



Assistance Programme in case of Emergencies

Diagnostic Report - Warsaw

- **1.1. City of Warsaw (the Capital), Mayor: Rafał Trzaskowski**
- **1.2. Heritage Protection Department – UNESCO Site Manager**
- **1.3. Michał Krasucki - Head of Heritage Protection Department, mkrasucki@um.warszawa.pl**
- **1.4.** Warsaw, the capital of Poland, is a vibrant city that seamlessly blends history with modernity. As a member of the Organization of World Heritage Cities, Warsaw is deeply committed to preserving its cultural heritage. A symbol of Polish resilience, the city is renowned for the meticulous reconstruction of its Old Town after World War II—a feat recognized by UNESCO as a unique example of urban restoration. Beyond its historic center, Warsaw promotes heritage protection through restoration projects, public education, and international cooperation.



Administrative information – Emergency Contact Details

2.1 The city of Warsaw is managed by the mayor together with 6 vice-mayors (city management) and 44 offices. The Mayor is elected by popular vote once every 5 years. Warsaw also has its own 'parliament', the City Council, which consists of 60 councillors elected in local elections. Within the urban structure there are also 18 districts, which have their own offices that also implement a certain amount of urban policy. The district councils are also elected in local elections. In total, the Warsaw City Hall employs around 9,000 people. The policy in the area of heritage and the protection of monuments is the responsibility of the Heritage Protection Department. The policy in the area of security is the responsibility of the Capital Security Centre

City of Warsaw, Heritage Protection Department, ul. Nowy Świat 18/20, 00-373 Warszawa T : (+48) 22-443-36-40/41, m: sekretariat.bskz@um.warszawa.pl

2.2 Contact details of other emergency services

- Warsaw Metropolitan Fire Department, T: 22 596 79 98, Polna 1, 00-622 Warszawa
- Warsaw Metropolitan Police, T: 47 723 65 55, ul. Nowolipie 2, 00-150 Warszawa
- City of Warsaw, Warsaw Public Safety Centre, T: 22 443 11 20, Młynarska 43/45, 01-170 Warszawa

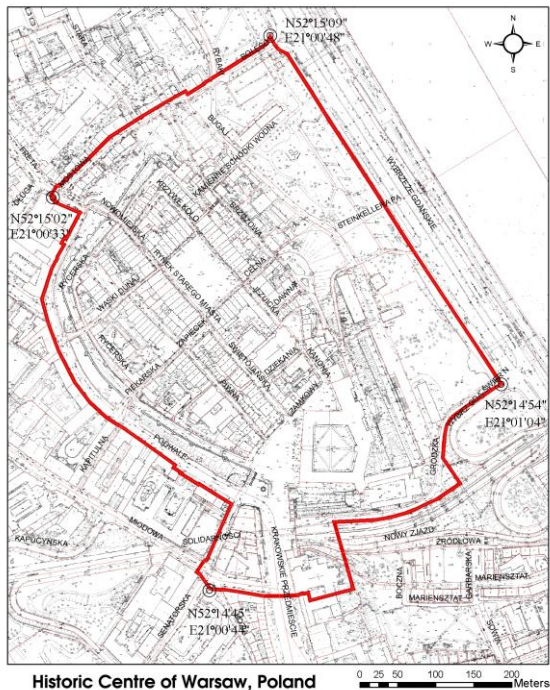
2.3 The structure of crisis management in Warsaw is determined by the legal provisions in force in Poland. In the event of a threat, a crisis management team is established, headed by the mayor of Warsaw. The team members are representatives of the police, fire department and the Warsaw Public Safety Centre. Depending on the type of threat and its scope, representatives of other services or offices, such as Director of Heritage Protection Department, are included in the team's work.

2.4. List of the organisations who might be consulted regarding the disaster management process:

- NID (National Heritage Institute)
- NIM (National Institute of Museums)
- ASP (Academy of Fine Arts)
- Polytechnic University - Department of Architecture
- Other universities and research institutes
- MKiDN (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage)
- AGAD - CLKA (Central Laboratory of Archival Conservation)
- National Library
- Local restoration and building companies

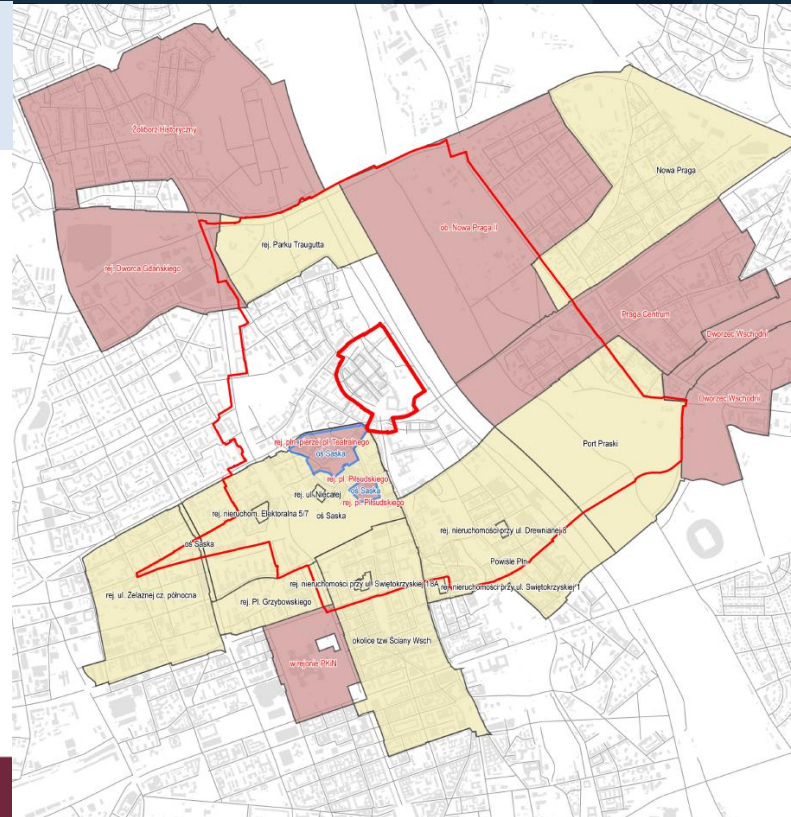
Geographical info

The UNESCO Site
10 ha



- boundary of the World Heritage property
- cadastral property divisions

The Buffer Zone



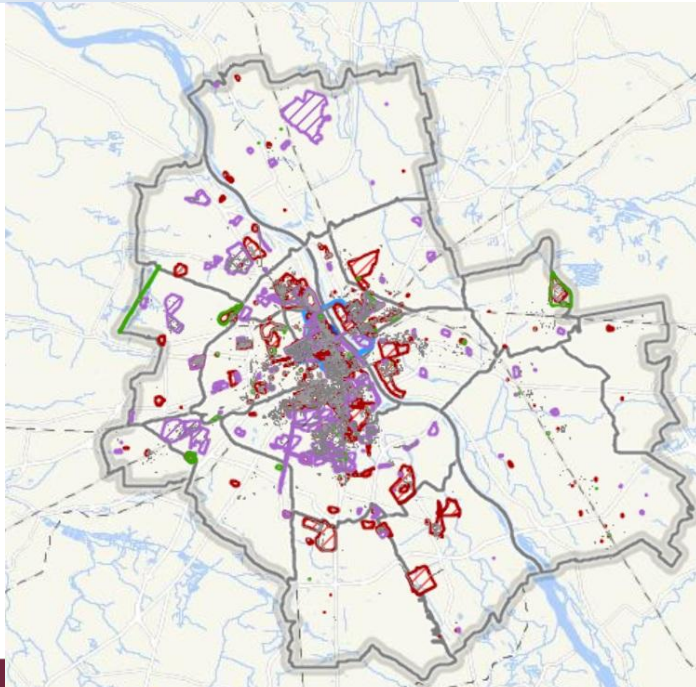
Property Ownership

The ownership structure of historical monuments in Warsaw is diverse, with a combination of public and private ownership. Many key landmarks, including the Old Town and significant historical buildings, are owned by public entities such as the City of Warsaw and the State Treasury. These properties are often managed by specialized institutions like museums or other cultural identities. Private owners also possess historic buildings, particularly those outside the central area, and are subject to strict preservation regulations. The city encourages collaboration between public authorities, private owners, and conservation organizations to ensure proper maintenance and protection of its heritage.



Protection Level

Protected zones and buildings
<https://mapa.um.warszawa.pl/>



Protection level

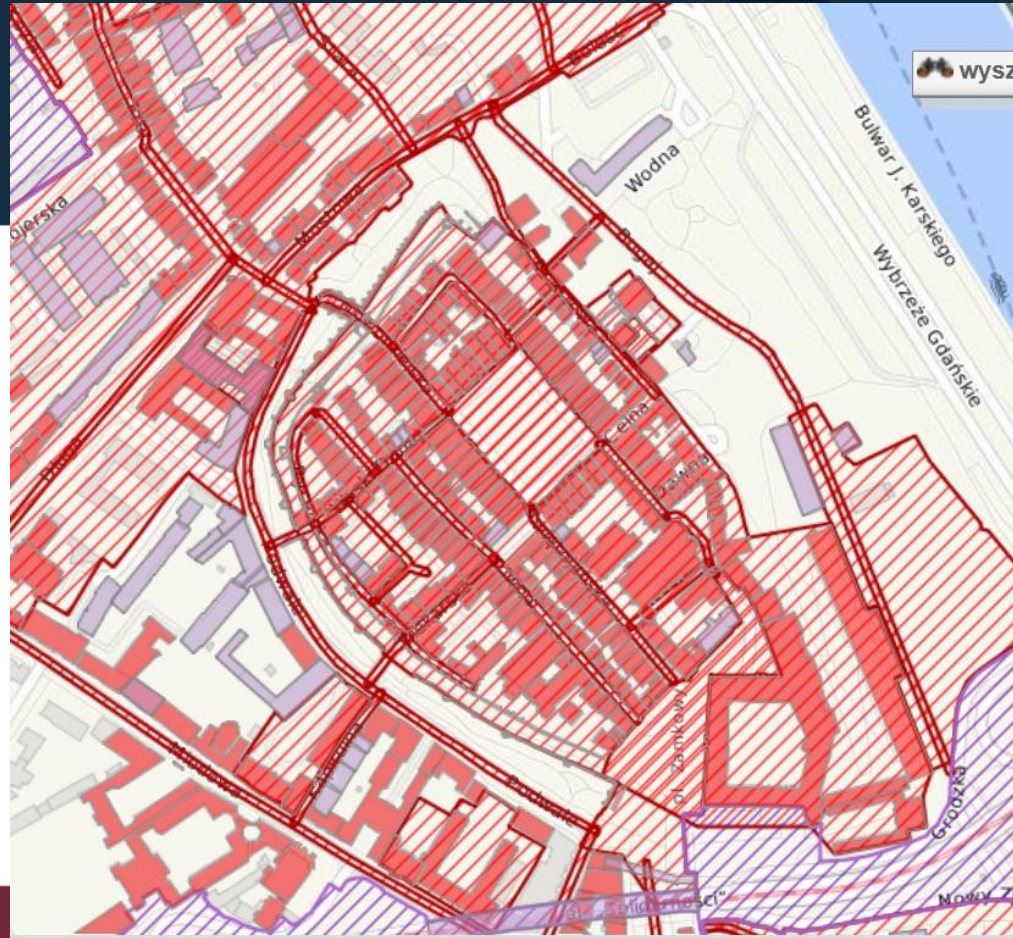


Individually protected



Individually protected/local level

In Warsaw, monuments are protected through various legal and regulatory frameworks. The city is home to 3,215 monuments listed in the national register of historical monuments and 8,870 entries are included in the municipal heritage register. The Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is surrounded by a buffer zone to safeguard its integrity. Additionally, four monuments in Warsaw are recognized as historical monuments, a designation that offers enhanced protection. These protections ensure the preservation of both architectural and cultural heritage, with strict regulations governing restoration, maintenance and any alterations to the sites.



Types of risk/hazard to which the city is exposed

- **Floods** – due to the proximity of the Vistula River, Warsaw is at risk of riverine flooding, especially during spring thaws or heavy rainfall.
- **Extreme Weather Events** – this includes heavy snowfall, strong winds, hailstorms, and heatwaves, which can disrupt infrastructure, transport, and power supply.
- **Urban Fires** – fires in residential, industrial, or public buildings can result from accidents, negligence, or arson.
- **Transportation Accidents** – road, rail, or air accidents, especially given Warsaw's role as a central transportation hub.
- **Mass Gatherings and Public Disorder** – protests, large-scale events, or sports matches may lead to security issues or crowd-related incidents.
- **Air Pollution and Smog** – high levels of particulate matter, especially in winter, can pose health risks and reduce quality of life.
- **Terrorism and Sabotage** – as the capital city, Warsaw could be a potential target for terrorist attacks or politically motivated acts.
- **Critical Infrastructure Failure** – This includes blackouts, telecommunications failures, or disruptions in public transportation systems.
- **Cyber Attacks** – threats to the digital infrastructure, such as municipal systems, public services, and utilities.
- **Epidemics and Pandemics** – the spread of infectious diseases (e.g., COVID-19) can severely affect public health and city operations.
- **Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Incidents** – accidental or intentional release of hazardous substances in industrial areas or during transportation.
- **Landslides and Ground Movement** – Though rare, certain urban development areas may be at risk due to unstable soil or construction work.

Existing information about the site

The Historic Centre of Warsaw was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980. This designation acknowledges the exceptional value of Warsaw's Old Town, which was meticulously reconstructed after its near-total destruction during World War II. The reconstruction serves as a testament to the resilience and determination of the city's inhabitants.

Historical Context and Reconstruction

During the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, over 85% of the city's historic centre was destroyed by German Nazi forces. Following the war, a five-year reconstruction campaign led by the citizens of Warsaw resulted in the meticulous restoration of the Old Town, including its churches, palaces, and market square. This effort is an outstanding example of a near-total reconstruction of a span of history covering the 13th to the 20th century.

Conservation Management Plan

The Municipality of Warsaw developed a comprehensive Management Plan for the Historic Centre of Warsaw to ensure the preservation and sustainable development of the site. This plan outlines strategies for conservation, monitoring, and community engagement, aligning with UNESCO's guidelines for World Heritage properties.

International Recognition and Influence

In 2018, Warsaw hosted an international conference on reconstruction, leading to the development of the "Warsaw Recommendation on Recovery and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage." This document provides universal guidelines for the recovery and reconstruction of World Heritage sites, drawing from Warsaw's experience as a model for post-conflict heritage restoration.

Further Reading and Resources:

- UNESCO World Heritage Centre: Historic Centre of Warsaw,
- Management Plan for the Historic Centre of Warsaw
- Warsaw Recommendation on Recovery and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage

Description of information about the condition of the city in relation to specific issues which could exacerbate the impact of a disaster

Warsaw, as Poland's capital and largest city, **faces several social and infrastructural challenges** that could intensify the impact of a disaster. **Rapid urban development** over recent decades has led to **a mix of modern and aging infrastructure**, particularly in housing and public utilities. Many residential buildings, especially in older districts like Praga or parts of Mokotów, **suffer from poor maintenance, making them more vulnerable to fires, structural failure, or power outages during extreme weather events.**

Public space in Warsaw is unevenly distributed, with **some densely populated neighborhoods lacking sufficient green areas or emergency assembly points.** This can hinder evacuation or relief operations. Environmental issues, such as **urban heat islands** and **poor air quality in winter**, also present risks—especially to vulnerable populations like the elderly or those with respiratory conditions.

Economically, **Warsaw has a relatively high standard of living** compared to other Polish cities, but social inequality persists. Some districts face higher poverty and unemployment rates, which can limit residents' capacity to respond or recover from disasters.

In terms of infrastructure, the city has modernized much of its transport and communication networks, including the metro and digital systems. However, **these systems are heavily used and could be strained during crises.**

Overall, while Warsaw is a relatively resilient city, gaps in housing quality, public space, and social inequality may amplify the effects of a disaster if not addressed in emergency planning.

Significance of Warsaw as WHC

The Historic Centre of Warsaw was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1980 as a globally significant example of post-war reconstruction. Following the near-total destruction of Warsaw in 1944, a meticulously executed rebuilding process restored the city's historical core using archival records, surviving architectural fragments, and 18th-century paintings by Bernardo Bellotto.

While the Old Town (Stare Miasto) is the focal point of the listing, the city's broader historical and cultural landscape also includes essential components that reflect its royal, political, and artistic legacy.

Main components of the World Heritage Site and connected heritage assets:

- **Old Town Market Square, Royal Castle, and St. John's Archcathedral** – key elements of Warsaw's medieval and early modern core.
- **Krakowskie Przedmieście and the Royal Route** – historically linking the Old Town with royal residences to the south.
- **New Town** (Nowe Miasto) – an extension of the medieval city with 15th-century roots.

Additional historic landmarks contributing to Warsaw's heritage:

- **Łazienki Królewskie** (Royal Baths Park) – an 18th-century palace-and-garden complex founded by King Stanisław August Poniatowski, notable for its integration of neoclassical architecture and landscape design. It serves as a symbol of Enlightenment ideals in Poland.
- **Wilanów Palace** – built in the late 17th century for King Jan III Sobieski, this baroque residence is one of the few Warsaw landmarks to survive WWII intact. It reflects Poland's early modern aristocratic culture and is often referred to as the “Polish Versailles.”

Significance of Warsaw as WHC



Summary of condition of buildings and urban environment

Warsaw's historical buildings and urban environment reflect a unique blend of reconstructed heritage and surviving monuments. Today, these reconstructed structures of Old Town remain in generally good condition, though ongoing maintenance is required due to age, environmental stress, and urban use.

Many buildings outside the core Old Town—such as in districts of Praga, Powiśle, and Wola—contain original pre-war or early 20th-century fabric but suffer from neglect, poor insulation, and structural wear. Conservation funding and revitalization efforts have increased in recent years, but disparities persist between central, touristic zones and peripheral or post-industrial districts.

The urban environment of historic Warsaw is shaped by a mixture of medieval layouts, baroque/classical axes (like the Royal Route), and socialist-era planning. While the city has made significant efforts to protect key vistas, public spaces, and skyline continuity, modern development—especially high-rise construction—poses risks to the visual integrity of heritage zones.

Air pollution, heavy traffic, and inadequate green space in some areas further challenge the preservation of historical materials, especially stone façades and decorative elements.

Existing Management/ Risk Assessment Planning Procedures

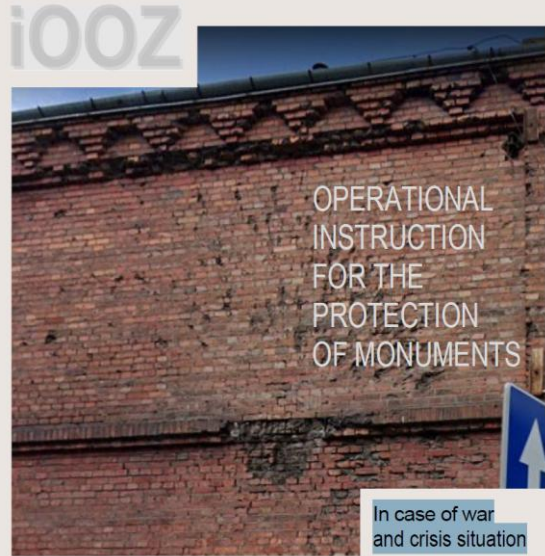
The crisis management and protection system for heritage at risk implemented in Warsaw results from the provisions of Polish law. The main document containing the organizational structure of crisis management and response procedures is included in the "Crisis Management Plan of the Capital City of Warsaw". The above-mentioned plan in the scope of heritage protection is supplemented - as a separate document - by the "**Plan for the Protection of Monuments of the Capital City of Warsaw**".

Training Plans and Information Programmes

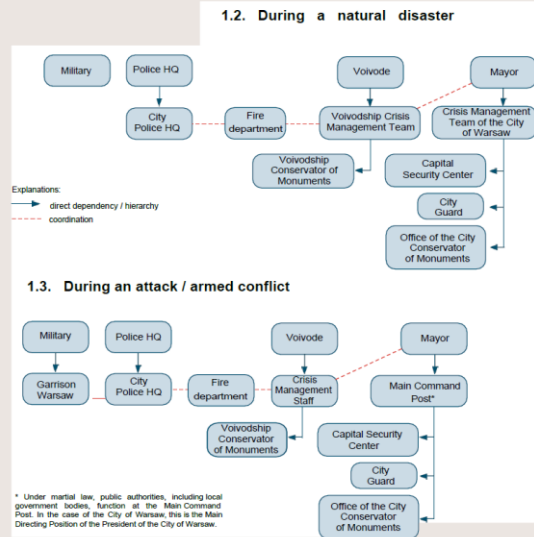
In December 2024, the act on the protection of the population and civil defense was introduced in Poland. The above-mentioned imposes a number of tasks on the mayor of the city related to, among others, the protection of heritage. We are currently working on the implementation of this act in the Warsaw City. The tasks of the mayor of the city that we plan to focus on are organizing substantive and equipment support for owners of monuments and arranging trainings and exercises for administrators of monuments in the field of protection of heritage at risk

Every two years, a trial exercise is held in Warsaw for the entire city - a strategy game. It assumes, for example, a military attack on Warsaw, terrorist outbreaks or a natural disaster (e.g. flooding). All city offices and services are involved in this game. Although the game so far has not focused on protected monuments, we – as the department - have been involved in the response structure.

Operational instruction for the protection of monuments in case of war and crisis situation



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3.1.1. Flooding

Flood risks are updated based on flood maps. Depending on the scale of the threat (range of 20-, 100- and 1,000-year water), specific sites are indicated.

Pre-emergency actions / flooding		
Action in order	Materials / Equipment	Comments
Prepare a conservation plan for the monument		
Prepare materials and equipment	Jute bags, agro-woven fabrics, dirty water pumps, dehumidifiers	A source of sand should be provided
Provide and train the necessary staff to be responsive		
Make a photographic documentation of the object	Camera	
If possible, make a 3D investigation of the object	3D scanner, photogrammetry	
Deposit the documentation in a safe place		



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