**CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE  
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Open-ended intergovernmental working group**

**in the framework of the reflection on a broader implementation of Article 18 of the**

**2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**

**UNESCO Headquarters, Room XI**

**4 to 6 July 2023**

**Item 3:**

**How to share good living heritage safeguarding experiences more broadly?**

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| **Summary**  The Committee has requested that the Open-ended intergovernmental working group reflect on how to share good living heritage safeguarding experiences more broadly. This document provides some points of consideration along three reflection topics, based on the recommendations of the Category VI meeting of experts, which was convened in April 2023 to lay the ground for the discussions of the working group. |

**Introduction**

1. Having initiated a reflection on Article 18 in 2021 (Decision [16.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/14)), at its seventeenth session in 2022 the Committee requested that the Open-ended intergovernmental working group (hereafter, the ‘working group’) reflect on how to share good living heritage safeguarding experience more broadly (Decision [17.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/10)). See document [LHE/23/18.COM WG ART18/1](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM_WG_ART18-1_EN.docx) for the agenda and timetable of the working group. The background to this reflection is provided in document [LHE/23/18.COM WG ART18/2](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM_WG_ART18-2_EN.docx).
2. This document provides some information and points of consideration regarding three reflection topics. They are based on the recommendations of the Category VI meeting of experts that was held from 19 to 21 April 2023 in Stockholm, Sweden, to lay the ground for the discussions of the working group, as presented in document [LHE/23/18.COM EXP/4](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM_EXP-4_EN.docx). While many sections of this document have been taken directly from the experts’ recommendations, they are presented in a different order and with adjustments so as to facilitate the working group’s discussions. It is expected that the working group will provide its recommendations to the eighteenth session of the Committee, which will take place from 4 to 9 December 2023 in Kasane, Republic of Botswana. In this regard, document [LHE/23/18.COM WG ART18/4](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM_WG_ART18-4_EN.docx), which has been published as a skeleton for the recommendations of the working group to be developed, will be revised during the meeting to reflect the working group’s discussions so that the group can adopt the recommendations on the last day of its meeting.

**General considerations**

1. Article 18 of the 2003 Convention has the potential to contribute to all the purposes of the Convention, as set out in Article 1 thereof. In this regard, it is important to emphasise the twofold guiding principle that the working group may wish to bear in mind. This will ensure continuity with the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the 2003 Convention, which followed the same principle (Decision [16.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/14)), namely that:

* Communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals (hereafter, ‘communities’) must be placed at the centre of efforts to safeguard their intangible cultural heritage in the spirit of Article 15 of the Convention and of the [Ethical Principles](https://ich.unesco.org/en/ethics-and-ich-00866) for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, as well as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (in particular its Article 27);
* The active participation of communities must be ensured in the implementation of Article 18, including the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

1. The working group may recall the original intent of Article 18. On the one hand, it calls upon the Committee to provide inspiration to communities around the world by selecting and promoting programmes, projects, and activities for the safeguarding of living heritage that best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention. At the same time, Article 18 should be considered in relation to Articles 19 to 24 in terms of facilitating cooperation and providing assistance to States Parties and communities concerned in planning, implementing and following up on their safeguarding efforts. Finally, Article 18 – together with Articles 16 and 17, which introduce the two Lists of the Convention – forms part of a chapter of the Convention entitled ‘Safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage at the international level’. As is the case for the two Lists of the Convention, the implementation of Article 18 should contribute to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage of communities worldwide through concerted actions at the international level. The specific responsibility of the Committee in this respect is also confirmed in Article 7(b) of the Convention.
2. The Category VI meeting of experts identified the following key issues[[1]](#footnote-1):
   1. A larger number of good safeguarding practices should be made available by means of the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (hereafter the ‘Register’), which at present presents no more than thirty-three practices.
   2. The good safeguarding practices shared under the Convention should be more equitably distributed geographically than is presently the case, with reference to paragraph 6 of the Operational Directives, facilitating South-South and North-South-South cooperation.
   3. Not only a larger number but also a wider range of good safeguarding practices should be shared, reflecting the diversity of living heritage covered under Articles 2.1 and 2.2. Such practices should also reflect the range of threats that exist to the viability of living heritage as well as of the possible safeguarding measures indicated in Article 2.3 of the Convention and the Operational Directives (with reference to paragraph 14 for multinational proposals).
   4. A broader implementation of Article 18 should be accompanied by the wide involvement of stakeholders, including (but not limited to) community contact persons concerned by elements already inscribed and selected practices, country focal points for periodic reporting, Category 2 Centres, accredited non-governmental organizations, UNESCO Chairs and other individual experts. A wider use of good safeguarding experiences by multiple stakeholders should be encouraged, particularly to achieve the aims of the Convention and fulfil the aims of the Overall Results Framework and the needs of sustainable development.

**Topic 1: Improving the access to and increasing the visibility of the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices**

1. The first reflection topic is aimed at improving the utilization of the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices itself, both in terms of access to it and its visibility. The Register, which directly reflects the safeguarding activities of communities and of those who cooperate with them, has not yet reached its full potential to serve as a tool for capacity building and for supporting and enriching the safeguarding efforts of the communities concerned. The working group may wish to prioritize the following issues in its deliberations: (1) selection criteria; (2) accessibility and visibility; and (3) relations with international cooperation mechanisms of the Convention.

Discussion point 1: Adjustments to the selection criteria

1. One concrete outcome of the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention was the deletion of selection criterion P.9 from the set of criteria presented in paragraph 7 of the Operational Directives (document [LHE/23/EXP ART18/2 Rev.](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-EXP_ART18-2_REV_FR.docx)). The Part I and Part II meetings of the Open-ended intergovernmental working group within the framework of the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention also recommended that the deletion or reformulation of criteria, other than criterion P.9 could be further discussed pending a broader discussion on the implementation of Article 18 of the Convention.
2. The selection criteria could be revised taking into account the following:
3. The criteria should focus on the description of the programme, project or activity in the sense of Article 2.3 of the Convention, references to safeguarding measures in the Operational Directives, as well as the principles and objectives of the Convention and the Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (criteria P.1 and P.3, which could be merged).
4. The participation of the communities concerned should be an important requirement (criteria P.5 and partly P.7 with reference to Ethical Principle 4).
5. Furthermore, a demonstration of the effectiveness of the programme, project or activity will remain a requirement, rendering the requirement to carry out an assessment of the results redundant (criterion P.4 could therefore be kept and criteria P.8 deleted). Such a demonstration may need to include a description of the initial situation which called for safeguarding and of the situation once the safeguarding measures had been successfully executed.
6. Criterion P.7 could be adjusted to refer to ‘good practices’ instead of ‘best practices’.
7. Reference to the possibility of using the good safeguarding practices as a model (P.6) could be included in the combined criterion for P.1 and P.3, but should not be limited to the international level, as models may be relevant at the national or local levels.
8. Some good safeguarding practices may be limited to local activities and criterion P.2 may therefore unnecessarily limit the diversity of the Register and could be deleted.
9. While criterion P.9 was deleted from the selection criteria as a result of the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention, paragraph 6 of the Operational Directives continues to mention the ‘needs of developing countries’. The deletion of criterion P.9 did not mean that the needs of developing countries are not important, but rather that specific safeguarding practices may be relevant for communities and countries everywhere in the world. In this respect, the importance of advocating for international cooperation when implementing Article 18 could be recalled.
10. The working group may wish to request that the Secretariat present draft amendments to the Operational Directives to reflect the recommendations of the working group regarding the selection criteria for examination by the eighteenth session of the Committee. If the Committee so wishes, these amendments may be brought to the attention of the tenth session of the General Assembly in mid-2024. Following that, adjustments to Form ICH-03 could be envisaged to take place in the second half of 2024, in order to support States Parties that wish to propose programmes, projects and activities for inclusion in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. The revised form could be made available for the examination of proposals under the 2026 cycle, for which the submission deadline is 31 March 2025.

Discussion point 2: Accessibility to and visibility of the Register

1. One of the weaknesses identified in the functioning of the Register is that it has not been able to serve satisfactorily as a source of inspiration and information for communities and other stakeholders around the world seeking safeguarding advice. The issue is partly quantitative since not enough programmes, projects or activities have been selected to cover a sufficiently broad range of safeguarding issues and to form a useful set of experiences.
2. In this regard, the recommendations of the Category VI meeting of experts emphasises that proposals to the Register be considered separately from nominations to the Representative List and the Urgent Safeguarding List, which might result in States Parties simultaneously submitting a proposal for the Register and a nomination to one of the two Lists, instead of having to choose between these two options. However, it may not seem timely to re-open a discussion on this point, following the completion of the global reflection on the listing mechanisms (2018–2022) which concluded by fine-tuning the existing system rather than drastically changing the set-up of the Lists and the Register. Instead, the working group may wish to allow sufficient time to evaluate the results of further adjustments that may be made to the selection criteria and Form ICH-03.
3. In terms of presentation, in accordance with paragraphs 44 and 45 of the Operational Directives, good safeguarding practices should be analysed and presented in such a way that they can be easily searched thanks to an indexing system, so that communities and other stakeholders can understand and apply various approaches used to address safeguarding issues. Together with any adaptations needed to reflect the possible adjustments to the selection criteria as mentioned above, Form ICH-03 can be revised to ensure greater accessibility by including, for instance, questions that facilitate the characterization of safeguarding approaches and their effectiveness, taking into account thematic areas and assessment factors laid down in the Overall Results Framework.

Discussion point 3: Relations with international cooperation mechanisms of the Convention

1. In line with Articles 18.2 and 18.3 as well as with reference to paragraphs 9(c), 21(b) and 42 of the Operational Directives, States Parties and other stakeholders should be encouraged to use International Assistance and/or to cooperate by other means at the international level. One possible approach might be to co-finance efforts to prepare, implement and follow up on proposals of programmes, projects or activities (see also paragraph 9 of document [LHE/23/18.COM WG ART18/2](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM_WG_ART18-2_EN.docx) concerning the underutilization of International Assistance mechanisms for the Register). To promote this endeavour, attention should be paid to undertaking activities that focus on capacity building, on exchanging and sharing experiences and on awareness raising. The preparation of proposals for selection as good safeguarding practices could be supported by accredited NGOs and by community representatives with successful experiences in this area and could be complemented by guidelines and capacity-building materials to increase accessibility for communities. To realize and harness the full potential of Article 18, all the available information should be continuously assessed and duly taken into account.
2. Notwithstanding Article 7(b) of the Convention and paragraph 45 of the Operational Directives, the current set-up of the Register does not include a dedicated follow-up and monitoring system, unlike the Urgent Safeguarding List and the Representative List. Yet interest has been expressed in learning about post-selection experiences: what happened after the selection (were the positive results sustainable?); how were ideas and methods of safeguarding shared, and how often and with whom? It would be pertinent to reflect on whether, and if so how, information on follow-up and monitoring could be integrated into the periodic reporting framework. It would be pertinent to engage researchers to pursue these questions. Furthermore, the periodic reporting mechanisms and in particular Form ICH-10 could be revised to encourage States Parties to give updates on programmes included on the Register and to describe actions undertaken in the implementation of Article 18 (see paragraph 13, document [LHE/23/18.COM EXP/4](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM_EXP-4_EN.docx)).

**Topic 2: Towards the creation of an online platform for sharing good safeguarding experiences**

1. The Register of Good Safeguarding Practices is not mentioned as such in Article 18 of the Convention. The idea behind the reflection is not only to continue discussing issues raised during the global reflection concerning the management of the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, but also to explore the implementation of Article 18 beyond it.

Discussion point 4: Pertinence of an online platform

1. It seems pertinent to explore the possibility of setting up an online and moderated ‘platform’ (previously also called an ‘arm’s-length body’ or ‘observatory’) that would allow communities in different parts of the world to benefit from the full potential of Article 18 of the Convention. Ideas along these lines were raised earlier, for example in the context of the Evaluation of UNESCO’s Standard-setting Work of the Culture Sector, conducted by the Division of Internal Oversight Services of UNESCO in 2013 (Decision [8.COM 5.c.1](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/8.COM/5.c.1)).
2. The idea was further developed when experts were consulted during the first phase of the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention (document [LHE/21/16.COM EXP/7](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-EXP-7-EN.docx)). Given the high number of procedurally complex issues, the global reflection was not conclusive on the possibility of creating an online platform. The recent Category VI meeting of experts considered that the creation of a moderated online ‘platform’ for sharing good safeguarding practices could be essential for fully operationalizing Article 18. With reference to Decision [16.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/14) (paragraph 9), it is important to consider how such an online platform might enhance dialogue and communication among all stakeholders of the Convention in a concrete manner, with a particular focus on communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals and their safeguarding needs.

Discussion point 5: The objectives of an online platform

1. The core objective of an online platform could be to enhance dialogue for the purposes of sharing good safeguarding practices, particularly in terms of sharing, follow-up, communication, collaboration and capacity building. Dialogue through such an online platform would in the first instance allow for the exchange of information between and among community members from different parts of the world to support their safeguarding efforts. At the same time, such a dialogue might also bring about more direct engagement of the Convention’s governing bodies with communities and bearers of living heritage. One of the direct consequences of the online platform could also be an increased use of the Register by States Parties, with a heightened awareness of this mechanism and the importance of sharing good safeguarding practices, to be highlighted through the online platform.
2. In summary, in terms of the links with the implementation of various mechanisms of the Convention, an online platform could be used, for example, to:
   1. Form a ‘network of inscribed elements and practices’ in order to exchange information regarding elements/programmes following their inscription/selection on the Lists and the Register and to monitor safeguarding plans and the sharing of safeguarding methods;
   2. Raise awareness about local, regional, national and international events related to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, with direct inputs from communities.

Discussion point 6: Practical considerations

1. **Moderation**: It is important to manage the volume, quality and types of information to be exchanged. A balance needs to be sought to allow communities around the world to make direct inputs and share information through an online platform. At the same time, the information flow needs to be managed in a meaningful way for the implementation of the Convention. Moderating ‘chats’ on a regular basis is labour-intensive but a minimum amount of intervention does seem necessary.
2. **Online possibilities**: The online modality would open up possibilities that were not conceivable when the Convention was adopted two decades ago. It would, for instance, facilitate the dissemination of audio-visual materials created by communities, groups or individuals wishing to share their good safeguarding practices. The platform could be foreseen partially as a social media/forum for informally and directly sharing knowledge regarding good safeguarding practices. Different languages could also be used for communicating on the platform through the mechanism of automatic translation. Furthermore, good safeguarding practices must be indexed, which is also a requirement for the further development of the Register.
3. **Community participation**: To facilitate communities’ broad participation in the use and moderation of an online platform: a) the use of mother languages should be encouraged; b) other communication modalities such as TV and radio and other analogue and digital technologies could be used to complement online tools to share information; and c) the possibilities for communities to share planned events through a calendar could be foreseen in an online space. In the same spirit, to encourage community participation in sharing good safeguarding practices, the Category VI expert meeting also suggested that the name of the online platform incorporate terminology in a national language meaning sharing (e.g., ‘delning’ in Swedish, ‘yirkonguii’ in Fulah, ‘shiriki’ in Swahili).
4. **Ethical considerations**: Cooperating with communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals must be based on full respect for the [Ethical Principles](https://ich.unesco.org/en/ethics-and-ich-00866) for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage as well as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (in particular its Article 27), with specific reference to the principle of free, prior, sustained and informed consent. Sharing images or disseminating information that may lead to the identification of individuals may not be appropriate in many circumstances. It may be necessary to establish guidelines specifically geared at sharing information online.
5. **A step-by-step approach**: The recent Category VI expert meeting strongly advocated for the adoption of a step-by-step approach when establishing an online platform for sharing good safeguarding practices (for more details, see the [report](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/59530-EN.docx) of breakout group B under Topic 2). To start the process, the existing webpage of the Convention could be used to highlight good safeguarding practices already included in existing materials (such as existing programmes selected in the Register, safeguarding plans in nominations, including elements transferred from the Urgent Safeguarding List to the Representative List, examples from periodic reports and International Assistance projects). Once the initial step has been successfully completed, the platform could be further developed as a fully interactive platform, providing an easily available means of sharing and generating knowledge and experiences about good safeguarding practices among the communities and other stakeholders.

Discussion point 7: Administrative set-up as well as financial and operational implications

1. Needless to say, clarification is required regarding the possible administrative set-up as well as the financial and operational implications of such an online platform. A base plan could be to establish the platform on a global basis with regional ‘rooms’, involving all stakeholders of the Convention. Such administrative considerations would need to take into account decisions, based on the full participation of the practitioners and other tradition bearers, concerning how an online platform would be set up and maintained.
2. A preliminary analysis shows that the initial set up of an online platform (which should be established within the Secretariat), over a six-month period, would require a one-off budget of US$300,000, essentially for IT developments, content preparation, and the initial testing of the system. Once it is established, the running of the platform would require an annual budget of US$500,000, in order to provide a wide range of services to support the sharing of good safeguarding experiences. The budget would include contracts for external IT developers, UNESCO staff time for one half time IT manager at P-3 level, one full-time content coordinator at P-3 level, two full-time assistants at G-4 level, and resources for undertaking activities to encourage sharing of good safeguarding experiences and for coordinating the content development with stakeholders of the Convention; as well as translation, equipment and other administrative requirements. It should be noted that this scenario would require sustainable staffing within the Secretariat to service the online platform in a reliable manner.
3. The Category VI meeting of experts also proposed forming an advisory group to oversee the establishment and running of the platform. The advisory group could be composed of members selected by the Committee, representing community experts and community contact persons for inscribed elements and selected practices as well as representatives from Category 2 Centres, the ICH NGO Forum and UNESCO Chairs. Country focal points for periodic reports and community representatives could provide advice to the Secretariat or to a technical team to be established within a host institution about the establishment and running of the online platform for implementing Article 18.

**Topic 3: Any other issues**

1. For the consideration of the working group, the Category VI meeting of experts raised the following issues:
2. Resources: Additional financial resources, complementing the International Assistance mechanism, need to be made available to communities to help them prepare, implement and follow up on programmes, projects and activities that best reflect the principles of the Convention.
3. Specific initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the scope of Article 18, including the benefits of the Register, could be taken up to recognize the safeguarding efforts of the communities, for example: a) award, prize, labels or certification for safeguarding practices, set up on a non-competitive basis; and b) The ‘good safeguarding practices’ days.

1. In addition, the experts considered that ‘Further implementation of Article 18 must be explored broadly, whenever possible, with reference to existing provisions of the Operational Directives (paragraphs 3 to 7, 9(c), 10, 12, 14, 20.1, 21(b), 27, 42 to 46, 70, 80(c), 96(c), 106, 107, 118, 121 and 123), the Overall Results Framework of the Convention with its thematic areas, the periodic reporting mechanism which has been reformed to align with the Overall Results Framework, the Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, as well as the international cooperation mechanisms of the Convention such as the listing system and International Assistance.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)