

# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

## ICOMOS International Heritage Alert

*The discussion about the future of the International Congress Centre (ICC) Berlin has been going on for more than ten years. Demolition, renovation and conversion into a shopping mall (the latter would equal a demolition of the interior) have all been discussed. Since March 2014, the building complex has been vacant; new uses are being debated – despite the fact that since the closing of the ICC the city of Berlin has no alternative venues for holding large-scale conferences. Therefore, precious potential lies idle – architecturally and economically.*

*The monumental building, opened in April 1979 after only three and a half years of construction, is quite unique in its futuristic shape and design. It is a Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art), preserved largely intact and in its authentic state, including the interior. It is not easy to define the style of this building which is outstanding and unique in every respect. This is because nothing comparable was built before or after. Due to the building's technology-inspired appearance it is reminiscent of high-tech architecture – and therefore of such buildings as the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (Renzo Piano/Richard Rogers, 1971-77), Lloyds in London (Richard Rogers, 1978-86), and the clinical centre in Aachen (Wolfgang Weber/Peter Brand, 1971-85). The buildings in London and Aachen are listed, the Centre Pompidou is undisputed as a national cultural good.*

*The ICC Berlin is a landmark of former West Berlin. Its relevance has long been accepted by the scientific community in Germany. Important institutions (the Architectural Association of Berlin, the Bund Heimat und Umwelt in Deutschland, the Monument Council of Berlin, the Association of Conservationists in Germany) have argued publicly for the listing of the ICC. Based on these regional and national activities ICOMOS expressed the international appreciation by adopting a resolution at the General Assembly of ICOMOS in Florence in November 2014. The basis of this resolution was a 17-page ICOMOS Heritage Alert prepared by ICOMOS Germany. It consists of a detailed description that, similar to a justification for listing, addresses all major aspects of the building and its monument value: From its historic value as testimony to the Cold War to the largely authentic state of conservation, the Heritage Alert characterises the building's architectural-historical value and also names the organisations supporting the Alert. The resolution sums up the central points of the Alert. By referring to earlier initiatives to save heritage of the 20th century it emphasises the international relevance of the ICC. Furthermore, it calls for the listing of this building and its use as a cultural and conference centre. In a letter (to which the resolution is attached) sent to the Governing Mayor of Berlin in January 2015 the President of ICOMOS International offered “to support you in the safeguarding of this historic property of European significance”.*

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### Deutsches Nationalkomitee von ICOMOS e.V.

Geschäftsstelle: Morassistr. 8 in 80469 München, Tel.: +49 (0) 89/ 2422 3784, Fax: +49 (0) 89/ 2421 9853  
Postadresse: Postfach 100517 in 80079 München, e-mail: [icomos@icomos.de](mailto:icomos@icomos.de)

## **1 Identity of Building**

### **1-0 Current name and original name.\***

*ICC Berlin (Internationales Congress Centrum Berlin)*

### **1-1 Location Town, Country, Street**

*Germany (FRG), Berlin, District (Bezirk) of Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, Sub-Area (Ortsteil) Westend; postal address: Messedamm 22, 14055 Berlin, Germany*

### **1-2 Classification/ Type of place**

*Monument of architecture and historic landmark of Berlin*

### **1-3 Current Heritage Protection Status**

*Acknowledged as very significant German post-war monument according to article 2 (1) and (2) of the Berlin Heritage Protection Law (Denkmalschutzgesetz Berlin), but officially not yet registered as listed property*

## **2-0 Statement of Significance and History**

### **2-1 Statement of Significance**

*The ICC cannot be regarded in isolation. The Kongresshalle in the Tiergarten in West Berlin (1957), designed by Hugh Stubbins, supported by Eleanor Dulles and sponsored by the Benjamin Franklin Foundation, was a first step towards making the island city of West Berlin's function as a hub visible (as a counterpart, in East Berlin the Kongresshalle at Alexanderplatz was built after designs by Hermann Henselmann, 1961-64). However, the ICC was meant to have a much wider radius. It was planned as "Europe's congress centre". Its construction coincided with the Helsinki Accords (signing of the Helsinki Declaration on August 1, 1975). This Declaration included cooperation in the fields of economy, science, technology and environment. These are central points that are also reflected in the function and architecture of the ICC.*

*Furthermore, for those approaching Berlin from the west on the AVUS (part of motorway A 115), it played "a role similar to the Brandenburg Gate in former times". It is of high value as one of the most significant architectural testimonies to the Cold War in Berlin.*

*Also a striking symbol at the time because of its high-tech architecture, the ICC was a display of progress, modernisation and internationalisation and has shaped architectural and urban history. This grand edifice in Berlin is comparable to the Centre Pompidou in Paris (1971-77), Lloyds in London (1978-86) or the University Hospital in Aachen (1971-85), buildings and sites that already have been acknowledged as historic landmarks or – as the Centre Pompidou – have been accepted by the public and by politics as undisputed national treasures.*

### **2-2 History of place**

*The place only began to write history with the construction of the ICC. The ICC – with a length of 320 m, a width of 80 m, and a height of 40 m – is situated broadly and*

*impressively between Messedamm, the city motorway and the railway lines flanking the others on the east side.*

*West of the ICC lies the trade-fair premise – including the tall hall of honour flanked by two halls of 100 m length each. These buildings – just like the round towers at the corners – were designed by the architect Richard Ermisch. They were erected 1935-37 in the neo-classical style.*

*North of them is Hans Poelzig's Haus des Rundfunks (Broadcasting House). Its main front measures a length of 155 m. This front is faced with dark-fired clinkers. Dark red bricks can also be found at the ICC – as homage to Poelzig's building.*

*The measurements of the central neighbouring buildings are relevant, because the ICC reacts to the scale of its surroundings. It responds to the place, i.e. to the large trade-fair premise and to the heavy-traffic island situation of the site.*

### **2-3 Date of project/ Date of construction/ Finishing of work**

*The planning began in the mid-1960s.*

*The ICC was erected between 1973 and 1979.*

*The official opening took place on April 2, 1979.*

### **2-4 Architect/Designers**

*Ralf Schüler and Ursulina Schüler Witte*

### **2-5 Architect/Designers**

*Ralf Schüler (born in 1930) died in 2011. His wife Ursulina Schüler-Witte (born 1933) still lives in Berlin. It's possible to contact her by e-mail: [usw-schueler@t-online.de](mailto:usw-schueler@t-online.de)*

### **2-6 Original and current use of building/place**

*The ICC was built as an international congress centre. Its function remained unchanged until its closing in April 2014.*

### **2-7 Changes, additions**

*Only a few small adaptations and alterations were executed in the interior (for example the conversion of a cafeteria into a meeting room)*

### **2-8 Current condition and use**

*The ICC has been closed since spring 2014 and is now without use.*

### **2-9 Original design intent and use**

*The architectural monument has remained nearly unchanged since the opening of the ICC; this applies to the exterior design and (neglected) surfaces as well as to the interior and its entire fittings. The International Congress Center (ICC) therefore meets the preservation criteria of authenticity and integrity to a high degree.*

## **3-0 Description (history and technology)**

### **3-1 Physical description**

*The building complex is 320 metres long, 80 metres wide and up to 40 metres high. The Congress Centre includes about 80 conference halls and meeting rooms, from 20 seats up to 9,100 seats in the two largest combinable auditoriums. The huge*

*complex comprises a total of 800,000 cubic metres of enclosed space and can hold up to 20,300 visitors. An electronic lighting system on the three main levels of the interior guides to the congress and conference facilities. Parking for 600 vehicles is available and the closed bridge structure with three-storey walkway provides a direct link across the neighbouring eight-lane motorway (AVUS) between the ICC and the Berlin trade-fair premise.*

### **3-2 Construction system used**

*To minimise traffic-induced noise and vibration from the roads, motorways and suburban railway nearby a so-called “house-in-house structure” was built. The construction is suspended from (10) external bridge-like steel trussed beams spanning over the building. The silvery anodized skin underlines the futuristic machine aesthetics of the whole complex.*

### **3-3 Physical context/setting**

*The ICC Berlin is situated on the western edge of the centre of Berlin and linked to the city’s exhibition grounds (Messe Berlin Trade Fair Grounds). The free-standing congress centre is surrounded by very busy roads and motorways and located close to prominent listed buildings such as the old Berlin Radio Tower (Funkturn, 1924-26), linked with the historic fair halls (Messehallen, 1930s and 1950s) and the Palais at the Radio Tower (Palais am Funkturn, 1956/57), the Marshall House and the ERP-Pavilion (European Restitution Program-Pavilion, 1950), as well as the Summer Garden (Sommergarten, 1931) situated in between the two. On the opposite side of the street (Masurenallee) Berlin’s Broadcasting House (Haus des Rundfunks, by Hans Poelzig, 1929/30) has been preserved, one of the internationally most significant monuments of the history of mass media in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

### **3-4 Social and cultural context and value**

*The ICC was the largest, most prominent and most frequented convention centre in Germany and one of the most successful congress centres worldwide. Between 2004 and 2009 the ICC received the World Travel Award as the “World’s Leading Conference and Convention Centre” five times and was also declared Europe’s Leading Conference Centre four times. The building represents an architectural landmark of Berlin just like the neighbouring Radio Tower and has become a symbol of West Berlin and its exhibition grounds. Millions of people from all over the world visited the ICC in the last 40 years. Besides the Centre Pompidou in Paris (by Renzo Piano) the ICC can be looked upon as the most prominent and popular convention centre of the 1970s in Europe. There is no travel guide or architectural guide that does not mention the ICC. It has also become well known as a film and television set. In Wim Wenders’ movie “Der Himmel über Berlin” (“The Sky over Berlin“ / “Wings of Desire”, 1987) the ICC serves as a characteristic opening motif.*

### **3-5 Materials/fabric/form/function**

*The supporting structure was carried out mainly in steel and reinforced concrete; sprayed asbestos was used as fire protection on the steel framing construction; furthermore aluminium, masonry and lightweight partition walls were executed. In*

*the building's interior many surfaces of floors, walls, ceilings etc are coated with modern synthetics (carpets, wall cladding, ceiling panels, etc). The form of the complex can be characterised as a technicistic mega-structure. The ICC is a multi-purpose building including congress and convention facilities, auditoriums, theatre stages, spacious lobbies and exhibitions areas, advertising space, parking, equipped with conference seating, designed specifically for the ICC Berlin, internationally acclaimed lighting, sound and projection systems used for events of all kinds and Wireless LAN (WiFi) which can be accessed via Hot Spots.*

### **3-6 Aesthetic value**

*Because of its unconventional machine-like form, the techno-like appearance of the metallic outer panelling and due to its isolated location between traffic and transport lines the ICC is often characterised as a spaceship or UFO landed at the fairground of Berlin. Its architecture celebrates the construction principle of carrying and supporting in a modernist machine-design aesthetic. The neo-futurist design of the mega-structure was obviously inspired by avant-garde ideas and drawings of the British Archigram Group. The ICC can be classified as a "Gesamtkunstwerk", a comprehensive work of architecture and arts, which forms an synthesis of urban design, the exterior and the interior design, including accessories, furnishings and building services or installations.*

*The interior design of the building combines Op Art and Pop Art references and offers a collection of significant works of building-related "art in architecture" (Kunst am Bau), such as the large light sculpture in the central lobby (by Frank Oehring) penetrating through three floors and symbolising the nerve system of the various technical facilities of the building; the press bar panels in the bridge structure painted by Kurt Mühlenhaupt, showing characteristic scenes from the various Berlin districts; or the mirror elements in the side lobby of Hall 2 designed by the Krefeld artist Adolf Luther, reflecting reality and lending a more festive accent to the room, etc. An ICC specific light and colour system serves visitors as orientation.*

## **4-0 Source of Alert**

### **4-1 Proposer(s) of Heritage Alert, contact details**

*ICOMOS Germany, [icomos@icomos.de](mailto:icomos@icomos.de) ; ICOMOS ISC 20C*

### **4-2 Groups supporting Heritage Alert and/or nomination, with contact details**

- 1. DoCoMoMo Germany e.V., Monika Markgraf; c/o Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, Gropiusallee 38, 06846 Dessau, Germany – mail: [docomomo@bauhaus-dessau.de](mailto:docomomo@bauhaus-dessau.de)*
- 2. Association of State Conservationists in the Federal Republic of Germany (Vereinigung der Landesdenkmalpfleger in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland / VDL) – c/o Dr. Markus Harzenetter, Fürstenbergstr. 15, 48147 Münster, Germany – mail: [judith.sandmeier@lwl.org](mailto:judith.sandmeier@lwl.org)*
- 3. Union of State Archaeologists in the Federal Republic of Germany Archaeology (Verband der Landesarchäologen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland / VLA) –*

Prof. Jürgen Kunow, Zur Wetterwarte 7, 01109 Dresden, Germany – mail: [info@lfa.sachsen.de](mailto:info@lfa.sachsen.de), or: [juergen.kunow@lvr.de](mailto:juergen.kunow@lvr.de)

4. Berlin State Monument Council (Landesdenkmalrat Berlin) – mail: [LDR@SenStadtUm.Berlin.de](mailto:LDR@SenStadtUm.Berlin.de)
5. Chamber of Architects Berlin (Architektenkammer Berlin / AKB) – Christine Edmaier, Architektenkammer Berlin, Alte Jakobstraße 149, 10969 Berlin, Germany; mail: [kammer@ak-berlin.de](mailto:kammer@ak-berlin.de)
6. Bund Heimat und Umwelt in Deutschland / BHU – Dr. Inge Gotzmann, Adenauerallee 68, 53113 Bonn, Germany – mail: [bhu@bhu.de](mailto:bhu@bhu.de)

#### 4-3 Groups potentially against Heritage Alert action

Messe Berlin GmbH

#### 4-4 Local, Regional, International significance citations about the place

*Heritage at Risk, ICOMOS World Report 2011–2013 on Monuments and Sites in Danger*, Hendrik Bäßler Verlag, Berlin 2014, edited by Christoph Machat, Michael Petzet and John Ziesemer, pp. 72 f.

See also item 4-6

#### 4-5 Letters of support for Heritage Alert action, newspaper articles, etc.

- Nikolaus Bernau, Panzerkreuzer Charlottenburg, in: *Radio Berlin Brandenburg (rbb)*, March 7, 2014.
- Nikolaus Bernau, Kann sich Berlin das leisten?, in: *Berliner Zeitung*, April 8, 2014.
- dpa, Sie nannten es "Raumschiff", in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 9, 2014.
- Ulrich Zawatka-Gerlach, Ein neues Kaufhaus für den Westen, in *Der Tagesspiegel*, September 5, 2014.
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#### 4-6 Publications that describe the work/place, bibliography, etc.

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- Georg Dehio. *Handbuch der deutschen Kunstdenkmäler – Berlin*. Berlin 1994, p. 198.
- Georg Dehio. *Handbuch der deutschen Kunstdenkmäler – Berlin*. Berlin 2000, p. 182.
- Reclam. *Kunstführer Berlin*. Stuttgart 1977, p. 297.
- Rave, Rolf/ Knöfel, Hans-Joachim/ Rave, Jan: *Bauen der 70er Jahre in Berlin*. Berlin 1981, p. 373.
- Wörner, Martin/ Mollenschott, Doris/ Hüter, Karl-Heinz: *Architekturführer Berlin*. Berlin 1997, p. 132.
- Peters, Paulhans (ed.): *Kongresszentren Kongresshotels (e+p Entwurf und Planung)*. München 1973.
- Riedel, Robert: *Kongresshalle und Kongresszentrum*. In: *Berlin und seine Bauten. Teil IX Industriebauten Bürohäuser*. Berlin/München/Düsseldorf 1971, pp. 250-254.

- Meyer-Bohe, Thomas and Walter: *Bauten für Schulungen, Tagungen und Kongresse. Leinfelden-Echterdingen 1983*, pp. 116-123.
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- Klotz, Heinrich: *Moderne und Postmoderne. Architektur der Gegenwart 1960-1980. Braunschweig/Wiesbaden 1987*, p. 83.
- Klingmann, Anna: *Synthese von Architektur und Technik. Das Internationale Congress Centrum*. In: Lepik, Andres/ Schmedding, Anne/ Gahl, Christian (eds.): *Das XX. Jahrhundert. Ein Jahrhundert Kunst in Deutschland. Architektur in Berlin*. Köln 1999, pp. 86 f.
- Kleihues, Josef Paul/ Becker-Schwering, Jan Gerd/ Kahlfeldt, Paul (eds.): *Bauen in Berlin 1900-2000*. Berlin 2000, p. 326.
- Pehnt, Wolfgang: *Deutsche Architektur seit 1900*. München 2005, p. 367.

**Selection of earlier articles in professional journals, magazines and newspaper 1975 - 2005:**

- Schüler, Ralf/Schüler-Witte, Ursulina: *Das neue Kongresszentrum Berlin*. In: *werk 2/1975 Begegnungsorte – Kongresszentren*, pp. 159-163.
- Schüler, Ralf: *Centre International des Congrès, Berlin*. In: *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* Nr. 212, 1980, pp. 26-30.
- Hoffmann, Hans Wolfgang: *Der zweite Blick: Das Internationale Congress Centrum Berlin*. In: *DAB 3/2001*, p. 18.
- Düttmann, Martina: *Dem ICC zum fünfundzwanzigsten Geburtstag*. In: *Bauwelt 13/2004*, pp. 32-37.
- Schmitz, Frank: *Ungeliebtes Mutterschiff*. In: *Quest Magazin 12/2004*, pp. 60-67.
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- Schröder, Christian: *Raumschiff ICC*. In: *Tagesspiegel*, August 21, 2005.
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- Richter, Christine: *Erst der Palast, jetzt das ICC. Symbole Ost- und West-Berlins verschwinden*. In: *Berliner Zeitung*, June 29, 2005.
- Zawatka-Gerlach, Ulrich: *„Das ICC ist weltweit ein Symbol“*. In: *Tagesspiegel*, December 17, 2005.
- Otto, Martin: *Die großen Zerstörer. Nun trifft die Berliner Gussstahlkugel Deutschlandhalle und ICC*. In: *FAZ*, August 8, 2005.
- Lang-Lendorff, Antje: *Raumschiff billig abzugeben*. In: *Berliner Zeitung*, June 30, 2005.
- Oleow, Matthias: *ICC-Abriss: SPD-Chef warnt den Senat vor Alleingang*. In: *Tagesspiegel*, December 11, 2005.
- *Ibid.*: *Weltmarke wird demontiert*. In: *Tagesspiegel*, December 18, 2005.

**4-7 Time constraints for advocacy**

*The future of the ICC Berlin is uncertain; several inconsistent expert reports, market and location analyses as well as feasibility studies for the conversion and reuse of the building (1. congress and convention centre or musical hall and playhouse; 2.*

*commercial shopping centre; 3. public museum or library; 4. "House of Innovation" or showroom of cultural living and interaction; 5. "House of Interaction, Living & Innovation", etc), cost calculations for renovation and transformation are being discussed in the Berlin Parliament and Senate of Berlin; a political decision is intended for this legislative period (2011-2016).*

**5-0 Recommended action**

**5-1 Heritage Alert: international/national distribution via ICOMOS**

**5-2 Letters to**

*Ralf Wieland  
President of the Berlin House of Representatives  
(Präsident des Abgeordnetenhauses von Berlin)  
Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin  
Niederkirchnerstraße 5  
10117 Berlin, Germany*

*The Governing Mayor of Berlin  
(Regierender Bürgermeister)  
Senate Chancellery  
Jüdenstr. 1  
10178 Berlin, Germany*

*Peter Zühlsdorf  
Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Messe GmbH Berlin  
Messe Berlin GmbH  
Messedamm 22  
14055 Berlin, Germany*

**5-3 ICOMOS National, Scientific Committee Website upload**  
ICOMOS Germany; ICOMOS ISC 20C

**5-4 Affiliated organisation distribution**  
*Docomomo, UIA, Europa Nostra, World Monuments Fund*

**5-5 Other actions recommended**  
*Resolution was adopted by the 18th General Assembly of ICOMOS in Florence 2014 appealing to the authorities of the Federal State of Berlin to preserve the monument and to reactivate the disused architectural monument while conserving its function.*

*Press release referring to the resolution of the 18th GA and the recommendations to the Berlin authorities*

**6-0 Desired outcome**



- 6-1 Legal protection or improved legal protection**  
*Listing of the ICC; keeping up the maintenance of the building; ensuring the possibility of a reuse compatible with the original function and heritage status*
- 6-2 Stopping of works that will alter the heritage values of the ICC**  
*Stopping the shutdown of the operational settings and technical infrastructure and ensuring the operational readiness*
- 6-3 Stopping of permits that would result in irretrievable loss of the heritage**  
*Stopping current plans for a shopping mall, which would require massive alterations and cause disfigurements, particularly in the interior*
- 6-4 Imposing minimum maintenance to stop further decay pending conservation/restoration work**  
*Maintaining and preparing the building and the technical equipment for temporary cultural and commercial use (exhibitions, conferences, seminars, etc); offering the public guided tours and visiting possibilities of the ICC*
- 6-5 Modifying the project so that it becomes respectful of the values for which the monument or site received legal protection**  
*Reactivating the ICC instead of closing and neglecting the building*
- 6-6 Stopping demolition**  
*Stopping the removal and dismantling of the furnishings and technical equipment, e.g. the audiovisual media and services*
- 6-7 Other:**  
*The ICC should neither be demolished nor gutted. More than almost any other mega structure of the 1970s characterising the cityscape and the architecture of Berlin the ICC as an almost unaltered building fulfils the international monument criteria of authenticity and integrity.  
In accordance with its architectural relevance the ICC Berlin should be listed and acknowledged, protected and reactivated as an internationally important building of the 1970s.*
- 7-0 Appendix with Illustrations - Picture Credits**  
*Fig. 1: Messe Berlin GmbH  
Fig. 2: [Deutsche Bundespost](#) / [Deutsche Bundespost Berlin](#)  
Fig. 3: Alfred Englert  
Fig. 4: Messe Berlin GmbH  
Fig. 5: Alfred Englert  
Fig. 6: Bernhard Kohlenbach  
Fig. 7: Alfred Englert  
Fig. 8: Alfred Englert  
Fig. 9: Mila Hacke*