Therefore, the responses to these recommendations are being prepared by a team from the Office of the Municipal Conservator of Monuments in Gdyni in collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture at the Gdańsk University of Technology²³. Once the clarifications and responses are approved by the Gdynia authorities and representatives of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, they will be submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Paris.

The 48th session of the World Heritage Committee will take place in July 2026 in Busan, South Korea. At that session, Gdynia's nomination will most likely be put to a vote again, and the Committee members may decide to inscribe another Polish site onto this prestigious List.

²³ Evaluations of Nominations of Cultural and Mixed Properties. ICOMOS report for the World Heritage Committee 47th ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee, Paris, France / 6-16 July 2025.

8. Summary

Regardless of the outcome of the ongoing procedure and whether the Gdynia City Centre is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the mere participation in this process of a monument entered into the register in 2007 and designated as a Monument of History in 2015 is in itself an exceptional occurrence and a unique distinction for the entire Gdynia community.

This achievement brings satisfaction to the circle of researchers, social activists, and heritage conservators who have been active in Gdynia for many years. The preparation of the documentation alone took several years, with the organizational burden undertaken by the City Council. In the evaluation concerning Gdynia, the experts acknowledged the property's Outstanding Universal Value on a global scale, which is the achievement of many generations, not only of Gdynia residents, who built the port and the city. The report also highlighted the good state of conservation of the property and the effective mechanisms for its protection and revitalization that are in place. This is the result of a heritage protection policy initiated at the local government level, consistently pursued for over 20 years, with the participation of residents and other stakeholders. The Gdynia case also demonstrates that the preparation of the nomination dossier for such a complex historic ensemble should involve specialists who are engaged in the daily protection of this heritage. This is particularly justified in the case of larger and more complicated spatial layouts. For the assessment of the nomination, not only the dossier itself was important, but the responses and clarifications, which can play a decisive role, were also significant.

Perhaps the experience gathered during the nomination procedure for Gdynia will be utilized in future nominations submitted by Poland to the World Heritage List.



Fig. 1. Proceedings of the 47th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Paris in July 2025, photo: Robert Hirsch



Fig. 2. Representatives of the City of Gdynia participating in the 47th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Paris, from the left: Joanna Leman, Robert Hirsch and Celina Łozowska, photo: Anna Marconi-Betka

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