



**South-East European Experts Network on the Safeguarding of the  
Intangible Cultural Heritage  
4<sup>th</sup> Annual Seminar**

(Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Romania, 3-7 May 2010)

**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE DISCUSSION**

We, the participants in the fourth regional seminar of the South-East European Experts Network on Intangible Cultural Heritage (Râmnicu-Vâlcea, 3-7 May 2010), hereinafter ‘the Network’ represent our countries of origin in the South-East European region and thank UNESCO and in particular its Office in Venice for Science and Culture in Europe (BRESCE) - Culture Section - for its support to the organization of this seminar. We are also deeply grateful to the host country, Romania, for its friendliness and for generously hosting us in the town of Râmnicu-Vâlcea.

We underline that this meeting, that is a follow-up to the previous meetings in Arbanassi, Bulgaria (June 2007), Safranbolu, Turkey (May 2008), and Zagreb, Croatia (April 2009) marked a new and important step forward to enhance a common understanding of opportunities and challenges linked to the policies for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in the region, such as: national inventory policies, the process of revitalising intangible cultural heritage, the management of sustainable cultural tourism, the role and involvement of the local communities, the transnational dimension of intangible cultural heritage.

During our discussions the following topics emerged:

- Great progress has been done by the countries of the region in the field of the intangible cultural heritage safeguarding : ratification of the 2003 Convention by all countries of the region; opening of the Category II Regional Centre for Intangible cultural heritage in Sofia, Bulgaria; setting up of national agencies or departments focusing on intangible cultural heritage at the Ministries of Culture; creation of national expert networks; development of national inventories; adoption of new laws on the heritage in the light of the objectives set out in the 2003 Convention;
- During the Convention implementation process, the countries of the region, notwithstanding their very different situations, share some common difficulties: setting forth the development of systematic inventory policies and digitalising their intangible cultural heritage; increasingly emphasising the elements of their intangible cultural heritage that need urgent safeguarding; further reflection on the ways and means to systematically involve the local communities and intangible cultural heritage stakeholders in the long term in the programmes for intangible cultural heritage safeguarding as in the process of inscription on the lists foreseen by the 2003 Convention; paying renewed attention to the changes caused to intangible cultural heritage by globalization, migration flows and ‘multiple identities’ within the communities;
- During the implementation of the Convention risks and dangers have emerged that the experts may need to confront: the political exploitation, on certain occasions, of the policies for the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, the folklorisation of culture, the museification of living traditions;
- The countries of the region feel the need for closer regional and sub-regional co-operation that has its best example in the meetings of the Network - especially within the framework of the intangible cultural heritage digitalisation projects – and for the fast and crucial development of transnational projects for intangible

- cultural heritage safeguarding, including through multinational candidates to the lists foreseen by the 2003 Convention. Against this background, the experts welcome the new joint initiatives taken by the countries of the region such as the project on traditional music (Bulgaria-Turkey) or on cooking practices (Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia);
- The organisation of regular meetings of the region experts to exchange experiences and good practices and to discuss the emerging problems linked to the 2003 Convention implementation is taking a crucial role for all countries and for the region as a whole. With reference to this, the experts underline the essential role that the Regional Centre on Intangible cultural heritage in Sofia will have to play, in particular in the fields of exchange of information and training;
  - A better co-ordinated and harmonious implementation of the 1972, 2003 and 2005 Conventions must attain the region goals in terms of promotion of cultural diversity while respecting the rights and interests of the local communities involved.

During our discussions, we pointed out that the support of UNESCO and of the authorities of the countries involved is of particular importance to assure the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. This support takes shape in the following activities:

- The co-ordinated management of intangible cultural heritage data bases (lists of experts, register of good practices, national and regional digitalisation policies, access to the data bases);
- Tailored projects and programmes for capacity building with special focus on the questions of training on cultural management policies;
- The development of new specialised professional networks such as a network of South-East European museums that will be responsible for the collections (ethnographic, musicological, etc.) that are linked to intangible cultural heritage;
- Co-ordination among the different administrative, cultural and scientific bodies that deal with intangible cultural heritage as well as among the communities and those who preserve traditions and the NGOs both at national and local level;

- Support to the implementation of the integrated action plan while taking into account the interdependent goals of the 1972, 2003 and 2005 Conventions.

During the meeting the following topics of common interests emerged:

*a) Revitalising the intangible cultural heritage:*

1. Any revitalisation process is strictly intertwined with the process of transmitting the living cultures to future generations, including through quality formal and informal education;
2. Each and every revitalisation project shall consider the evolving nature of intangible cultural heritage, the diversity of cultural and social contexts as well the dynamic, non homogeneous, stratified and discontinued character of cultures;
3. The revitalisation process must consider that intangible cultural heritage actors are perpetually reinventing their social and cultural practices as well as their evolving relation to nature, culture, time and history;
4. In order to avoid any artificial reconstruction - folklorisation, reification, abusive interpretations - the revitalisation process must be coupled with quality systematic scientific research – inventories, data bases, registrations – that should be carried out in a responsible and ethical way in full respect of the integrity of intangible cultural heritage actors – confidentiality, intellectual property rights, dignity.

*b) The role and involvement of the local communities:*

1. The regular involvement, the participation and the free endorsement by the local communities and those who preserve traditions is a key element of the entire process for the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage;
2. Local knowledge is crucial for the survival of the elements linked to intangible cultural heritage and shall be enhanced in an inclusive manner, in close co-operation with the local communities and while taking full account of the protection of the rights and interests of the communities and individuals involved.

c) *The effective implementation of the 2003 Convention that underlines the following aspects:*

1. Priority set on the List of urgent safeguarding, in order to take the suitable safeguarding measures in favour of intangible cultural heritage expressions of local communities whose survival – recreation or transmission – is threatened;
2. Priority set on the preparation of the multinational candidature files for the Lists foreseen by the 2003 Convention;
3. The implementation of national and regional policies focusing on intangible cultural heritage inventories.

d) *The ethical, responsible, inclusive and sustainable of cultural tourism linked to intangible cultural heritage.*

1. The experts believe that putting the local communities – their knowledge and know-how, their understanding and competencies – to the heart of the cultural tourism policies aiming at promoting intangible cultural heritage is an ethical duty;
2. Any form of cultural tourism aiming at the promotion of intangible cultural heritage shall be anchored to a concept of sustainable development that respects the local background, the integrity of intangible cultural heritage actors as well as their responsibilities within the community;
3. Cultural tourism policies shall foster the economic potential of intangible cultural heritage, while protecting its values and the historic nature of this heritage through specific research programmes.

e) *A new holistic vision of intangible cultural heritage policies*

1. The experts acknowledge the importance for the countries of the region of integrating the complementary dimensions of tangible and intangible into their policies and cultural heritage management plans;

2. In this context, any integrated intangible cultural heritage management policy shall necessarily emphasise the role of the individuals, groups and local communities;
3. The experts take note with interest of the new initiatives taken by the countries of the region to promote an integrated vision of intangible cultural heritage (celebration of the Heritage Day including the tangible and intangible heritage).

## FINAL CONCLUSIONS

We, the participants in the fourth regional Seminar of the South-East European Experts Network organised in Râmnicu-Vâlcea, from 3 to 7 May 2010, in the light of our discussions and the comparative analysis of the situation in the different South-East European countries express our satisfaction for the fact that the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage has been at present ratified by all countries of the region. The following common positions have emerged from our debate:

1. In order to achieve effective regional co-operation in South-East Europe for the implementation of the 2003 Convention and in view of the impact that this process could have at local, national and international level, the following initiatives should be encouraged and taken:
  - a) We ask the governments of the countries involved as well as the UNESCO Office in Venice to further support the existence and the activities of the Network;
  - b) We undertake to promote the questionnaire prepared by the National Italian Commission for UNESCO aiming at publishing on the Internet site of the UNESCO Office in Venice all available and useful information about the expertise of South-East Europe in the field of intangible cultural heritage as well as the good practices of the countries of the region concerning the inventories, measures and policies for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage;
  - c) We support the launch of the new experts networks such as the one suggested by Greece on museums and other institutions that deal with issues related to intangible cultural heritage;

- d) We recommend the implementation of strategies and action plans on intangible cultural heritage promotion through sustainable cultural tourism in full respect of the integrity of the local communities;
  - e) We agree to focus our attention – together with the national authorities and the academic institutions involved – on the transnational dimension of intangible cultural heritage. In this context, we welcome the conclusions moving in this direction that were adopted on the occasion of the Round Table of the Ministers of Culture on intangible cultural heritage that took place in Konya, Turkey, on 17 December 2009.
2. We welcome the creation of a Category II Regional Centre for intangible cultural heritage under the aegis of UNESCO in Sofia, Bulgaria and we hope that it will become the focal point and pole of regional expertise, in particular in the field of training, information, exchange and awareness-raising for the policies of culture management. We declare our willingness to contribute to the implementation of its future action plan.
  3. We underline the need to strengthen the training institutes that already exist and/or the creation of UNESCO Chairs for the study, teaching and research in the field of intangible cultural heritage, with the aim to develop the networking of universities and of higher education institutes at international, regional and sub-regional level.
  4. Taking note of the importance of the complementary role of the three UNESCO Conventions of 1972, 2003 and 2005:
    - a) We ask the governments of the countries of the region and the Ministries of Culture involved to consider this close complementarity when implementing the Conventions as well as in the strategies and action plans concerning the policies for the safeguarding of cultural heritage;



- b) We undertake to share in the Network our experiences and knowledge of the good practices based on the harmonious implementation of the three conventions;
  - c) We recommend raising the awareness of the general public and the local communities, including through information campaigns, on the goals and principles of the three conventions, in order to give them greater visibility.
5. We ask UNESCO, in particular the UNESCO Office in Venice – Regional Bureau of UNESCO for Science and Culture in Europe –Culture Section:
- a) To continue its efforts to develop activities of institutional support, promotion, information and awareness-raising for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in South-East Europe;
  - b) To enable the new regional centre for digitalisation of the cultural heritage that was created with the support of UNESCO in Skopje to integrate intangible cultural heritage;
  - c) To foresee in the near future the organisation, in co-operation with the Regional Centre on intangible cultural heritage in Sofia, of a meeting at regional level on the challenges coming from the intangible cultural heritage transnational dimensions – inventories, drawing registration files, good practices;
  - d) To continue to support the organisation of seminars for intangible cultural heritage experts of South-East Europe and to guarantee the stable composition of the members of the Network.
6. We wholeheartedly thank Serbia for its proposal to host the next meeting of the Network in 2011, which will focus on the questions concerning intangible cultural heritage national legislations and we encourage Greece to explore the possibility to host the Network meeting in 2012.

7. We thank Romania for its generous hospitality and we kindly ask it to inform the General Assembly of the States Parties about the recommendations of the Network during its next meeting in Paris, 22-24 June 2010.
8. We undertake to transmit through our governments the recommendations of the seminar to the next meeting of the Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe that will take place in Serbia in 2011 as well as to the Forum of the Heads of State of South-East Europe that will be held in Istanbul, Turkey in June 2010, while inviting them to take the necessary measures for their implementation, so that intangible cultural heritage becomes an instrument of intercultural dialogue to the benefit of social cohesion and sustainable development.

Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Romania, 7 May 2010