

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

**TWELFTH ANNUAL COORDINATION MEETING OF  
CATEGORY 2 CENTRES ACTIVE IN THE FIELD OF  
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**13 June 2024  
UNESCO Headquarters, Paris (Room VIII)**

**Report of the eleventh annual coordination meeting of Category 2 centres active in the field  
of intangible cultural heritage (5-6 September 2023, Plovdiv, Bulgaria)**

## **I. Background**

Since 2012, the Living Heritage Entity annually brings together representatives of all Category 2 centres (C2Cs) active in the field of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) to exchange experiences, discuss future strategies and workplans, and strengthen collaboration between the centres and with UNESCO. In years in which the General Assembly of States Parties to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (GA) is held in Paris, the meeting takes place on the day after the GA. Every second year it is hosted by one of the C2Cs in the respective host country.

The Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe (RCSICH) generously hosted the eleventh coordination meeting on the occasion of the twentieth Anniversary of the 2003 Convention and the tenth anniversary of holding the C2Cs coordination meetings, noting that the first meeting took place in Sozopol, Bulgaria.

Co-organized by the Living Heritage Entity and RCSICH, the meeting took place on 5 and 6 September 2023 in the Small Basilica of Philippopolis, Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The choice of the Small Basilica with its Roman mosaics from the fifth century AD provided a conducive environment with a festive atmosphere for the workshop which was highly appreciated by all participants.

In addition to sharing information on recent developments under the 2003 Convention as well as the status of Category 2 centres and the process of renewing agreements between host countries and UNESCO, the objective of the meeting was to explore and strengthen synergies between the centres and with the Living Heritage Entity. It aimed to identify possible collaborations with the work of other C2Cs and foster cooperation through the sharing of experiences and main challenges, activities carried out, ongoing or planned, and areas of interest.

## **II. Participation**

The meeting brought together representatives of the eight centres contributing to UNESCO's actions in the field of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, five of which have been active for more than ten years, two for more than five years, and the last one was established in 2021:

- ALGERIA – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Africa (CRESPIAF);
- BULGARIA – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe (RCSICH);
- CHINA – International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (CRIHAP);
- IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF) – Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia (Tehran ICH Centre)
- JAPAN – International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI);
- PERU – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Latin America (CRESPIAL);
- REPUBLIC OF KOREA – International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (ICHCAP);
- UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – International Centre for Capacity Building in Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Arab States (ICCBICH).

All eight centres were represented by their leadership: seven by their Director Generals and one by its acting Director General (see List of participants in the annex).

UNESCO was represented by Susanne Schnüttgen (Head, Capacity Building and Heritage Policy Unit) and Helena Drobna (Programme Specialist, Programme Management Unit), both from the Living Heritage Entity, Culture Sector.

For the opening ceremony, the national and local authorities were represented by H.E. Mr Krastyu Krustev (Minister of Culture of Bulgaria), Ms Snezhana Yoveva (Director of the State Institute for Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and Mr Plamen Panov (Vice-mayor of Plovdiv).

### III. Summary of discussions

As an introduction, RCSICH and UNESCO highlighted the achievements of the past twenty years and future directions for the Convention with reference to the Seoul vision 'Unleashing the power of living heritage for sustainable development and peace' and to the MONDIACULT Declaration and its emphasis on anchoring culture as a public good in the post 2030 Development Agenda.

Each centre then presented the highlights of their programme over the past year, also discussing key challenges and areas of possible cooperation with the other C2Cs.

The presentations demonstrated the successful implementation of substantive programme activities in line with UNESCO's Programme and Budget (41/C5), notably in areas such as capacity building, research, networking, and integrating living heritage in education.

- All Category 2 centres are actively involved in capacity building. They especially provided strong support for capacity building for periodic reporting, in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRESPIAL), Europe (RCSICH), Arab States (ICCBICH), and Africa (CRESPIAF). For the Asia and the Pacific Region, CRIHAP and ICHCAP reconfirmed their commitment to support the programme for submission of reports in 2025. In addition, the centres contribute to implementing UNESCO's global capacity-building programme, thereby expanding its reach (CRIHAP, CRESPIAL, RCSICH, Tehran ICH Centre).
- Several of the C2Cs have furthermore provided important support to the living heritage and education programme, both for upstream and operational work (ICHCAP and RCSICH, and on a smaller scale CRESPIAL).
- They conducted different activities along the thematic initiatives of the 2003 Convention: ICH and disaster risk reduction (IRCI – starting), ICH and climate change (CRIHAP - training), and the economic dimensions of living heritage safeguarding (IRCI). Some provided support to the preparation of nominations (ICCBICH, CRESPIAF), and International Assistance requests (CRESPIAL).
- The centres expressed strong interest in supporting UNESCO's work on sharing good safeguarding experiences including through case studies (IRCI, ICHCAP, ICCBICH, Teheran ICH Centre).

The discussions highlighted several common challenges while emphasizing some possible solutions.

- While the C2Cs operate with regional or international scopes, most of them encounter high expectations from their host country to increase visibility at the national level (to justify their funding), often requiring balancing international activities with activities that involve national/local audiences.
- The centres increasingly try to develop longer term strategic visions and engage more with other centres in joint activities. At the same time, the related need to mobilize additional resources to their regular budgets is challenging for most of them.
- Ensuring strong engagement of their centre's participating States is a challenge for most of the centres. Nevertheless, some have experimented with modalities that have proven to be effective: focal point system with co-financing for in-country activities (i.e. CRESPIAL) and strong collaboration within a partner country, often involving the relevant UNESCO field office support to establish relations with national partners (CRIHAP).

The meeting also identified areas of future collaboration with and among the C2Cs. These include:

#### Support to periodic reporting

ICHCAP and CRIHAP are collaborating with the Secretariat in 2023/24 for rolling out the capacity building programme for country focal points on periodic reporting in the Asia and the Pacific Region.

### ICH and education

Several centres are interested to continue working on integrate ICH in education, including CRESPIAL, ICHCAP, Teheran ICH Centre, and ICCBICH.

### Climate change

Teheran ICH Centre and ICHCAP will organize a sub-regional meeting of experts on climate change in October 2023. IRCI confirmed interest in following and considering the findings for their research to be undertaken in 2024. ICHCAP intends to support information sharing on the topic, while CRIHAP is open to support training.

### A broader implementation of Article 18 of the Convention

The centres are waiting for the proposals to be presented during 18.COM in December 2023 to be able to suggest concrete activities to support the sharing of good safeguarding experiences of communities around the world.

### Synergies between tangible and intangible heritage (1972 and 2003 conventions)

ICHCAP will collaborate with the new Category 2 centre in interpretation and presentation of World Heritage properties based in Republic of Korea. CRESPIAF also expressed interest.

### Foodways

Several centres, including CRESPIAF, ICCBICH, and RCSICH share an interest on issues related to the safeguarding of foodways.

### Engaging youth

IRCI and CRIHAP wish to further strengthen efforts in this direction.

### Information sharing

ICHCAP is reflecting on the possibly of supporting activities to increase the visibility and sharing of action undertaken by C2Cs.

## **IV. Conclusions and follow up**

Overall, the meeting fulfilled its objectives, and highlighted some important points.

- The Category 2 centres confirmed their strong interest in strengthening cooperation between all centres and with UNESCO, with some promising collaboration already in place and several areas identified which fully align with the priorities of UNESCO's programme and budget. The meeting highlighted the usefulness and need for in-person discussion and informal exchange. To further enhance information flows between the centres and with UNESCO, online working sessions could provide a useful platform.
- The meeting demonstrated the important role that the C2Cs play as institutions, supporting the implementation of the 2003 Convention at the regional levels. It also highlighted the vulnerability of some of the centres that have to work hard to sustain their activity level as public funded institutions. In this context, the renewal evaluation is an important tool helping them to negotiate resources and receive recognition for their mandate and work.
- The hosting of the event gave visibility to the Sofia Centre through the presence of the Minister of Culture and a high-level official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the mobilization of national media attention. In addition to the two-days meeting, RCSICH prepared a very rich cultural programme of field visits, including several museums and sites, but also an invitation to the celebration of the nineteenth anniversary of the inscription of the Ancient Plovdiv on the UNESCO tentative list of the 1972 Convention.
- The Tehran centre expressed its interest to possibly host one of the next annual meetings of the C2Cs. It was recalled that the twelfth meeting in 2024 will be held during 10.GA at Headquarters in Paris.

## Annex A

### List of participants

**ALGÉRIE – Centre régional pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel en Afrique (CRESPIAF)**

**ALGERIA – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Africa**

Mr HACHI Slimane	Professeur, directeur du CNRPAH
Ms MEGHIREF Meriem	Assistante de Direction
Mrs BENCHATER Saliha	Administratrice de Recherche

**BULGARIE – Centre régional pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel en Europe du Sud-Est**

**BULGARIA – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe**

Ms TODOROVA Irena	Executive Director
Ms STANEVA Mirena	Expert
Ms ISTATKOVA Chayana	
Ms ROUSSEVA Iliyana	
Ms ILIEVA Nadejda	
Ms TOKADZHIEVA Diana	

**CHINE – Centre international de formation sur le patrimoine culturel immatériel dans la région Asie-Pacifique**

**CHINA – International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (CRIHAP)**

Mr ZHANG Jing	Deputy Director-General
Ms SHEN Ce	Staff of the Research Division

**IRAN – Centre régional de recherche pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel en Asie de l’Ouest et en Asie centrale**

**IRAN – Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia**

Ms MOMENI Atousa	Director-General
Ms PIROUZNIK Mehrnaz	Programme Specialist, International Affairs Unit

**JAPON – Centre international de recherche sur le patrimoine culturel immatériel dans la région Asie-Pacifique**

**JAPAN – International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI)**

Mr MACHIDA Daisuke	Director-General
Ms NOJIMA Yoko	Head of Research Section

**PÉROU – Centre régional pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel de l’Amérique latine (CRESPIAL)**

**PERU – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Latin America (CRESPIAL)**

Mr Owan Lay González	Director-General
Ms Verónica Ugarte Rivera	

**RÉPUBLIQUE DE CORÉE – Centre international d’information et de travail en réseau sur le patrimoine culturel immatériel dans la région Asie-Pacifique (ICHCAP)**

**REPUBLIC OF KOREA – International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (ICHCAP)**

Mr KIM Jisung

Director-General

Ms CHA Boyoung

Director, Planning & Management Office

**EMIRATES ARABES UNIS – Institut de patrimoine de Sharjah, pour le Centre international pour le renforcement des capacités en matière de patrimoine culturel immatériel dans les États arabes**

**UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – Sharjah Institute for Heritage, for International Centre for Capacity-building in Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Arab States at the Sharjah Institute for Heritage**

Ms RASHID AL SHAMSI Aisha

Director of the Arab Heritage Center

Ms ALBUQAISH Hind

Sharjah Institute for Heritage

## **Annex B**

### **Agenda**

**The eleventh annual coordination meeting of Category 2 centres  
active in the field of intangible cultural heritage  
Plovdiv, Bulgaria  
5 to 6 September 2023**

#### **Monday 4 September 2023**

All day. Arrival of participants

#### **Tuesday 5 September 2023**

9.30 – 10.00 a.m. Welcome coffee and registration of participants

10.00 – 10.30 a.m. Opening ceremony

Opening speech by:

Mr. Krastyu Krustev, Minister of culture of Republic of Bulgaria

Ms. Susanne Schnuttgen, Chief of Unit, Capacity-building, UNESCO Living Heritage Entity

Mr. Plamen Panov, Deputy Mayor of Plovdiv

Ms. Snezhana Yoveva-Dimitrova, Director of the State Institute of Culture of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Irena Todorova, Director General, Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe

*Girls' Choir Evmolpeya*

10.30 – 11.00 a.m. Introduction of participants

11.00 – 11.15 a.m. Objectives of the meeting

11.15 – 12.30 p.m. Recent developments in the life of the 2003 Convention

12.30 – 2.00 p.m. Lunch

2.00 – 3.00 p.m. Recent developments concerning category 2 centres  
Renewals and reviews – status and updates

3.00 – 3.30 p.m. Coffee break

3.30 – 5.00 p.m. Working session: Discussion on strategic planning activities and collaboration amongst the centres and UNESCO

5.00 - 6.30 p.m. Tour and presentation of the Bishop Basilica of Philippopolis

7.00 p.m. Official dinner at restaurant Valere given by Municipality of Plovdiv

#### **Wednesday 6 September 2023**

10.00 – 11.30 a.m. Discussion on upcoming workplans and possible collaboration amongst the Centres and UNESCO (continued)

11.30 – 12.00 a.m. Other business

12.00 – 12.30 p.m. Closing of the eleventh Annual coordination meeting

12.30 – 2.00 p.m. Lunch

2.00 – 4.00 p.m. Plovdiv city tour

4.00 – 6.00 p.m. Old town Plovdiv: photo exhibition Vision, Narrative, Touch

6.00 – 7.30 p.m. Visit in Plovdiv Regional Ethnographic Museum

7.30 p.m. Dinner at Plovdiv Ethnographic Museum

**Thursday 7 September 2023**

All day. Departure of participants