15th Annual Meeting of the South-East European Experts Network on Intangible Cultural Heritage

Periodic Reporting as a Strategic Tool for Safeguarding Living Heritage in South-Eastern Europe

Online workshop, 6-7 July 2021

* Cover image: Stefka Zasheva is teaching her great-grandchildren Persiyana and Alex to weave on a loom - a traditional device for producing carpets and rugs. © Ministry of Culture of Bulgaria/Tsvetan Nedkov, 2013. The element “Bulgarian Chitalishte (Community Cultural Centre): practical experience in safeguarding the vitality of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Bulgaria)” was inscribed in 2017 on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

CONCEPT NOTE
**Background**

The South-East European Experts Network on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) was established in 2007 under the auspices of UNESCO, in order to support the implementation of the UNESCO 2003 Convention in South-East Europe. Annual meetings of the network took place in Arbanasi, Bulgaria, June 2007; Safranbolu, Turkey, May 2008; Zagreb, Croatia, April 2009; Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Romania, May 2010; Belgrade, Serbia, May 2011; Athens, Greece, May 2012; Sofia, Bulgaria, May 2013; Limassol, Cyprus, May 2014; Venice, Italy, June 2015; Supetar, Croatia, June 2016; Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, June 2017; Lubljana, Slovenia, October 2018; Cremona, Italy, June 2019; online, June 2020.

The meetings are primarily aimed at representatives of ministries of culture and/or other authorities in charge of ICH safeguarding in the Member States under the purview of UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe: Albania; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria, Croatia; Cyprus; Greece; Malta; Republic of North Macedonia; Republic of Moldova; Romania; Serbia; Slovenia; and, Turkey. Experts representing relevant authorities from Austria and Italy are also invited as observers.

The Network aims to enhance a common understanding of opportunities and challenges linked to the safeguarding of the ICH as a key asset of South-East European cultural diversity, serving as a regional platform for sharing knowledge and good practice. Since 2018, the annual meetings introduced a capacity-building approach on specific subjects and progressively extended attendance to other relevant experts from the region, to contribute more effectively to the advancement of ICH safeguarding.

The present, 15th annual meeting is organized by UNESCO (UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, together with the UNESCO Living Heritage Entity), in cooperation with the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe (Sofia, Bulgaria).

**Description and objectives**

The meeting takes place in the midst of the first regional periodic reporting cycle in the Europe Region. The 2003 Convention provides (Art. 29) that States Parties shall submit to the Committee reports on the legislative, regulatory and other measures taken for the safeguarding of the ICH in their territories. Periodic reporting allows States Parties to assess in a participatory manner the implementation of the Convention in their territories, evaluate their capacities for safeguarding living heritage, report on their ICH inventories and update the status of elements inscribed on the Representative List. It also stands as one of the Convention’s key mechanisms for international cooperation, allowing States and communities to benefit from the experience gained in other States Parties and to exchange information on effective safeguarding measures and strategies across the whole region.

The structure of periodic reporting has been recently aligned with the Overall Result
Framework (ORF) approved by the Convention’s General Assembly in 2018 with the aim to better understand the impact of the 2003 Convention on safeguarding living heritage in States Parties. In addition to reporting of the recent development and the current situation, countries are also invited to set clear and realistic targets in the different areas related to the implementation of the Convention for the next reporting cycle.

Europe is the second region, after Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020, to undertake the periodic reporting exercise on the implementation of the 2003 Convention under the reformed periodic reporting mechanism. The periodic reports of European countries are to be submitted by 15 December 2021 for an examination by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2022.

To accompany the reporting process, the Living Heritage Entity has developed a training tailored for the Country Focal Points (CFPs) designated by national authorities to be in charge of the periodic reporting. Adapted to an online format in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the training was delivered in the European region from 19 March to 16 April 2021. Aimed at strengthening the CFPs’ knowledge and skills to design and implement results-based participatory reporting, the four weeks training has combined a series of plenary webinars with group forum discussions on a sub-regional basis – including South-East Europe. Providing an occasion for peer learning, networking, and strategic discussions among participants, it has raised specific questions and challenges such as participation of communities and various stakeholders, data collection, roles of country focal points, monitoring and evaluation.

Next to the follow-up webinar to the online training for the Europe region (2 July 2021), the 15th Annual Meeting of the South-East European Experts Network on ICH will focus on the achievements, challenges and benefits of the ongoing periodic reporting process in the region. It will offer an opportunity to promote the sharing of knowledge and experiences through thematic panels on participative and intersectoral strategies implemented in South-East European countries in the periodic reporting process.

In this regard, the meeting shall aim at:

- taking stock of the progress in the periodic reporting process in South-East European countries;
- sharing knowledge, experiences and advice on strategies, mechanisms and tools used for the elaboration of the periodic reports across the region;
- identifying possible opportunities for reinforced regional cooperation in implementing the 2003 Convention and safeguarding ICH.

The meeting will also provide an opportunity to discuss and advance cooperation on intangible cultural heritage safeguarding issues with and among States Parties and other relevant partners in South-East Europe.
Topics for discussion

Sessions 1 & 2 – The periodic reporting on the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: sharing experiences and lessons learned from South-Eastern Europe

During these first two sessions participants will be invited to deliver short presentations (10 minutes max.) on the main developments, achievements and challenges encountered during the periodic reporting process in their country so far.

- What has already been done to date?
- What are the next steps until the submission?
- What are the main challenges faced so far and how did you overcome them?

Session 3 – Participative process in the data collection: intersectorality, different stakeholders’ and communities’ involvement

Introductory presentations:

- Participation as a key concept with reference to the 2003 Convention’s basic texts
- Indicators 21 (Extent to which engagement for safeguarding ICH is enhanced among stakeholders) and 22 (Extent to which civil society contributes to monitoring of ICH safeguarding)

Group work – participants will be divided in subgroups of not more than 5 people to practice interactively on the proposed subjects. Outcomes of the subgroup discussions will be presented in the plenary, followed by an overview of the revised HO3.

Session 4: Periodic reporting as a self-assessment tool: objectives and results, targets and baselines

Introductory presentations:

- Targets and baselines
- Differences between objectives and results

Group work - participants will be divided in subgroups of not more than 5 people to practice interactively on the proposed subjects. Outcomes of the subgroup discussions will be presented in the plenary, followed by a debriefing on the meeting and conclusions.

Working language

The working language of the meeting will be English.