

HERIS

The Heritage Information System of the Austrian Federal Monuments Authority

René PLOYER, Federal Monuments Authority, Austria

Florian LEITNER, Federal Monuments Authority, Austria

Christoph HÜTTERER, Federal Monuments Authority, Austria

Keywords: *heritage — database — architectural monuments — archaeological monuments*

CHNT Reference: Hütterer, C., Leitner, F., and Ployer, R. (2022). HERIS. The Heritage Information System of the Austrian Federal Monuments Authority, in CHNT Editorial board. *Proceedings of the 27th International Conference on Cultural Heritage and New Technologies, November 2022*. Heidelberg: Propylaeum.

DOI: xxxxxxx.

What is HERIS?

Two years ago, the Austrian Federal Monuments Authority (BDA) started to merge its various specialised databases (these are the database of monuments of architectural heritage and the database of archaeological sites) into one large unified database. This resulted in HERIS (Heritage Information System).

The online application HERIS was developed by the Austrian Federal Chancellery and contains the entire inventory of architectural heritage and potential monuments, listed archaeological monuments and archaeological sites in Austria (Fig. 1). The individual data sets are provided with texts, photos, administrative data and other information originating from the former databases and ongoing data surveys.

In contrast to the databases originally used, the main innovation of HERIS is that the objects (monuments and archaeological sites) are represented as GIS based polygons, thus providing a comprehensive cartographic visualisation of the Austrian inventory of architectural and archaeological monuments and archaeological sites. In addition, HERIS has the possibility to link the objects with the corresponding file inventories of the ELAK (Electronic File).

One of the advantages of HERIS is its intuitive usability. Using the simple search function, objects can be queried by their catalogue title and/or their address. A combined query of catalogue title, municipality, federal state and address is possible. The detailed search additionally enables an accurate query according to special parameters, such as property data, date, find category, monument protection status, etc. (Fig. 2. 3). The search result can be exported as a CSV file, shape file or PDF catalogue.

Aims of HERIS

- Central administration of the architectural and archaeological cultural heritage
- Standardised data maintenance in the BDA
- Basis for decisions in the BDA
- Speed up decision-making in the processes of the BDA
- Exchange with other institutions
- Passing on relevant data to the spatial planning departments of the federal states
- Strengthening the BDA's Open Data initiative
- Implementation of the inventory strategy
- Training of all BDA staff in HERIS.

Guideline for Archaeological Inventories

For a uniform recording of monuments and archaeological sites, a guideline for data recording in HERIS is required. A guideline for the inventory of archaeological monuments and sites has already been prepared. This guide does not deal with the meaning and purpose of inventory in monument research and conservation, nor does it present the history of (archaeological) inventory at the Federal Monuments Authority (BDA). Rather, the guide aims to summarise the uniform procedure established at the BDA for the recording of archaeological monuments, i.e. data on known or accessible archaeological sites, find spots and finds in the entire federal territory.

The guideline defines the areas in which expert decisions are required, specifies the thesauri to be used and explains the data entry into the database maintained by the BDA as well as the associated GIS-based mapping. The guide was developed within the framework of projects tendered throughout Europe, also in the sense of a collection of FAQs, and was revised on the occasion of the implementation of the HERIS (Heritage Information System) database in 2020.

What is the purpose of archaeological mapping?

As an essential tool for practical archaeological heritage management: to survey the spatial extent of proven and justifiably developed sites and to address them technically (findings, dating, etc.).

As a basic survey for the preparation of expert opinions on the protection of monuments: Description and significance of the site in terms of "variety, diversity and distribution". The literature collection has to be usable for expert opinions, but not necessarily contain every mention in the - scientific or 'local' - literature, but in any case every literature that supports the extent and dating of a site.

The aim of the archaeological inventory is the compilation of the archaeological monument register and the GIS-based mapping of all known or accessible archaeological sites and listed archaeological monuments.

Differences from the Office's old databases

HERIS has been in full operation since 2021. Through its use, potential for improvement and further development can be collected and reported to the developers, so that the database grows and is adapted at the same time. GIS-based mapping can be seen as a substantial innovation. A major advantage of the new database is that large linear monuments can be recorded in a single data set, even if they extend across an entire province and require assignment to countless cadastral municipalities. As an example, the Upper Austrian horse-drawn railway was recorded as one site. In the map window of the dataset, the entire mapping of both the site and the monument and the lost sections is displayed.

In the course of the work in HERIS, adaptations to the Guideline for Archaeological Inventory were also necessary. This revision is already available online on the website of the Federal Monuments Authority since July 2021.¹ On the one hand, the thesaurus was supplemented and, on the other hand, some necessary adaptations and more detailed explanations were added to the guide.

A similar guide for architectural monuments is in progress. Currently, HERIS contains approx. 115,000 monuments (39,000 of which are listed) and approx. 35,000 archaeological sites.



Fig. 1. Entry page to the HERIS database (© BDA).

¹ <https://www.bda.gv.at/service/publikationen/standards-leitfaeden-richtlinien/leitfaden-inventarisierung-archaeologie.html>

Katalogtitel- und Adresssuche

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Fig. 2. Surface of the detailed search for architectural monuments (© BDA).

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Zurücksetzen Suchen

Fig. 3. Surface of the detailed search for archaeological monuments and sites (© BDA).

References

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