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**SOFIA**  
REGIONAL CENTER  
FOR THE SAFEGUARDING  
OF THE INTANGIBLE  
CULTURE HERITAGE IN THE  
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE  
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF  
UNESCO

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# **10<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the South-East European Experts Network on Intangible Cultural Heritage**

***“Intangible Cultural Heritage and World  
Heritage: synergies and coordination  
between the UNESCO 2003 and 1972  
Conventions”***

**Brač, Croatia, 14-15 June 2016**

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**SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS and  
CONCLUSIONS**

We, the participants in the 10<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the South-East European Experts Network on Intangible Cultural Heritage (Brač, Croatia, 14-15 June 2016), henceforth “the Network”, wish to thank the Ministry of Culture of Croatia, the Croatian Commission for UNESCO, and the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe for the warm hospitality and for the successful organization of this meeting; we also express our appreciation for the support provided by the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe (Sofia, Bulgaria) to the organization of this meeting.

We wish to highlight that this meeting, which is a follow-up to the previous meetings in Arbanassi, Bulgaria (June 2007), Safranbolu, Turkey (May 2008), Zagreb, Croatia (April 2009), Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Romania (May 2010), Belgrade, Serbia (May 2011), Athens, Greece (May 2012), Sofia, Bulgaria (May 2013), Limassol, Cyprus (May 2014), and Venice, Italy (June 2015) marked a further step towards enhancing regional cooperation on the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, and developing a common understanding of related challenges and opportunities.

The following trends and topics of common interest emerged during our discussions, and recommendations for future action were made accordingly, which are summarised herewith according to the following list of contents:

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## 1. Progress and experiences in the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in SEE (2015-2016)

Participants representing SEE State Parties presented the main achievements in implementing the Convention at country level, with special focus on developments since the previous meeting of the network in June 2015.

The main novelty in **Croatia** lies in the active involvement of local communities and bearers in the process of inscribing ICH elements in the National Register of Cultural Goods, which are now treated in accordance with the Law on the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage (1999). The elements inscribed in the National Inventory currently amount to 148, including 143 elements in the National Register of Cultural Goods and 5 elements in the List of Cultural Goods under Preventive Protection. Applicant(s) for the establishment of protection of intangible cultural property can be all natural and legal persons in the Republic of Croatia, who submit their proposals for the inscription in the Register to the Conservation Departments of the Ministry of Culture through a standard application form. Limited but continuous financial support is also provided by the Ministry, through public calls for proposals. In the field of promotion and awareness-raising, a close cooperation is being developed – besides others – with the Croatian Tourism Office. In 2015, a Reference Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage has been established within the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, with the aim to bring together all institutions in Croatia and cooperating institutions in other countries that possess relevant documentation or scientific material and information, particularly related to intangible cultural heritage. Activities on education and research were also continued and further developed.

Main achievements in **Albania** during 2015-2016 mostly focussed on the development of the legal and institutional frameworks, and on capacity-building. A new Strategy on Culture is currently being drafted with the support of UNESCO, as well as the new Law on Cultural Heritage that shall include a specific chapter on ICH and the obligations linked to the 2003 and 2005 Conventions. An Action Plan for the promotion of the identity and intangible cultural heritage of minorities is under approval, while an Action Plan for the integration of Roma people was approved in December 2015, with a specific chapter on the preservation and promotion of Roma culture and intangible heritage. A specific chapter on traditional crafts was also included within the new Law on Crafts. In terms of awareness-raising and promotion, the initiative “Show your culture” was launched by the Ministry of Culture, allowing for uploading videos on ICH on a dedicated webpage within the Ministry’s website. Albanian ICH elements were also presented in the framework of several international events, such as the Milan EXPO 2015. In September 2015 a national training workshop was held in Tirana on “Building capacities for the UNESCO 2003 Convention”; a workshop on methods of registering ICH elements in video format was also held in Tirana in July 2015. Over 100 persons were trained in total.

**Austria** participated as an observer country. 7 new elements were inscribed in the National Inventory in 2015 and 4 new elements so far in 2016, for an overall amount that is currently up to 90 elements. Three meetings of the ICH experts panel were held during the reporting period, as well as a survey on the effects of being listed on the national inventory; the first national report on the legislative, regulatory and other measures taken for the safeguarding of ICH in Austria; a new field research and lectures on “ICH goes Science” in cooperation with the University of Vienna; meetings for the preparation of multinational nominations for inscription in the UNESCO RL of traditional blueprinting knowledge and practices concerning natural hazards in the Alpine region. Preliminary preparations were completed for the nomination of 3 regional centres for Craftsmanship for inscription on the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices. A research study on Traditional Craftsmanship as Intangible Cultural Heritage and as an Economic Factor in Austria is about to be published.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, works are in progress to consolidate the preliminary ICH lists of the two Entities (Republika Srpska, and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) within the Preliminary List of ICH of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first Report on the implementation of the 2003 Convention was submitted in December 2015. In 2016 two nominations for the RL were submitted, respectively on the Konjic Woodcarving (amandedl nomination) and “Picking the tea herb Iva on Mount Ozren”. In addition, two other nominations are currently being prepared. Progress was made in both Entities for improving the legal and institutional frameworks, including, for Republika Sprska: the adoption of amendments to the Law on Museum Activities, adding articles related to ICH; the establishment of the Department for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Museum of RS; the establishment of the Commission for the Intangible Cultural Heritage within the Ministry of Culture; the establishment of the Central Register of ICH. In the Federation, the draft revised Law on the Protection and Use of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage was prepared; at Catonal level, two Cantons already have Laws on the Protection of Cultural Heritage harmonized with the provisions of the 2003 Convention, and 2 other are preparing such laws. Several educational and promotional activities were carried out in both Entities, also upon the direct initiative of the communities of bearers. Currently, there is no institution responsible for training on ICH safeguarding in BiH, but a capacity-building workshop was organized during 2015 by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Commission of BiH for UNESCO, with support of the UNESCO Regional Bureau, with special focus on community-based inventorying.

**Bulgaria** obtained the inscription of the “Surova folk fest in Pernik region” on the RL, in 2015, followed by an exhibition on this element at the National Ethnographic Museum. A proposal for inscription in the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices was submitted in 2016, about the “Festival of folklore in Koprivshitsa: a system of practices for heritage presentation and transmission”. Works also continued for preparing the multinational candidature of the Cultural practices associated to the First of March (together with Republic of Moldova, Romania, and the

former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) for the RL cycle in 2017. In general, the experience acquired in recent years showed that the nomination process produced benefits in terms of developing experts' competence and capacities, active partnership with communities and enhancing inter-institutional cooperation. Main opportunities and challenges for the future will focus on the improvement of national inventory policies, the relation between ICH and tourism, the involvement of local communities in safeguarding and transmission, the transnational dimension of ICH and the strengthening of training and capacity building.

In **Cyprus** the first call for the National Inventory of ICH was launched in 2015, and resulted in the inscription of 8 elements. 10 new elements were inscribed as a result of the second call in 2016. In terms of safeguarding, the Lefkaritiko Lace Embroidery National Standard was approved. A wide set of activities was implemented in 2015-2016 with regard to awareness-raising, promotion and education (programme on "Promoting and transmitting ICH through formal and non formal Education"), including workshops and lectures publications, heritage days, cooperation with the media and community-involvement initiatives. In terms of regional/international cooperation, a meeting of experts was organized in Nicosia in January 2016 on drystone as an element of intangible cultural heritage. In general, the main challenge for the future lies in enhancing the community-based approach to ICH safeguarding and transmission, which also requires the development of communities' awareness, capacities, and ownership. It is also necessary to find ways to ensure that intellectual property rights of the bearers of ICH are respected, creating official certifications for practitioners of traditional cultural expressions in order to protect them against unauthorized imitation and mass reproduction.

The implementation of the 2003 Convention and in general all efforts related to ICH safeguarding in **Greece** in 2015-2016 had to deal, for the 6<sup>th</sup> year in a row, with the repercussions of a fiscal and economic crisis. The severe budget and staff reductions created a new environment that all stakeholders have to adapt themselves to, and which requires a "paradigm shift" towards new policies and practices based on sustainability, participatory method, and inter-sectoral approach. Since the first Greek nomination of an element in the RL (Mediterranean Diet, 2010), the implementation priorities shifted from a top-down to a bottom-up approach based on the key-role of communities, which ,however, requires continued efforts in terms of capacity-building and awareness-raising. Within this framework, the link between ICH and sustainable development shall be further investigated and developed, with a special focus on natural risk prevention (Sacred Forest in Epyrus), management of rural spaces (dry stone walling), arts and crafts (wooden shipbuilding), tourism etc, which are deemed necessary in order to tap the full potential of ICH on one hand and ensuring its safeguarding on the other. The Greek ICH Inventory currently includes 13 elements, with 16 elements on the waiting list (representing all ICH categories).

**Hungary**, which participated as an observer country, informed about the institutional framework and main operational activities for ICH safeguarding. In particular, the role of the ICH Expert

Committee of the Hungarian National Commission for UNESCO was highlighted, as a consultative body to the Minister responsible for Cultural Heritage with the tasks to ensure the implementation of the Convention on the national level, and making recommendations to the Minister for inscription of elements on the National Inventory, as well as for Hungarian nominations for inscription on the UNESCO Lists. The National ICH Inventory currently includes 24 elements, with 6 new elements to be inscribed in 2016. The cooperation with communities is also ensured thanks to the network of 19 county coordinators, along with the advice of voluntary experts and professionals and the contribution of several local associations, NGOs and festivals. The Hungarian Open Air Museum is responsible for the professional implementation of the convention, within the department of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which was established in 2009.

The system for ICH safeguarding in **Italy** is also shifting from a top-down to a bottom-up, participatory method centred on the communities. In addition, the approval of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for an increased integration of ICH safeguarding within the broader framework development policies, requiring an inter-sectoral approach, as also reflected in the most recent version of the 2003 Convention's Operational Directives. An interesting example in this sense is offered by the activities developed around the nomination for inscription in the RL of the "Celebration of the Celestine Pardon", which include actions geared to integrate local tangible and intangible heritage through communication, promotion, awareness-raising, international cooperation, sports and contemporary cultural expressions.

The **Republic of Moldova** informed about the recently launched 2016-2020 programme for safeguarding the Christmas time ritual carolling in male groups, inscribed on the RL together with Romania. Related actions included documentation, inventorying, research, revitalization, transmission and promotion of the element, in accordance with the national law and the 2003 UNESCO Convention. In May 2016 a new project was also launched for the Regulation on the organization and activity of the National Centre for the Conservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; the Centre's mission is to ensure the implementation of the state policy in the domain of identification, documentation, research, inventorying, transmission, revitalization, promotion and enhancement of ICH. The new regulations are expected to be approved in June 2016. Several local and national ICH festivals also took place during 2015-2016, such as the National Day of Traditional Costumes that was celebrated for the first time in November 2015, upon initiative of the Parliament, with excellent visibility. Finally, the Republic of Moldova and Romania are working to prepare a joint nomination file on Traditional techniques for confectioning the Romanian women blouse.

In December 2015 **Romania** obtained the inscription of the Lads' dances in Romania in the ICH RL. The multinational file on Cultural practices associated to the first of March was re-submitted for examination by the end of March. Work is progressing for preparing the nominations of 3 other joint files with the Republic of Moldova, respectively on *Traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship in Romania*

and the Republic of Moldova (coordinated by Romania, submitted to UNESCO in March 2015), the Oina game, and the making of traditional female blouse with *altiță* (the last two, coordinated by Romania and the Republic of Moldova). In November 2015 the Ministry of Culture and the National Commission for the Safeguarding of ICH organized “The Living Human Treasure Gala”, during which the president of the Romania awarded the creators declared “Living Human Treasures” from 2010 to 2015. The Ministry of Culture also launched new programmes to finance cultural activities, including ICH and crafts. Finally, in terms of awareness-raising and education, the Romanian Academy (Iași Subsidiary) organizes each year in June a workshop on “How and Why We Can Teach Traditional Culture”.

In **Serbia** the National ICH Register currently counts 32 elements, including the Slava celebration (RL) and the traditional Kolo traditional folk dance (nomination submitted). The main recent initiative is the project on “Digitizing the documentation of the National Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the application of new information and communication technologies in the protecting and promotion of ICH”, supported by UNESCO Participation Programme, which will allow for the creation of a database to access and present ICH using new IT technologies. In November 2015 a conference was held at the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade on Raising Awareness of the Importance of Registered ICH in Serbia through the Enhancement of the National Register of ICH; its recommendations called for improving coordination among relevant bodies on ICH safeguarding, creating opportunities for the contribution of experts and professionals, associating safeguarding measures to the inscription in the National Registry, and updating documentation. A wide set of actions were also realized on awareness-raising, including educational activities, festivals, and the European Heritage Days 2015 on Old and Traditional Crafts – Preservation and Sustenance.

In 2016 an amendment was introduced in the Cultural Heritage Protection Act (2008) of **Slovenia**, replacing the expression “living” with “intangible” cultural heritage, in order to better comply with the 2003 Convention’s requirements. As of June 2016, 52 elements were inscribed in the Register of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Slovenia (established in 2008) and 151 bearers were identified. In the last 12 months, 11 new elements were inscribed in the national ICH register. Over the last five years, the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, which is the national Coordinator for the ICH-related activities in Slovenia has promoted ICH in various ways, including exhibitions, publications, events, symposia, festivals, and a website. This resulted in greater awareness and increased public interest in the ICH. The close cooperation between experts and bearers is also shown by the joint promotion and safeguarding of the heritage. In December 2015 the Coordinator published the book Documenting and Presenting Intangible Cultural Heritage on Film, which brings an important contribution to the creation of videos about the intangible cultural heritage in relation to both nominations for the Representative List and videos for use in museums and other heritage institutions. The main challenges facing ICH safeguarding in the country include: the risk of

excessive commercialization of ICH; the appropriation of heritage and improper attempts to file ICH elements in the register, due to lack of awareness and understanding; occasional disagreements between experts on interpretation of ICH elements; incorrect presentations and lack of understanding by the media; and excessive attention on listing respect to other aspects of safeguarding.

In **The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, during the last two years progresses were made for the improvement of national inventory policies and digitisation, with the launch by the Government of a 3-million € project for the digitisation of heritage and public archives, that will also include ICH. Activities on community involvement and ICH education were developed, concerning respectively the “Kopachkata” community and the Glasoechko singing. At the State level, a revision of the Cultural Heritage Protection Law and other related Legal Acts were promoted in January 2015 to better integrate ICH principles. Most recently, a capacity-building seminar was held in April 2016, with the support of the Regional Centre in Sofia. The new National Strategy for protection and safeguarding of Cultural Heritage 2016-2020 is about to be finalized, and it will also include ICH. A special financial mechanism was created within the Ministry of culture to provide support for ICH revitalization projects. Finally, the Cultural Heritage Protection Office was re-structured in June 2016, with the establishment of a new unit for cataloguing and digitization of heritage (including ICH).

**Turkey** informed of the country’s achievements and on-going efforts with regard to the 4 dimensions related to the Convention’s implementation. On the legal and institutional framework, the role of the local ICH boards and central ICH commission of experts were underlined. Concerning inventorying/identifying, Turkey has two different systems: the ICH National Inventory (based on territorial principles and bottom-up approach) and the Living Human Treasures National Inventory (9 individuals and one group enlisted in 2015). Awareness-raising is also a priority, and dealt with at both local and country level. In most recent years, significant progresses were achieved in terms of safeguarding measures, also based on research and documentation. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism also supports the production of publications and videos, as well as numerous activities for regional and international cooperation (the most recent one being the Turkey- Hungary Common Culinary Project, started in 2016).

## **2. Coordinating 1972 and 2003 Conventions**

On the specific topic of the second session, i.e. **synergies and coordination between the UNESCO 2003 and 1972 Conventions**, the representatives of UNESCO and of three participating State Parties (Croatia, Cyprus, and Italy) delivered specific presentations, while all participants contributed to the ensuing debate.

The debate confirmed the increasing necessity of an integrated approach to heritage safeguarding, encompassing tangible and intangible expressions within the framework of a heritage-based approach to sustainable development.

Although all participants agreed on the inextricable link between tangible and intangible expressions, defined by a speaker as two wings of the same bird, the debate also revealed the lack so far of specific policy approaches and/or programmes at country level on how to effectively coordinate the two Conventions. In this sense, the international exchange of experience, as well as the development of specific policy documents by UNESCO may provide a valuable contribution.

On the other hand, it was underlined that the relation between tangible and intangible heritage stretches far beyond the issue of coordinating the two Conventions. In fact, as the 2003 Convention advocates for safeguarding the whole ICH, while the 1972 Convention only applies to places recognized as having Outstanding Universal Value, spatial coincidences and interaction between intangible and tangible heritage should be investigated and treated beyond the limits of the properties inscribed in the World Heritage Lists.

As further evidence of the two points above, great interest during the meeting was raised by the presentation of experiences not related to World Heritage sites and not inspired by any specific coordination policy, but rather developed around specific projects geared to support local heritage-based development. In particular, participants agreed that the development of a specific policy for integrated heritage management cannot happen separately from the definition of place-based solutions, while on the other hand local project activities should be supported by broader policy frameworks in order to ensure consistency and sustainability.

### **3. Common challenges, open issues and priorities for future action**

Participants agreed on the necessity to continue the progressive shift from a top-down (institutionally driven) to a **bottom-up (community-based) approach** with regard to identifying, inventorying, and safeguarding ICH, while respecting the specificities of each State Party.

On the other hand, the workshop confirmed that, in the absence of an official agreed definition, the concept of “**communities**” is intended differently from country to country and from context to context. The same applies to the identification of the “**community representatives**”, which may differ greatly, ranging from local government agencies to NGOs, associations, informal groups of individuals.

The workshop also confirmed the existence of different approaches with regard to the **living human treasures**, which in some of the participating State Parties continue to operate at country level, attracting significant attention and resources. This sparked a discussion on the issue of

**licensing**, as a point of convergence between safeguarding needs and individual economic interests; as a result, the need was expressed by several participants for a clearer advice on the approach to licensing.

The above point is especially relevant with regard to traditional **arts and crafts**, where the **commercialization** of objects is on one hand a necessary element of safeguarding and viability, while on the other it brings along risks of over-exploitation and degradation of the cultural values. In order to face this risk, the importance was stressed on education and awareness-raising with the aim at assisting the general public in understanding, appreciating, and selecting cultural products and their background.

Accordingly, the **role of experts** was underlined as necessary interfaces and mediators between institutions and communities. The purpose of avoiding artificial freezing of obsolete cultural practices may lead to an all-permitting attitude towards bearers of ICH, with the risk to witness degradation of traditional culture. Within this framework, the expert's role is to analyse innovation and ICH transmission in the context of its cultural environment. Experts shall use their knowledge not to rule over ICH, but to watch the cultural context evolve, to advise bearers and the public and to raise awareness by transmitting reliable information.

The importance of **documentation and research** was underlined by many participants as a necessary condition for correct inventorying and effective safeguarding.

**Multinational nominations** proved to be very important for enhancing international cooperation between communities, experts and institutions, as well as to enhance awareness-raising, visibility and mobilization. Although these initiatives can sometime present challenges in terms of coordination and interpretation, their role as promoters of ICH values shall not be underestimated.

While acknowledging the risks related to the overestimation of **listing**, the international and national inventorying was unanimously considered as a pillar of ICH safeguarding, in consideration of its impact on awareness-raising, knowledge, ownership, mobilization and agenda-setting.

Inventories are sometimes also important with regard to **funding**, as they are often used to determine the eligibility of applicants (although, this system may present some risk in terms of limiting access and increasing the over-estimation of listing). While several State Parties have introduced public financing mechanisms for ICH safeguarding, the availability of resources is still very limited and the need to better promote and present ICH vis-à-vis donors and decision makers was underlined (for example, with regard to the EU financing programmes). Similarly, opportunities shall be explored to further develop public-private partnerships.

In general, participants agreed that ICH safeguarding efforts at all levels, from international to local, can only be effective and sustainable provided they are better integrated within **sustainable development** programmes. The imperative need to further investigate, present, promote and

operationalize the role of ICH as a driver and enabler for sustainable development was repeatedly underlined as a key priority, in order for ICH to maintain and enhance its relevance.

## 5. Conclusions and follow-up

Participants in the meeting agreed on the importance of the Network and of its annual gatherings as a very useful platform to exchange experiences, information and lessons learned, as well as to enhance regional cooperation and discuss issues of common interest.

The present one being the 10<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Network, it offered an ideal opportunity to underline and appreciate the substantial progresses achieved by the State Parties in the region to safeguard ICH. Over the past decade, the ratification process in South-east Europe was completed and concrete results were achieved in all the concerned Member States regarding the implementation of the 2003 Convention. South-East Europe stands nowadays at the forefront of international efforts to safeguard ICH, as proven by many forms of evidence, including: the many measures taken at local and country level; the high number of elements inscribed in the UNESCO ICH Lists and registers; the importance attached to ICH within relevant regional cooperation platforms such as the Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe; the strong regional cooperation, testified by the amount of multinational files and cross-border activities, as well as by the establishment of partnerships and specialized agencies such as the Regional Centre in Sofia, etc.

However, many challenges remain to be faced, both at country and regional level, in order to further enhance the implementation of the Convention in South-East Europe and to better adapt to the new regional and international scenario.

In this sense, the relevance of the Network was confirmed and participants welcomed the **proposal by Bosnia and Herzegovina to host the next meeting of the Network, in 2017**, with a special focus on the issues of **resource mobilization, fund-raising and partnerships for ICH safeguarding**.