



United Nations  
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International Council of Museums  
Conseil International des Musées  
International Council of Museums



With the support of the UNESCO Office in Moscow  
for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus,  
the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation.

## Policy Brief

Social and Educational Role  
of Museums in Promoting the  
Principles of the UNESCO 2003  
Convention for the Safeguarding  
of the Intangible Cultural Heritage



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This Policy brief is devoted to the museum activities in the sphere of the intangible cultural heritage in the CIS countries and their role in the effective implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). This publication reviews successful international practices and actual museum issues in the sphere of intangible heritage that assumes integration of the main principles of the 2003 UNESCO Convention into all aspects of museum management.

The authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this publication and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

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# Social and Educational Role of Museums in Promoting the Principles of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

*The concept of intangible heritage, poorly understood just a few years ago, has gained ground everywhere. There is still work to be done to explain its raison d'être, its exact scope and the benefits of sharing it, but the voice of sceptics is weakening before the reality on the ground.*

*Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, 2012*

## Context and Significance of the Problem

Resolution № 1, adopted at the end of the XXI General Assembly of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), held in October 2004 in Seoul, Korea, supported the International UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and called upon all governments to ratify it. This document emphasizes a special role of museums in the implementation and promotion of the basic principles of this Convention. In particular, they are advised to «give particular attention and resist any attempt to misuse intangible heritage resources and particularly their commercialisation without benefits to the primary custodians»<sup>1</sup>, as well as to work in concert with local authorities on developing and implementing relevant legislation on the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and training of personnel responsible for the effective implementation of the 2003 Convention. The resolution also notes the need to introduce information about intangible cultural heritage in all study programs of training of museum professionals and to include the knowledge of the provisions of the Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage in the qualification requirements.

In 2004, ICOM General Conference adopted a new edition of the Code of Ethics for Museums, which includes the key concept of the museum as “a non-profit making permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, re-

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution no. 1, adopted at the 21st General Assembly of ICOM, Seoul, Korea, 8 October 2004: <http://icom.museum/the-governance/general-assembly/resolutions-adopted-by-icom-general-assemblies-1946-to-date/seoul-2004>.

searches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment”<sup>2</sup>.

*What is intangible cultural heritage, and what is the practical role of museums in preserving and promoting it?*

Chapter 2 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage contains the definition of the intangible cultural heritage. It interprets this concept rather widely and multifaceted: «intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills — as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith — that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development”<sup>3</sup>.

At least three key points result from this definition. *Firstly*, Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter — ICH) is a complex concept that includes both «intangible» forms of spiritual manifestations of human culture, and material objects related to it, as well as cultural spaces or cultural landscapes, without which these spiritual elements cannot exist. *Secondly*, ICH is a living heritage that is passed on from one generation to another and is constantly recreated by its bearers: communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, again in conjunction with the environment. An important aspect is that the bearers recognize the ICH as their cultural heritage. This proves that this Convention attaches importance to spiritual practices of even numerically small communities of local manifestation, but even they contribute to the cultural diversity of the world and in this sense are equally important for humankind. *Thirdly*, ICH should contribute to mutual understanding and respect between different communities and groups, as well as to their sustainable development.

Main categories of ICH are defined in the second part of Article 2 of the Convention:

(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference in October 2003 and entered into force on 20 June 2006 after 30 states had ratified it. According to the data of 2014, 161 States have already joined the Convention, representing more than ¾ of the 193 States Parties of UNESCO. These facts prove not only the importance of the Convention for many countries of the world, but also the confidence in it and strong opinion that its implementation at the national level can really change a lot of things for the conservation of such vulnerable forms of culture as an intangible heritage.

Due to the complex nature of ICH, a term “element” is used to refer to some of its manifestations (practices or processes). Example: an element of intangible cultural heritage.

<sup>2</sup> ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, adopted in 1986 and revised in 2004: <http://icom.museum/professional-standards/code-of-ethics>.

<sup>3</sup> International UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003): <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>.



- (b) performing arts;
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- (e) traditional craftsmanship.

Undoubtedly, this is an incomplete and rather generalized list of all possible manifestations of the intangible human creativity. Every State Party of the Convention has the right to expand this list, following the definition of the intangible cultural heritage, which is given in the text of the Convention.

The determinative aspect of the 2003 Convention is the concept of «safeguarding», the meaning of which is significantly different from the same term used in other UNESCO conventions related to the protection of cultural heritage. In the spirit of the 2003 Convention «safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage» means ensuring the viability and sustainable development. Any acts aimed at the conservation of ICH, its freezing are unacceptable. ICH is a «living» heritage that changes constantly; it is recreated by its bearers and transmitted from one generation to another. Thereby, the general practical measures aimed at safeguarding ICH, are defined in the Convention and the Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>4</sup> as:

- raising awareness about importance of ICH;
- identification and inventory;
- creation of effective legal, administrative and social environment for safeguarding.

If no risks and dangers threaten the viability of ICH, the application of general measures is enough. In other circumstances, when practice and transmission of ICH is threatened with extinction, special measures are applied: from research and documentation to the revival of the practice and the transfer of certain elements of ICH. There are no specific recommendations in the Convention on when and how to apply certain measures for the conservation of ICH. One should use examples from other member states, which are listed in the Register of best safeguarding practices of ICH and the application documents provided by UNESCO for inscription in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. All of these materials are available on the UNESCO website<sup>5</sup>.

Paragraph 8 of the Yamato Declaration adopted by experts in tangible and intangible heritage in the city of Nara (Japan) in 2004, says: “... considering that intangible cultural heritage is constantly recreated, the term “authenticity” as applied to tangible cultural heritage is not relevant when identifying and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage”.

<sup>4</sup> Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: [http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/ICH-Operational\\_Directives-5.GA-EN.docx](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/ICH-Operational_Directives-5.GA-EN.docx)

<sup>5</sup> Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO portal: <http://en.unesco.org/themes/intangible-cultural-heritage>.



Undoubtedly, the implementation of all measures for the safeguarding of ICH is not possible without the direct participation of the communities, groups or, in some cases, individuals, i.e., direct bearers of heritage. This is a fundamental condition, predetermined by the Convention. Museums with their social and educational potential have a special role in the involvement of the expert community and the general public into the process of the protection of ICH and its popularization and promotion.

### **Analysis of the Current Activities of Museums in Relation to Intangible Cultural Heritage: International Experience and Practices of the CIS Countries**



After the entry into force of the 2003 Convention the polemics in the museum environment about the role of museums in safeguarding and promoting the ICH do not stop. The main leitmotif of this controversy, as a rule, is discussion of the opportunities that museums can implement as part of its main activity. However, as Christina Kreps, professor of the University of Denver (USA) states, museums could do more than merely “adding on” ICH to existing museum activities. We talk about integrating the core principles of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage into all aspects of museum management<sup>6</sup>. It is appropriate to remember the achievements of the supporters of the «new» museology over the past 20 years. The paradigm of understanding the museum as a social institution has changed, as well as its key concepts, such as «museum object», «museum collection» and «museum space» also have undergone changes. The focus has shifted directly from objects of material culture to their substantive component that includes values, beliefs and stories of particular individuals and communities behind these objects. The cultural space in which its birth and functioning have taken place is equally important. One of the ideologists of the movement «for a New Museology», French ethnographer and museologist Georges-Henri Rivière defined museum as both a «mirror» in which local people can view themselves and the history of their ancestors, and visitors — get acquainted with work and traditions of the local population and begin to respect it; «laboratory» for the study of the past and the present of the local population and the environment; «reserve», created to preserve and interpret the natural and cultural heritage; «school», carrying out cultural and educational activities.



The tendency of recent years is a protest movement in the museum environment against the conservative approach of most museums towards solving problems of socio-cultural and socio-

<sup>6</sup> Kreps, Christina. *Intangible Threads: Curating the Living Heritage of Dayak Ikat Weaving // Touching the Intangible: Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Eds. Peter Davis, Gerard Corsane, Michelle Stefano. Boydell & Brewer Ltd.



political development (Christina Kreps describes this approach as «Eurocentric» or «Western»). The museum community became concerned about the vital need to respond to the needs of the society. Unlike supporters of traditional museology, supporters of a “new” one focused on conservation and sustainable development of the surrounding cultural and natural environment, taking into account the environmental component (hence the name of the second movement «for a new museology» — ecomuseology). Ecomuseums focus primarily on local communities: they are created with their active participation and cooperation with professionals.

The formal (external) features of ecomuseums (implemented in practice mainly in France and Canada) are equivalent to regional museums, which are aimed at local communities; at the conceptual level many approaches of the «new» museology are relevant for the entire museum community, and this was reflected in the basic principles of the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (version 2004):

- Museums preserve, interpret and promote the natural and cultural inheritance of humanity.
- Museums provide opportunities for the appreciation, understanding and management of the natural and cultural heritage.
- Museums hold resources that provide opportunities for other public services and benefits.
- Museums work in close collaboration with the communities from which their collections originate as well as those they serve.

The traditional concept understands museum as a storage of material heritage extracted from the environment and placed in the museum collections. Intangible elements to be stored only in the form of video or audio recordings or text descriptions. Thus, we store the archives, not the spiritual values. The “new” museology, considering museumification as a process of development of the natural and cultural environment, refers to the concept of “museum object” in a different way. It allows to consider museum object not only intangibles values, but also elements of the cultural landscape, as well as objects and even buildings that have not lost their functional significance yet. This approach radically changes the concept of the museum’s selection, which allows in this case the possible existence of processes of identification, selection and documentation of cultural heritage without depositing it in a museum collection. Besides, the museum selection is not limited just to things and events that have passed through the prism of the time and value selection, it is also the so-called potential heritage objects, artifacts and intangible manifestations related to the contemporary life of communities, groups or, in some cases, individuals.



For informational purposes: In museum terminology ecomuseum, as a specific type of museum institution, came into wide use since the early 1980s. The International Seminar “Ecomuseums and the new museology” played a crucial role in the development of the theory of ecomuseology. It was held in Quebec City in 1984, and adopted the “Quebec Declaration”, containing the basic provisions for the “movement for a new museology” characterized socially orientated activities.



Undoubtedly, this approach is very close to understanding of integral museums' policy in respect of intangible cultural heritage. Stating that ICH should be integrated into all structures of museum management, Christina Kreps meant a new approach to museum activities: from selection and conservation to the interpretation of museum collections. She cites numerous examples of how traditional storage technology can be used for maintaining museum objects and collections. Moreover, these means are also elements of ICH as they were passed on from generation to generation, and more importantly, they reflect not only the problem of preservation of material outward form of things, but also their intangible content. For example, the National Museum of the American Indian, which is part of the Smithsonian Institution of USA, developed a unique method of joint curatorial work of professionals and representatives of indigenous population. Working with local population, museum workers found that locals had their own methods of taking care of things and their "treatment", which were used in the museum storage afterwards. They also included some intangible aspects. For example, female Indian masks cannot be stored together with male masks. Masks used in the ceremony of death should be stored face down and so forth<sup>7</sup>. Thereby, knowledge and skills of indigenous peoples should be respected and recognized as legitimate curatorial methods, due to the fact that they provide the integrity of objects: physical, material and spiritual.

Museums traditionally not only keep, but also document the heritage. However, in accordance with the Convention of 2003, these actions with regard to the intangible cultural heritage should be implemented with the active participation of communities and with their consent. It is necessary to take into account the diversity of its forms and functions. The possible interaction of museums and ICH bearers may include the following activities:

- assist correspondent communities in documenting their ICH, for example, by interviewing practitioners and traditional bearers, as well as information dissemination;
- educational courses among members of the community to support the documentation process;
- use of existing documents, audio and video materials in projects of revival of ICH elements;
- assist correspondent communities to provide access to archival information on their ICH collected by others; joint creation of data banks or archives on ICH;
- joint management of inventories of ICH.

<sup>7</sup> Boonyakiet, Chewasit. "The role of museum in safeguarding ICH By Christina Kreps, Denver University" Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Learning Resources. December 2011. Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre // <http://www.sac.or.th/databases/ichlearningresources/images/LECTURE4.pdf>.



The Register of Best Safeguarding Practices for the safeguarding of ICH contains a number of examples that demonstrate how the interaction of professionals and bearers of ICH on its documentation could solve a complex of problems of preservation and popularization of the heritage. We are talking about the project “Indians in Indians’ eyes” in Brazil<sup>8</sup>. It started in 2000 and was aimed at strengthening cultural awareness within communities involved in the project. Thanks to the project, the Indians became anthropologists, historians, journalists and photographers, they published books, booklets and brochures. They studied photography and video recording; they learned how to use computers and the Internet. As a result of joint efforts there was created an interactive portal “Indians online” (‘Indios on Line’), which contains the audio-visual and written materials. The project enjoyed a wide popularity among young Indians, contributed not only to increase of consciousness among indigenous peoples, but also created a space for inter-cultural dialogue within and outside the Indian communities.

Another example of community participation in the process of documenting the intangible heritage is associated with the collection of traditional knowledge of local plants that are considered



<sup>8</sup> Web portal ‘Indios on Line’ <http://www.indiosonline.org.br/novo>.



valuable from medical, agricultural, economic, and religious points of view, on the peninsula of Zamboanga (Philippines)<sup>9</sup>. The reason was a decrease in plant diversity of the peninsula due to climatic and demographic changes. The elders of the local community Subanen addressed experts asking for help in gathering information and compiling the necessary documents. Due to joint efforts the information obtained was placed in a multimedia format and formed part of the popular educational materials in English with translation into Sebanen. Community now uses these data for teaching culture to schoolchildren; these data are also used as a textbook for adults who want to learn to read and write in the language of their ancestors.

An example of an integrated approach to the study and translation of the intangible cultural heritage is the work of the school-museum in the municipality of Pusol (Spain)<sup>10</sup>. This innovative project implements the idea of integration of formal education with the process of the transfer of knowledge about the local natural and cultural heritage. Schoolchildren together with their teachers and community representatives who possess the knowledge in the field of traditional culture, collect data on local heritage, exploring local crafts, folklore and environmental management systems. Being in constant contact with bearers of heritage, they directly contribute to its preservation. The students also are voluntary guides in the school museum, which was created in the process of active cooperation of the local community, schoolteachers and students. Interpretation of the intangible cultural heritage is perhaps the most common and not difficult way of its integration into the museum environment. Using elements of ICH in museum expositions and exhibitions, educational programs and recreation is characteristic not only for open-air museums and ethnographic museums. Such activities are characteristic for all museum institutions regardless of the typology. However, even here there is a difference between the so-called “linkage” of ICH to traditional museum activities and systematic approach, which is based on interaction with bearers of ICH and several other purposes: not so much to popularize, but to promote its transmission between generations, approve and develop a mechanism of succession. Christina Kreps gives two typical examples illustrating the various concepts of ICH interpretation. The first describes the activities of the monastery Ton Kaew in Thailand on museumification of traditional textile production. The abbot with monks and local residents restored the building of the former weaving work-

<sup>9</sup> Community-based documentation contributes to the viability of intangible cultural heritage in the Philippines, UNESCO portal: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00261>. Suminguit, Vel.J. “Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Intellectual Property Rights: an Enabling Tool for Development with Identity”: <http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/pub/documents/Indigeknowledge.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Centre for traditional culture — school museum of Pusol pedagogic project, UNESCO portal: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&Art18=00306>.



shop. Today, there is an exhibition of a collection of local textiles collected by the monks, and the rest of the space, as before, is used as a weaving workshop, where young villagers study weaving techniques under the guidance of more experienced local weavers. The second example is inauguration of the exhibition in the museum complex in the center of the island of Borneo (Indonesia), during which in digital form and in the form of specially crafted dioramas a traditional culture of its inhabitants was demonstrated. For local residents — bearers of this culture — existence of the museum did not matter. It was created to satisfy the ambitions of civil servants, without paying attention to the interests of the community. Unfortunately, such a formal approach can be seen in the work of many ethnographic museums.

Identifying and documenting ICH objects is the most common approach to preservation of the Intangible cultural heritage in the CIS countries. You could find a lot of examples of such practice, for instance, development of national registers of ICH. In the Republic of Moldova the National Museum of History and Ethnography of the Republic of Moldova in 2010–2011 were responsible for this, in the Russian Federation a Russian National House of Folk Arts is responsible for the creation of the electronic catalogue. Festivals and competitions could be called as the next level in the preservation and promotion of ICH. “Festival of fairy tales”, which annually holds the Museum of Hovhannes Tumanyan in Yerevan and the Festival of music and crafts “Living antiquity”, which is held by Museum-Reserve “Rostov Kremlin” in Rostov the Great. These festivals have received recognition at international level. Similar work is conducted in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). Each December, Yakutian government holds the decade of the Yakut heroic epos “Olonkho”, which is included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In CIS countries during recent years a new trend in safeguarding the Intangible heritage has appeared, which not only focused on fixing and documentation of ICH, but also on the transfer of skills and traditions that helps to maintain the viability of this heritage. One of the first examples of such work was the Khomus Museum, whose creators seek to preserve and transmit to descendants not only traditional instrument, but also methods, philosophy and even medical practices associated with this tool. Museum-reserve “Rostov Kremlin” deals with the preservation of traditional Rostov bells and recreates the school bell ringers. The Museum-reserve of M. A. Sholokhov in 2012, started the project on reconstruction of the traditional methods of land cultivation and began to plow on bulls, which required restoration of the race of these bulls, that was lost on the territory of Russia





*Expert meeting participants.  
The State museum-reserve  
"Rostov kremlin". Rostov the Great*

Resume: Intangible, as well as tangible, heritage is part of our cultural identity, and plays an important role in preserving cultural diversity. Culture manifests itself at the level of material evidence of human creativity, and in intangible elements, expressed in terms of language, music, theater, dance, system of knowledge and skills, spiritual and intellectual practices, customs, and a number of other forms of creative activity.

Paying attention to the intangible cultural heritage in museum work is to strengthen the integrated multidisciplinary approach. Traditionally, museums are considered to be centers of documentation and storage of values, as well as subjects of museum communication and interpretation. All these functions can be easily integrated in the context of objectives for the conservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Museums can provide a stable relationship with the communities they represent, take the initiative on documenting and inventories of ICH; finally become a gathering place for members of the local community, united by common goals and projects for the interpretation and presentation of ICH for the future generations.



## **Tasks of Museums in the CIS Countries on Contribution for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**

To date, the 2003 Convention was ratified or accepted by most countries of the CIS, in particular: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. In the lists of intangible cultural heritage they are represented as follows: from Azerbaijan 7 elements of ICH are included; from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan — 5 elements; Armenia is represented by 4 elements; Kazakhstan — 2; Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova include one element of ICH. From the Russian Federation, despite the fact that it is not a Party to the Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH, 2 elements of ICH are included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Ratification, acceptance or approval of the Convention requires its implementation at all levels: especially at the level of communities, groups and, in special cases — individuals, as well — at the level of the state and other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, research and expert centers, including museums. The Convention and the Operational Directives defines tasks and roles of each Party. As mentioned above, in relation to museums, these tasks may include identification, documentation and inventory of ICH; development and implementation of various measures for the protection of ICH; conducting seminars and trainings in management and conservation of ICH; raising public awareness about ICH on its territory; ensuring the participation of bearers in all activities related to their ICH.

A preliminary survey of the Regional Expert Meeting of the UNESCO / ICOM for Museum Specialists of the CIS countries “ Strengthening the Social and Educational Roles of Museums as Vectors for Intercultural Dialogue and Enhancing their Links with the UNESCO Conventions in the field of culture”, which took place on 8–11 November 2014 in Moscow on a basis of the All-Russian Museum of Decorative, Applied and Folk Arts and in the Rostov the Great on a basis of the State Museum-Reserve “Rostov Kremlin” (Russian Federation), showed that the potential of museums of the CIS countries is far from being exhausted, and their possibilities in this area are not fully implemented.

In many cases, we see the above example of “incorporation” of intangible cultural heritage in the system of traditional activities of the museum and almost complete absence of an individual ap-

Before the Convention was adopted in 2003, UNESCO had a Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. In the frameworks of this program cluster countries of UNESCO Office in Moscow has proclaimed these masterpieces: «Semejsky cultural area and folk traditions» (2001, Russian Federation), «Duduk and its music» (2003, Armenia), «Yakutian epic tradition “Olonkho”» (2005, Russian Federation) и «Traditional system of musical play «Mugam» (2005, Azerbaijan). When 2003 Convention was adopted all elements proclaimed as masterpieces of oral and intangible cultural heritage according to the article 31.1 were automatically included into the Representative list set by the article 16 of the Convention.



proach towards it. Nevertheless, a number of examples testify that museums do not remain aside from the activities on the implementation of the 2003 Convention, implemented by their states after its ratification.

As was mentioned earlier, in Moldova, for example, the National Museum of History and Ethnography initiated a work on creation of a national registry of ICH, which should become the main tool for its study and documentation. The first volume of the registry is published and is available online now. The museum is also the initiator and one of the organizers of the annual festival of crafts, conducts numerous workshops with community representatives, and carries out certain projects related to ICH.



Many museums organize scientific expeditions to study the ICH, allowing not only to replenish the museum collections; they become a source for future exhibitions and publications. Among such examples — expedition on the topic: “Clothes of people from the Altai Republic: traditions and innovations” of the National Museum of the Altai Republic AV Anokhin (2007), as well as the expedition “Following the roads of A.K. Serzhputovskiy”, organized by the Joint Regional Museum Mozyr (Belarus) in 2005–2007 together with the Academy of Sciences and the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts.



The elements of intangible cultural heritage are used in museums’ exhibitions and fairs, cultural and educational events. Museums have become active participants of various festivals and celebrations associated with ICH, including, for example, the Decade of the Yakut heroic epos Olonkho holiday “Altyn as”, dedicated to the unique product Khakassian cuisine “talganu” (meal from roasted barley or wheat grains) (Russian Federation), “Motol fest”, “Bereginya” — festivals of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Belarus, “Colors of the Silk Road” in Kazakhstan and so forth.

Very interesting experience of work with natural and cultural heritage exists in one of the oldest cities in Russia — Kolomna, where the project “Museum posad (trading quarter). New life of the old city” is realized. Although there are still debates whether it is possible to consider this example related to museum work, yet the museum is used here as a complete resource for the conservation of some elements of the material and non-material culture. In fact, we deal with an excellent example of “museum” approach to the whole territory, geographically located within the boundaries of the historic center of the city, but which goes far beyond its borders according to the degree of its influence. This experience, which began as a private initiative on revival of the ancient tradition of producing marshmallow in Kolomna, eventually led to the creation of a network of interconnected industries (marshmallow factory, bakery, packaging etc.) and the respective museum and exhibition structures; attracted a large number of interested people of different

professions and received the support of local authorities. Such projects show possibilities of museums in the development of the urban environment and integration of values and meanings of tangible and intangible culture in the lives of local communities.

Regional expert meeting of museum professionals, held in November 2014 in the Russian Federation, was logic continuation of the large-scale project “Running a Museum — XXI century”<sup>11</sup>. It was aimed at identifying the potential of museums on the implementation of UNESCO Conventions in the field of culture and the development of practical recommendations for CIS countries. Despite the short duration of this meeting and a wide thematic range offered by the organizers, experts work gave the possibility to assess the opportunities and identify trends on strengthening the role of museums in the sphere of Intangible cultural heritage. With regard to the prospects for implementation of the 2003 Convention, the main vectors of future work of the museum community of the CIS can be focused in the following tasks:

- increase the professional competence of museum employees;
- develop interdisciplinary approaches in museum activities;
- develop partnerships, especially with local communities, NGOs, bearers of intangible cultural heritage;
- a paradigm shift related to intangible cultural heritage: the transition from traditional conservatory techniques to integration of the principles of the 2003 Convention in museum management;
- creation of data banks on ICH and its bearers;
- interaction with bearers of ICH at all levels of work with intangible heritage, from identifying, fixation to interpretation and reconstruction of succession mechanisms;
- study of best global practices of preserving ICH and development of additional innovative museum techniques.

Undoubtedly, the solution of these problems has complex character, assuming a long way: from acquisition and development of special knowledge to integration into the system of museum activities. It is important to preserve the possibility of a continuous exchange of experience and capacity building in the CIS due to the development of training, conferences and on-line communication.

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<sup>11</sup> Project «Running a Museum — XXI century», UNESCO Moscow office Web:  
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/moscow/culture/the-unescoifesco-project-running-a-museum-21st-century>.

# Recommendations on Enhancing the Role of Museums in Promoting the Principles of the International UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

Recommendations are based on results of expert discussions during preparation and execution of the UNESCO/ICOM Regional expert meeting for the museum professionals “Strengthening the Social and Educational Roles of Museums as Vectors for Intercultural Dialogue and Enhancing their Links with the UNESCO Conventions for Culture” held on 08-11 of November 2014, in Moscow and Rostov the Great (Russian Federation).

Recommendations were developed with participation of leading specialists on preservation of cultural and natural heritage as trainers and experts, and representatives of museums of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation.

Recommendations were sent to the competent representatives of the Ministries of culture and tourism, the museum community and non-governmental organizations of the CIS countries.

The participants of the UNESCO/ICOM Regional expert meeting “ Strengthening the Social and Educational Roles of Museums as Vectors for Intercultural Dialogue and Enhancing their Links with the UNESCO Conventions for Culture “,

- *Sharing* the spirit and joining the provisions of the International Convention on preservation of the intangible cultural heritage;
- *Emphasizing* the value and importance of the Convention for the conservation of cultural heritage in General and of the objects included in the List of the intangible heritage, in particular;
- *Noting* the growing role of museums in society and their responsibility for the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage and ensuring wide access to heritage objects;
- *Understanding* the importance of securing and development of a positive image and enhance the role of the Museum in the modern social environment;
- *Noting* the increasing value that museums play in preserving and promoting intangible heritage;

**recommend:**

- **To recognize** further development of international partnerships and cooperation between museums, including the CIS countries, and projects of ICOM and UNESCO as effective and necessary ones.
- **To promote** development of interdisciplinary contacts between museums with specialists from other fields, including the protection of cultural heritage, tourism and education, and involvement of representatives of public and private institutions from designated sectors.
- **To draw** the attention of Museum experts and Museum leaders on the need to work with local communities to identify, document and preserve intangible cultural heritage by creating and conducting educational programs, fixing the identified monuments, doing inventories, conducting joint activities.
- **To promote** best practices by placing them in the register of best practices for the preservation of ICH, and examination of the experience of experts from the CIS countries which requires the development of a single portal, which could be a common platform of communication of specialists in this sphere.
- **To promote** inclusion in all curricula for training of Museum professionals information on intangible cultural heritage and its protection principles taking into account provisions of the 2003 Convention.
- **To develop** specialized training and courses, including online ones, for Museum staff on the basic principles of protection of intangible cultural heritage in the frameworks of Museum activities.
- **To recognize** effective the development of relations between museums of the region, including through the establishment of joint projects (festivals, art contests, etc.), mutual promotion of the various forms of intangible cultural heritage, which are in the focus of these museums.

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## Useful links

- Intangible heritage on the UNESCO portal  
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00001>
- UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists  
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&multinational=3&display1=inscriptionID#tabs>
- Register of the best practices on intangible cultural heritage preservation  
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00675>
- ICOM Russia web-site — <http://icom.museum>
- Database of non-profit organizations accredited to the Committee of intangible heritage  
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=331>
- The regional Centre for the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage in South-Eastern Europe  
<http://www.unesco-centerbg.org>
- Electronic catalogue of the intangible cultural heritage of the Russian Federation  
<http://www.rusfolk.nasledie.ru>
- Living Heritage of Belarus, Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: <http://livingheritage.by/en>
- The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Moldova:  
<http://www.patrimoniuiumaterial.md/en>
- International Fund for agricultural development  
<http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous>



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