



Venice  
Office  
Cyprus  
National Commission  
for UNESCO



Republic of Cyprus  
Ministry of Education and Culture

## CONCLUSIONS

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# **Eighth Annual Meeting of the South East European Experts Network on Intangible Cultural Heritage**

***“Intangible cultural heritage and education:  
experiences, good practices, lessons  
learned”***

**Limassol, Cyprus, 15-16 May 2014**

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A meeting organized within the initiative



We, the participants in the 8<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the South-East European Experts Network on Intangible Cultural Heritage (Limassol, Cyprus, 15-16 May 2014), henceforth “the Network”, wish to thank the Republic of Cyprus – Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO for their warm hospitality and for the successful organization of this meeting; we also wish to express appreciation for the support offered by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe (Venice) in the preparation of this meeting, and in coordinating the Network’s activities in general.

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), and Sofia, Bulgaria (May 2013) 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:

### **Public awareness and visibility**

- Participants reported increasing public interest in ICH at all levels, from cultural operators to the media and the general public; this interest has created momentum that presents new opportunities and challenges for the safeguarding of ICH;
- The preparation of nomination files for inscription in the ICH UNESCO lists, and the inscription of elements on said lists, were recognised as instrumental in producing these high levels of interest; similarly, national inventoring and listing activities were reported as contributing to the enhanced visibility of ICH;
- The organization of festivals was also deemed to have a positive impact on raising interest in and awareness of ICH, especially when coupled with media coverage of the events in question (public broadcasting, etc);
- On the other hand, participants noted that this increase in public interest does not necessarily imply a similar increase in the understanding of ICH as defined by the 2003 Convention; in this regard, they stressed the importance of developing specific communication tools and programmes and of working in cooperation with the communities of bearers.

### **Education**

- Participants agree as to the paramount importance of incorporating intangible cultural heritage (ICH) within formal and non-formal educational programmes, with the twofold aim of using ICH as a tool to enrich the educational platform and increase its effectiveness, and of supporting the transmission and safeguarding of ICH;

- With regards to formal educational programmes, the integration of ICH within existing school subjects and curricula was recognized as a good practice, and a valuable alternative to the creation of ICH-related subjects;
- With regards to non-formal educational programmes, the discussion highlighted the importance of improving cooperation with museums as key partners and of reinforcing cooperation among relevant State authorities, museums, foundations and other civil society partners involved in activities relating to ICH and education;
- Music and nutrition emerged as particularly relevant and fertile subjects for the development of ICH-related educational activities, on both a formal and an informal level, due to their ability to involve and to overcome linguistic and cultural divides;
- In general, participants highlighted the need to improve cooperation with the communities of bearers and ensure their involvement in the definition and implementation of educational programmes, as a necessary condition for developing effective and sustainable educational activities;
- The need for stronger and closer inter-institutional coordination was also indicated as one of the priorities for the improvement of ICH-related educational activities, with particular reference to cooperation among ministries of culture, education, and other relevant authorities.

### **Regional cooperation: priorities for future action**

- The preparation of multi-national nomination files was jointly indicated as a good practice and a priority for future cooperation, based on the important contribution they provide in terms of networking, exchange of knowledge, and intercultural dialogue. Participants noted the positive outcomes already achieved in the region as a result of multi-national files, and expressed a common willingness to continue and possibly step up joint efforts in this field as a priority for regional cooperation; in this sense, the coordination meeting of Member States who participated in the inscription of the Mediterranean Diet on the UNESCO Representative List, which took place in Agros (Cyprus) on 28-29 April 2014, represent a good example to be repeated for other multi-national inscriptions;
- Efforts should also be made to enhance regional cooperation in the field of capacity-building, at both an institutional and a professional level. In this respect, participants specifically wish to encourage the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, based in Sofia (henceforth the Sofia Regional Centre), to step up its capacity-building activities at a regional level; they agree to convey this message to their representatives in the Centre's General Assembly in order that this topic be further discussed on occasion of the next session of the Centre's General Assembly;
- With regards to fund-raising, participants agree on the importance of reinforcing cooperation in order to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by EU-funded programmes, with special reference to Creative Europe and Horizon 2020. In this sense, a more active role could also be played by the Sofia Regional Centre, in terms of coordination, networking, and information sharing

- Participants acknowledge the relevance and usefulness of these annual meetings of the South-East European Experts Network on ICH as the main specialized regional platform for exchanging experiences and developing cooperation, and support their continuation; in this regard, participants put forward the following recommendations for the organization of the next meeting:
  - national presentations on the state of implementation of the 2003 convention will focus on the most significant novelties/selected best from the previous year
  - one main thematic focus should continue to be proposed for each meeting, in order to allow for a more in-depth and detailed discussion; in this regard, the issue of coordination among UNESCO Conventions (especially 2003 and 2005) was proposed as the thematic focus of the meeting next year. In addition, other issues were suggested for possible additional thematic panels, including i.a.: role and definition of bearers in the inventorying processes; ICH and minorities; ICH and religion; ICH, communication and the media; monitoring of inventoried/listed ICH elements; ICH and tourism: risks and opportunities
  - background papers on the meeting’s thematic focus should also be prepared for future meetings, based on the very useful contribution offered by the background note developed for the present meeting
- Participants stress the need to ensure greater continuity in the network’s activity and contacts, and more regular exchanges between the annual meetings; accordingly, they recommended the establishment of an on-line platform or mailing list, to be created and managed preferably by the Sofia Regional Centre, geared at sharing information on issues of common interest on a more regular basis.

Finally, we recommend the present conclusions to be presented and disseminated on occasion of the next meeting of the “Council of Ministers of Culture in South-Eastern Europe – Enhancing Culture for Sustainable Development”, due to take place in Ohrid, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on 27-28 June 2014.

#### List of annexes:

1. Meeting’s agenda
2. Final list of participants
3. Background note on ICH and education