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# Handbook on integration of intangible heritage

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## Foreword

The InThrace Project (2023-1-RO01-KA220-HED-000156121) is an Erasmus+ KA220-HED Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education project. The six partners are responsible for all materials produced in this project. The project's *Handbook on integration of intangible heritage* aims to provide a comprehensive theoretical and practical framework for understanding, preserving, managing, and promoting intangible cultural heritage (ICH). It supports learners and practitioners in integrating ICH into tourism and community development in a responsible and sustainable way, while strengthening cultural identity & community involvement.

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# Introduction

This Handbook aims to provide valuable information to readers regarding the management of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). It follows with 11 Chapters that highlight significant points related to a better understanding of ICH.

**Chapter 1: Overview and understanding of ICH examines Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)** and its importance in preserving collective identities and cultural diversity. The definition provided by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003) emphasizes its dynamic and living character, different from tangible heritage, as it is continuously transmitted and recreated by communities. The evolution of the concept of heritage is traced from the first international conventions, such as the International Charter of Venice (1964) and the World Heritage Convention (1972), to the adoption of the Faro Convention (2005), which recognizes the role of heritage in social cohesion and sustainable development. The chapter also explores the interaction between intangible heritage and collective identity, analyzing how cultural traditions and expressions contribute to local, regional and European identities. UNESCO and European Union and Council of Europe initiatives to protect intangible heritage are presented. Finally, it highlights the need for participatory conservation strategies that integrate communities in the protection and revitalization of ICH in the face of the challenges of

globalisation and digitalisation. As UNESCO (2003) aptly states, intangible heritage "is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization", and its transmission "provides communities with a sense of identity and continuity". In an integrating Europe, this means that celebrating each other's living heritage - and ensuring its survival - can strengthen both regional pride and a broader European solidarity. In this sense, intangible heritage becomes a space for negotiating identity, in which the past is re-signified to meet the needs of the present. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) observes that intangible heritage is essentially a phenomenon that depends on recognition, and this recognition is always influenced by political, economic and cultural factors. Thus not every tradition becomes heritage, and the selection process inevitably involves choices and exclusions. Intangible heritage, in essence, is the soul of culture: by safeguarding it, we preserve not only songs, recipes, or rites, but the very identity of peoples, keeping Europe's past alive in its present and future. Intangible cultural heritage plays a crucial role in reinforcing this European identity, as it provides a symbolic space of belonging, transcending national borders and promoting cultural diversity within a common framework. The oral traditions, festivals and cultural practices shared between different regions of Europe contribute to building a collective consciousness and a supranational identity. Intangible heritage thus becomes not only a legacy of the past but also an active vector of European cohesion, providing a framework in which European citizenship can be lived and experienced beyond its legal dimension.

## **Chapter 2: Legislation and regulations at local, national and EU level**

The term 'cultural heritage' has changed content considerably in recent decades and now it includes also oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

Defined by the UNESCO 2003 Convention, ICH emphasizes the living traditions transmitted across generations, providing communities with a sense of identity and continuity. The safeguarding of ICH is a complex, very delicate and difficult process. It necessitates comprehensive legal and institutional frameworks, operating at local, national, and international levels as well as the extremely active attitude of society. Shared ICH elements by several countries, recognized at the EU level shed new light on unknown aspects of contacts, relationships, influences and understandings in the common historical development of European nations. The safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) within the European Union reflects a complex interplay between local, national, and supranational frameworks. Each Member State - from Greece to Romania, Croatia, Poland and Portugal contributes uniquely to this collective effort, drawing upon centuries-old traditions while adapting to contemporary realities. The UNESCO 2003 Convention serves as a foundational guide for harmonizing these efforts across diverse cultural landscapes. The importance of ICH extends beyond its cultural significance. It is a vehicle for fostering social cohesion, sustaining regional identities, and promoting sustainable development. For example, Romania's Călușarii dance and Portugal's Fado music not only preserve artistic expressions but also provide economic opportunities through cultural tourism. Similarly, shared heritage elements such as the Mediterranean Diet demonstrate the potential for ICH to bridge cultural and geographic divides within the EU. However, the preservation of ICH is not without challenges. Globalization, urbanization, and demographic shifts threaten the transmission of traditions to future generations. In rural areas, the outmigration of younger populations further exacerbates the decline of traditional practices. Moreover, insufficient funding and lack of public awareness often hinder effective safeguarding measures. To address these challenges, greater emphasis must be placed

on education, community involvement, and cross-border collaboration. Digital platforms offer innovative solutions for documenting and disseminating ICH, ensuring its accessibility to broader audiences. EU programs such as Creative Europe and Horizon Europe can further support these efforts by providing financial resources and fostering cooperation among Member States. Looking ahead, the role of ICH in fostering European identity and unity cannot be overstated. As the EU navigates an increasingly interconnected world, its cultural diversity remains a source of strength and resilience. By prioritizing the safeguarding of ICH, the EU not only preserves its past but also builds a foundation for a more inclusive and sustainable future. In this context, Romania's weaving traditions, Greece's Rebetiko music, Poland's Szopkarstwo, Portugal's cork production, and Croatia's Ojkanje singing represent more than cultural artifacts - they embody the living spirit of Europe's heritage, connecting communities across generations and borders. Ultimately, the safeguarding of ICH requires a balanced approach that respects local particularities while fostering a shared sense of responsibility. The experiences of EU Member States illustrate that with coordinated efforts, innovative strategies, and sustained investment, the rich tapestry of Europe's intangible heritage can continue to thrive, inspiring generations to come.

### **Chapter 3: Types of ICH - Categorization of intangible heritage**

highlights a series of recent approaches to categorizing intangible cultural heritage. The chapter is structured in four parts. The first part presents the definition that UNESCO has given in the strategic document "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" (2003), where dimensions and directions for the conservation and use of this type of heritage are indicated. The second part reviews recent contributions by studies that propose critical analyses of the concept of cultural heritage and

attempt to capture the diversity and complexity of forms of heritage. It emphasises a theoretical model that integrates tangible and intangible forms of cultural heritage. The third part deals with the importance of using and integrating technology in the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, showing that digitization has become an essential tool in this endeavor. The last part discusses the concepts of mapping and categorization of intangible cultural heritage, with references to recent theories and research in the field. The chapter also contains two case studies, one on the digitization of a traditional craft in China, and the other on a project mapping intangible heritage in an area with a well-consolidated ethnographic identity in Romania.

**Chapter 4: Explaining tourism heritage value and impact on culture, economy, and society** looks at the different aspects of heritage: material, immaterial, movable, and immovable. It shows how important these aspects are for human history, culture, and identity. Material heritage includes monuments, fortresses, and cities. Immaterial heritage covers customs, rituals, and language. Together, they shape cultural memory. Movable artifacts connect these areas, showing how traditions and objects move between communities and across time. These elements create a shared global heritage. They highlight the need to protect it from destruction, neglect, and modern challenges. The text points out both natural and cultural heritage as recognized by the 1972 UNESCO Convention. It emphasizes that landscapes and sites often go beyond national borders, making their protection difficult. Threats include wars, natural disasters, environmental damage, and climate change. Mass tourism is a major issue. It brings economic benefits, but also causes overcrowding, environmental stress, and cultural disruption, as seen in places like Venice and Machu Picchu. Sustainable management must find a careful balance between

conservation and economic and social interests. The chapter stresses the importance of teamwork among experts, policymakers, local communities, and the public. Protecting heritage cannot rely only on formal UNESCO recognition. It needs open dialogue, shared responsibility, and fair representation of different interests. Responsible tourism, which respects local traditions and minimizes ecological impact, is suggested as a way to meet visitor demand while preserving heritage. A case study from Croatia illustrates these ideas in action. It describes years of research and fieldwork in post-war, economically struggling areas where heritage was often neglected. The author shares the challenges of linking academic research, conservation authorities, and local communities, pointing out the dangers of political and financial mismanagement. Despite setbacks, local initiatives have been crucial for creating sustainable heritage projects, such as archaeological parks and interpretation centers. Successful efforts connected heritage protection with community development, education, tourism, and jobs, helping to build a sense of ownership and resilience. In the end, the chapter asks: heritage for whom and for what purpose? The answer focuses on serving local communities first while ensuring that heritage remains a living and inclusive resource. Preservation needs ongoing commitment, cooperation across different fields, and the integration of research into development plans. By placing heritage at the center of identity and community well-being, it can be protected and dynamically reinterpreted for future generations.

**Chapter 5: Managing ICH Conservation and Preservation** discusses protecting intangible cultural heritage (ICH) as defined in UNESCO's 2003 Convention. ICH includes the practices, knowledge, skills, and cultural expressions that are passed down through generations. These elements give communities a sense of identity and continuity. ICH appears in oral

traditions, performing arts, social practices and rituals, knowledge about nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship. This is often called “living heritage.” Protecting ICH follows international agreements, mainly UNESCO’s 2003 Convention, the Faro Convention (2005), and the ICOMOS 2024 guidelines. Preservation involves a variety of actions including identifying, documenting, and researching heritage, as well as protecting, promoting, and revitalizing it. The chapter emphasizes that safeguarding is a shared responsibility among government bodies, cultural organizations, scholars, and especially the communities and practitioners who maintain this heritage. Key measures for safeguarding include:

- Identification and Inventorying: This means describing and listing heritage elements at local, national, and international levels. It often involves community members and researchers in this process. Documentation using texts, audio-visual materials, and digital collections is crucial for both keeping and accessing the heritage.
- Transmission and Revitalization: This ensures continuity through learning across generations, both informally (within families and communities) and formally (in schools, universities, and vocational programs). Revitalization is vital for practices at risk. It includes raising awareness, education, and creating environments that support sustainable practices.
- Registration: National registers, like Croatia’s established in 1999, document ICH and often serve as necessary steps for UNESCO nominations. Croatia stands out in Europe with over 200 national entries and 18 on UNESCO’s Representative List. The registration process involves expert committees, community consent, and safeguarding plans. The chapter also examines challenges in safeguarding, such as the threat of over-commercialization, tourism exploitation, rural depopulation, and lack of interest from younger generations. However, registration and inventorying can encourage preservation projects and increase awareness, even for elements that are not formally recognized. Raising awareness and

education are highlighted as key strategies. Media, cultural institutions, and schools play important roles in informing the public and incorporating ICH into formal, non-formal, and informal education. This helps ensure continuity across generations. Lifelong learning frameworks are particularly useful for safeguarding ICH. Finally, funding and sustainability are noted as urgent concerns. These require backing from state, regional, and local programs, along with support from EU and international frameworks. Effective safeguarding relies on inclusive participation, cooperation across disciplines, and blending ICH into community development and strategies for cultural diversity. In conclusion, safeguarding ICH is not just about preservation. It also involves fostering creativity, strengthening identity, and connecting heritage to sustainable development. We all share the responsibility to make sure traditions remain living practices, enriching cultural diversity for future generations.

**Chapter 6: Sustainable Tourism Practices regarding ICH and Community Involvement.** Sustainable tourism (ST) plays a vital role in preserving intangible cultural heritage (ICH) by integrating an economic, socio-cultural, and environmental value perspective. UNESCO defines ICH as the traditions, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as central to their cultural identity. Passed through generations, these practices are essential for maintaining cultural diversity and resilience. ST provides a framework to engage with ICH respectfully, fostering socio-economic benefits for host communities while ensuring ICH is valued as a dynamic element of living cultures rather than a tourism commodity. A key principle of ST is respect for cultural identity. It involves safeguarding local traditions and preventing their commodification or exploitation. Authentic exchanges between visitors and communities are encouraged, promoting mutual respect and maintaining the integrity of cultural practices.

Community participation is fundamental, empowering locals to plan and manage tourism initiatives that protect their heritage while reaping economic benefits. By aligning tourism with cultural values, communities enhance their social well-being and preserve traditions. ST also ensures equitable economic benefits from ICH-related activities, supporting livelihoods and incentivizing heritage preservation. This approach sustains ICH for future generations through documentation, promotion, and revitalization of cultural practices. Educating visitors fosters deeper respect for ICH, enriching their experience and protecting traditions. ST serves as a critical mechanism for safeguarding ICH by providing a structured approach to preserving the traditions, practices, and knowledge that underpin cultural identity. Through authentic cultural exchanges, the promotion of local livelihoods, and the facilitation of intergenerational knowledge transfer, ST ensures that ICH remains a dynamic and integral aspect of community life. Additionally, ST emphasizes the importance of inclusive participation, empowering communities to actively manage tourism initiatives that reflect and respect their cultural values. However, challenges such as cultural commodification, environmental degradation, and the erosion of authenticity necessitate urgent and coordinated responses. Policymakers, researchers, and practitioners are called upon to prioritize the integration of ICH into tourism policy, develop capacity-building initiatives for local stakeholders, and employ participatory planning approaches. These actions are essential to fostering a sustainable future in which ICH and responsible tourism coexist, ensuring long-term benefits for both cultural preservation and socio-economic development.

**Chapter 7: Marketing and methods of promoting ICH.** The importance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) does not concern the cultural event itself, but is related to the wealth of knowledge and skills transmitted through it

from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge within a state can be related to minorities as well as to the main social groups and is as crucial for developing as for developed states (<https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/1175796>). Cultural management uses concepts from marketing that are based on the promotion of products and services and refers to the 4 ps (product, place, promotion, price). This Chapter examines the factors related to the management of ICH, drawing on concepts described in the marketing theory for the 4 ps. These basic concepts are then examined and related to ICH. This chapter highlights the importance of marketing techniques and methods for promoting LCC in a sustainable and ethical way in digital and physical environments/using traditional and new technologies.

**Chapter 8: The importance of ICH preservation, understanding and promoting of EU integration processes.**

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is an integral part of humanity's cultural fabric, encompassing oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, and traditional knowledge and skills. The safeguarding of ICH has become a pressing global concern, particularly within the European Union (EU), where cultural diversity and shared heritage serve as foundational principles for integration. The preservation of ICH not only ensures the continuity of cultural practices but also fosters mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration among EU Member States. This chapter examines why ICH preservation matters, the mechanisms available for its safeguarding, their efficiency, and the ways in which these efforts contribute to the EU's integration processes. The preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage is not merely a cultural endeavor but a vital component of the European Union's integration processes. By safeguarding ICH, the EU protects its cultural diversity, promotes unity, and fosters sustainable development.

Mechanisms such as the UNESCO Convention, national legislation, and community-based initiatives provide essential tools for this task, though their success depends on adequate resources, community involvement, and policy alignment. In the context of EU integration, ICH preservation contributes to shared identity, mutual respect, and cross-border collaboration. It underscores the importance of cultural heritage in shaping a united Europe while respecting the unique traditions of its Member States. As globalization and modernization continue to challenge traditional practices, the EU must prioritize ICH preservation as a means of building a more inclusive, cohesive, and culturally vibrant future.

**Chapter 9: Contemporary challenges and solutions for the management of ICH (multiculturalism, crises, etc.)** discusses the contemporary challenges and solutions for managing Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), highlighting issues such as multiculturalism, crises like pandemics and natural disasters, and the importance of ICH in contemporary society. ICH encompasses various forms of cultural expression, including oral traditions and performing arts, and is recognized through UNESCO's 2003 Convention for its safeguarding and promotion. The chapter outlines key challenges faced in ICH management, particularly in multicultural settings where diverse interpretations can lead to conflict over ownership and representation. Globalization often dilutes local customs, necessitating a balance between local and global cultural influences. Crises like COVID-19 have disrupted traditional ICH transmission, while natural disasters risk the destruction of both tangible and intangible cultural assets, leading to emotional and psychological impacts on communities. Effective management methodologies include community-focused approaches that involve local participation in documenting and safeguarding ICH, utilization of digital technology for preservation, and the

establishment of robust institutional frameworks and policies. Digitization serves to document and enhance accessibility while promoting language revitalization and education. Furthermore, ICH contributes significantly to sustainable development through tourism and local economic initiatives, underscoring the need for community engagement and authority in tourism that aligns with cultural values. Crisis readiness and response strategies are essential for mitigating the impact of disasters and ensuring resilience in ICH preservation.

**Chapter 10: Ethical considerations in ICH: Discuss the ethical implications of documenting, preserving, and promoting intangible cultural heritage, including issues of ownership, consent, representation, and cultural sensitivity.**

ICH, as previously defined, is a rich tapestry that includes oral traditions, performing arts, social customs, rituals, festive celebrations, and traditional knowledge about local surroundings. Therefore, ICH plays a crucial role in nurturing community identity and continuity while fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity and human creativity across different societies. However, the preservation and documentation of ICH come with complex ethical dilemmas, especially regarding cultural ownership and intellectual property rights. Since many of these traditions and knowledge systems are held by entire communities rather than individuals, they challenge the conventional legal frameworks that are built around personal ownership. This collective aspect of cultural heritage often clashes with existing intellectual property systems that prioritize individual rights over the communal stewardship of cultural knowledge. The present chapter focuses on the different aspects of interconnecting ICH and ethics, starting with the definition of ethics and moving to the perspectives and concerns raised over the years in this domain, which are found across the literature. Recognizing that ICH can

evolve without losing its essence provides a pathway toward a more inclusive and adaptive cultural scenery that reflects the multifaceted nature of the human experience. The dichotomy between the preservation and evolution of ICH underscores the need to address critical questions regarding the balance between preserving heritage and fostering innovation, challenging communities, policymakers, and scholars to navigate the intricate interplay between cultural continuity and transformation within the modern context. There is an urgent need for a stewardship framework that emphasizes the collective ownership and management of cultural assets, thereby acknowledging the distinctive relationships between local communities and their heritage, while striving to address the historical injustices associated with cultural appropriation. We can ensure that cultural heritage remains vibrant, meaningful, and sustainable for future generations through responsible stewardship. The time for action is now – to protect, preserve, and promote ICH in ways that honor its creators, respect its custodians, and benefit humanity.

**Chapter 11: Funding and Resource Mobilization for Intangible Cultural Heritage:** emphasizing its critical role in community identity amidst risks from globalization and urbanization. It outlines strategies for financing ICH preservation through international instruments, particularly the 2003 UNESCO Convention, which mandates state involvement in ICH safeguarding, encourages community participation, and underscores the necessity for national inventories and preservation measures. Key resources highlighted include a suite of online educational tools, thematic training materials, and sustainable development toolkits to bolster ICH safeguarding initiatives. Funding identification mechanisms are explored, especially through UNESCO's Participation Programme, European funds such as Creative Europe, and programs like Erasmus+ that support educational

initiatives related to ICH. The Ministry of Innovation and Growth in Bulgaria also provides grants for SMEs while leveraging various EU funding mechanisms, including the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and active community involvement is emphasized as vital for ICH's sustainable preservation, as they play a significant role in engaging with local bearers of heritage.

# Overview and Understanding of Intangible Cultural Heritage

## Chapter 1

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### 1. Definition and Importance of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Globalisation and the swift changes in our social systems affect our cultural identities, the perceptions of other groups and cultural diversity. Cultural heritage functions as a vital mechanism to safeguard and distribute our local, regional, national, European and ethnic identities through links between past, present and future. It exists in two distinct forms, which include material or tangible heritage alongside immaterial or intangible heritage.

While less tangible than the material culture, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is the tangible manifestation of cultural expressions, traditions, practices, knowledge, and skills transmitted from generation to generation. This heritage is defined by UNESCO in the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003): “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". These elements are expressed in oral practices and traditions, crafts, performing arts, and knowledge of and about the natural world and the universe. Munjeri (2004) compares intangible and tangible heritage and explains that intangible cultural heritage is not a remnant of the past, but a treasure of knowledge called 'living phenomenon'. However, it is considered to be fragile and subject to change in the course of society. This is important in the process of identifying intangible heritage because it proclaims that the significance of the resource is not in the tangibility of the resource but in the intangibility of the resource (Ruggles & Silverman, 2009).

The two types of heritage share numerous common aspects despite their distinct characteristics. The two elements maintain a dependent relationship because monuments carry intangible meanings which support traditions that need physical locations, such as churches for worship and ritual (Salomon & Peters, 2009). Both heritage types play a role in building and strengthening group identities, according to Munjeri (2004), while globalisation and urbanisation impact the preservation of tangible and intangible heritage, thus necessitating unified protection strategies for cultural sustainability (Lenzerini, 2011). Conservation policies need to protect community practices alongside knowledge and expressions in addition to historic objects and sites.

Ruggles & Silverman (2009) state that intangible cultural heritage requires understanding of the communities which both practice and transmit it. Likewise, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) have noted that intangible cultural heritage consists of more than just practices and traditions because it functions as a metacultural phenomenon which emerges from communities' reflexive awareness of their heritage. The process of becoming an intangible cultural heritage depends on both the transmission across generations and the acknowledgement of its value by practitioners and their communities. Becoming aware of heritage does not happen automatically because it requires active participation, which forms through socio-economic changes, cultural policies and community desires to maintain their identity's continuity.

Therefore, intangible cultural heritage cannot be understood without referring to the concept of community and its engagement. It offers them an identity reference, a way of keeping and passing on their values and traditions (Harrison & Rose, 2010). These practices are also performed by communities in the present as a response to the present environment and their historical background to create a sense of identity and time continuity. In fact, UNESCO (2003, p. 4) points out that intangible heritage “contributes to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity... which helps individuals feel part of one or different communities”. Intangible cultural heritage is the conservation of special traditions and values to form a unique identity at the local, regional, national and even European levels.

The UNESCO (2003) definition encompasses a broad spectrum of cultural expressions which fall into five distinct categories:

- Oral traditions and expressions, based on language as a promotor of ICH that preserve stories, legends, proverbs, and poems that sustain a community's cultural heritage. The Romani language (*World Day of Romani Language, 2025*) stands as an example among others, including Tsiattista Poetic Duelling and the Land-of-Legends program for Kronoberg Region Sweeden (*Tsiattista Poetic Duelling - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, n.d.*) and *Land-of-Legends Programme, for Promoting and Revitalizing the Art of Storytelling in Kronoberg Region - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, n.d.*).
- Performing arts - traditional music, folk dances and folk theatre. Flamenco in Spain (*Flamenco - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, n.d.*) or the Dance of the Lads dancing, Romania (*Lad's Dances in Romania - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, n.d.*)), are some examples that are included in the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*;
- Social practices, rituals and festive events – such as traditions and ceremonies specific to different communities, such as the Carnival in Binche, Belgium (*Carnival of Binche - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, n.d.*), or Winter festivities, Carnival of Podence (*Winter Festivities, Carnival of Podence - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, n.d.*);

- The knowledge systems about nature and the universe encompass the traditional understanding of agricultural practices, as well as traditional medicine and fishing techniques. The Kihnu cultural space in Estonia serves as an example where women maintain maritime traditions which they transmit to future generations (*Kihnu Cultural Space - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage*, n.d.);
- Traditional craftsmanship – including handicraft techniques that involve pottery making, weaving, metalworking and traditional musical instrument production. Examples: Traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship in Romania and the Republic of Moldova (*Traditional Wall-carpet Craftsmanship in Romania and the Republic of Moldova - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage*, n.d.) and the organ craftsmanship and music in Germany (*Organ Craftsmanship and Music - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage*, n.d.).

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) explains that heritage exists as a human-made selection of cultural practices which receive heritage status while others remain excluded from this classification. Through this process, intangible heritage transforms into a discussion about cultural identity and the preservation of essential values. Traditions exist in the present because they represent the ongoing activities which people continue to develop and redefine.

The metacultural aspect of intangible heritage exists at the crossroads of practical activities and reflective processes. The perception of cultural expressions as heritage bestows upon them a value which transcends their performance value (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). The recognition of ICH holds importance because it enables cultural diversity acknowledgement. According to Lenzerini (2011, p.101) ICH functions as the leading tool for preserving cultural diversity and maintains an essential relationship with human rights.

Hence, Munjeri (2004) notes that although at first glance there was opposition, the recognition of intangible heritage on the international level has been important for the protection of the 'living heritage'. ICH is considered to be alive when transmitted from one generation to another;

thus, it is always changing with society. It enables communities to maintain their uniqueness in the increasing cultural homogenization, being an identity reference (González, 2008) but also a valuable resource from the cultural tourism perspective (Arcos-Pumarola, Paquin & Sitges, 2023) and, of course, through events, rituals and common practices it is a centre of gravity that enhances the sense of community coherence (Schreiber, 2019).

Lenzerini (2011) identifies five basic factors that constitute intangible cultural heritage. These are:

1. Self-identification – as heritage only exists if it is recognised by the communities who create and transmit it. This view is fundamentally different from tangible heritage because it does not use universal standards of artistic or scientific value to determine its worth (Lenzerini, 2011, p.102)
2. The other feature of intangible heritage is that it is characterized by continuous re-creation – it does not remain static but is constantly changing in response to historical and social changes in the communities that practice it. Thus, the conservation approach should not be limited to the protection of heritage fixed in time but should create an environment that allows for its organic development (Lenzerini, 2011, p. 109).
3. The deep connection between intangible heritage and the cultural identity of communities. UNESCO asserts that intangible heritage gives communities a sense of identity and continuity, which promotes both respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO, 2003, cited in Lenzerini, 2011, p. 108). The intrinsic relationship between heritage and identity plays a significant role in maintaining social cohesion and cultural diversity in a world where globalisation and standardisation prevail.
4. Authenticity - intangible heritage must be preserved in its authentic form and must not be distorted by any external influences, whether economic, touristic or political (Lenzerini, 2011, p. 114)
5. The relationship between intangible cultural heritage and human rights - ICH has to be protected not only as a cultural expression but also as an integral part of the cultural rights of individuals and communities. The

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) states that ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities have the right to preserve and develop their culture (Lenzerini, 2011, p. 115). In this sense, the protection of intangible heritage is not only a cultural issue but also one of social justice and equity.

Thus, intangible heritage is not only the heritage, but also the manifestation of the creativity of humankind and it is dynamically involved in the construction of individual and (collective) social identities and meanings (Vecco, 2010). In the contemporary world, where cultural diversity is considered one of the most important factors of social enrichment, intangible cultural heritage serves as a vital tool for building authentic intercultural dialogue between communities.

## **2. History and Stages in Defining Heritage**

In order to understand the emergence of intangible heritage it is necessary to analyze the evolution of the concept of heritage; the evolution of intangible heritage being closely linked to a conceptual broadening of the notion of heritage, which has moved from an understanding centered on material objects to one that includes performative, ephemeral and communitarian dimensions of culture.

Vecco (2010) studied the evolution of heritage definitions noting that, in the last decades of the 20th century, the term 'heritage' has been characterized by a semantic expansion and conceptual transfer, becoming increasingly generalized and used in place of other terms such as 'monument' and 'cultural property'. She identified several evolutionary stages in the definition of heritage that produced changes and in the contextualization of the term in international directives, charters and resolutions.

Thus, several landmark moments in the history of heritage refer to international charters when the term heritage began to be integrated and recognized. We have marked below these landmark moments drawn from Vecco (2010, pp. 322-323) and Klysner Steffensen (2024):

1. At the Athens Conference in 1931, the term 'artistic heritage' was used internationally for the first time.
2. The Hague Convention (1954), adopted under the auspices of UNESCO, serves as the initial international treaty that protects cultural property during armed conflicts and introduces the concept of 'cultural property' in such situations.
3. The International Charter of Venice (1964) establishes a first definition of heritage through its statement that historic monuments from previous generations serve as active historical markers which witness their enduring traditions. People develop increasing awareness about human value unity as they see ancient monuments as something that belongs to all of humanity. The world recognizes a collective duty to preserve these heritage items for upcoming generations. Our responsibility is to transmit these cultural treasures in their completely authentic state to future generations. The preservation and restoration of ancient buildings need international agreements about guiding principles which countries should apply through their cultural and traditional frameworks (The Venice Charter - International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, 1964, Preamble)
4. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) defined cultural and natural heritage for the first time as having "outstanding universal value" while establishing criteria for World Heritage List site selection to protect valuable sites worldwide.
5. The European Charter of the Architectural Heritage (1975) was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1975 to establish Europe's architectural heritage as an irreplaceable symbol of European cultural wealth and diversity while highlighting European states' shared duty to protect this heritage.
6. The Washington Charter (1987), also known as the "International Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Cities" (ICOMOS), focuses on the protection and management of historic cities and urban areas while showing how conservation should be integrated into urban planning processes.

7. The Burra Charter (ICOMOS, 1982) advocates for protecting sites based on their aesthetic, historical, scientific or social importance to preserve their cultural value. Thus, both tangible and intangible heritage that brings recognition to certain human values must be protected.
8. The Charter of Nara (1994) along with the Declaration of San Antonio (1996) established fresh perspectives about authenticity and heritage value through their recognition of cultural diversity and intangible heritage.
9. The Krakow Charter (2000) introduces new terms that include 'value-bearer' and memory' for its definition. The concept of memory enables people to recognize historical events and human thoughts from past times.
10. In 2001, UNESCO added 19 new cultural masterpieces to its list, which included items related to orality and intangible heritage as cultural goods.
11. Through the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), UNESCO established a protection framework for intangible cultural heritage through definition and recognition procedures.

Thus, from the above, we can see a shift in perspective and a series of changes in how heritage is viewed, from listing objects to the ability of an element to create value for society (Vecco, 2010). It is clear that new objects like industrial sites and landscapes have been added to the international heritage list and there is a shift from architectural heritage to artistic heritage and then to ethnographic and intangible heritage.

This development has helped in the recognition of the hitherto ignored intangible heritage as an essential aspect of cultural identity and collective memory, from a strict materialist definition to a more flexible one to capture cultural diversity. A milestone in this transition was the recognition of intangible heritage as “heritage that is carried in people’s lives and not in objects” (Logan, 2007 as cited by Ruggles & Silverman, 2009, p. 1). This vision was followed by adopting the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 which

acknowledges that traditions, practices and expressions of culture are central to people's identity and thus need to be protected by institutions.

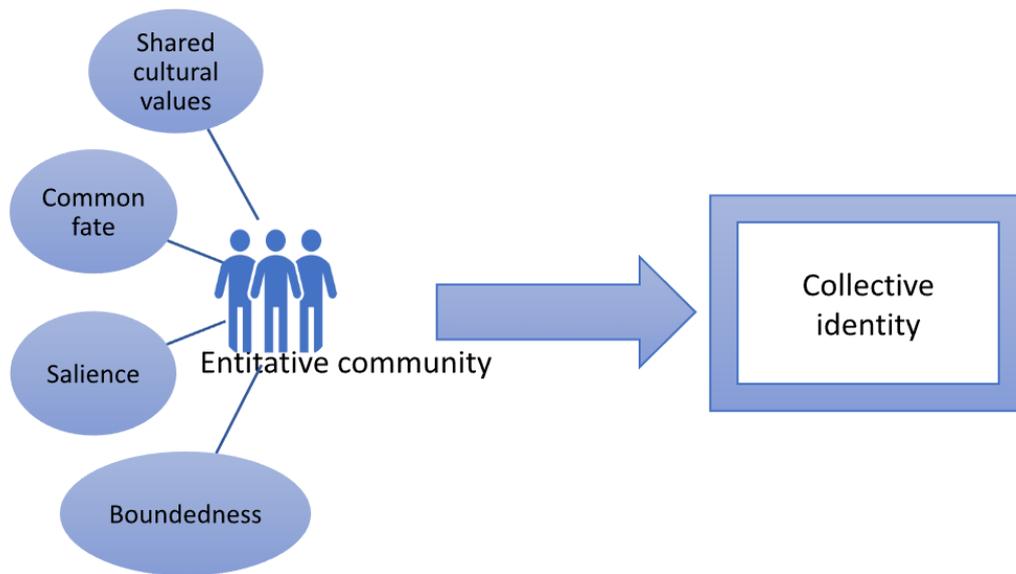
### 3. Collective Identity: Definitions and Dimensions

Collective identity can be defined as “a self-description of an individual or a group, which is emotionally or intellectually based on identification objects” (Brandtjen, 2023, p. 4). It is “giving stable meaning in the flux of social relations” and is a vital aspect of social organisation (Eder, 2009). Naturally, the concept of community is the one on which collective identity is based on.

According to Castano (2004), common fate, homogeneity of cultural values, and relevance and demarcation from other communities are necessary in the consolidation of an entitative community that generates collective identity (see Figure 1). It makes it legitimate through a sense of belonging to these shared values and common destiny.

Entitativity and identification, two social phenomena, contribute to the formation and strengthening of collective identities. Entitativity refers to the recognition of a group as having a distinct and coherent identity, while identification is the process by which individuals embrace this identity (Eder, 2009). Intangible heritage sustains this process by sustaining cultural continuity and a sense of community (Harrison & Rose, 2010).

Figure 1. Determinants of collective identity; adapted from Castano (2004, p. 42)



ICH operates at several levels, covering different types of identities and communities. At the local level, it defines communities through informally transmitted common customs, crafts and traditions (e.g., the community of the inhabitants of Viscri, Romania). At the regional level, ICH contributes to reinforcing common identities within wider geographical and cultural spaces, often promoted for historical, economic or even ethnic reasons (e.g., Catalonia, Spain; Azores, Portugal). An even broader framework is the national one, which serves as a defining element of a national identity that legitimizes the existence of the nation state (but which is sometimes politically instrumentalized through cohesion and propaganda (Gonzalez, 2008) - e.g., through cohesion: the Croatian identity; through propaganda: the identity of the former Yugoslavia).

In the EU context, intangible heritage is trans-border, being used to support the motto “United in Diversity” and uniting millions of people across the old continent. This heritage has the role of combating the perception of a “European identity deficit” and reinforcing intra-EU solidarity (Schreiber, 2019).

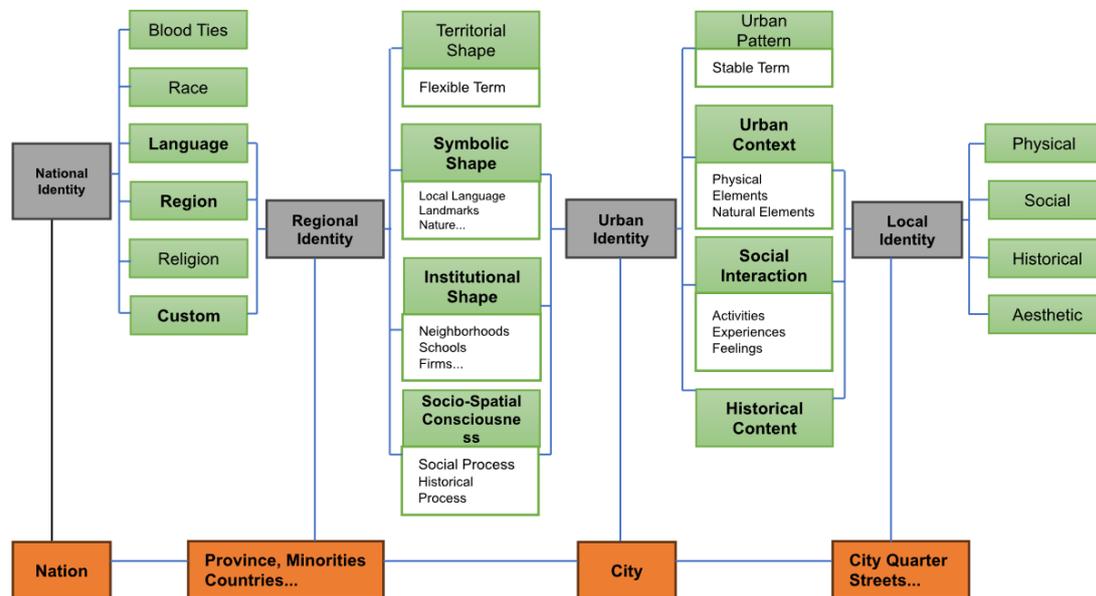
Based on these dimensions, we can thus define collective identity at several levels:

- Local identity – attachment to a limited-size community. This type of identity can be geographically defined since it is represented by a certain limit or boundary that forms a district, city, town, or village. It is affected by physical, social, historical and aesthetic factors.
- Regional identity – common cultural and historical features shared at the regional level. It is developed during historical and territorial socialisation and is “the ‘mental’ product of societies’ interaction with their physical and social environment and the mental reflection of the space in people’s minds and memories” (Raagmaa, 2002, p. 60). Paasi (1986, as cited in Raagmaa, 2002, pp. 58-60) describes regional identity formation through four components, including territory formation by boundary creation and practice implementation and symbolic expression of the region through names, languages, monuments, and local customs and institutional support through organisations and social networks and norms and socio-spatial consciousness of inhabitants which develops from social and historical processes and manifests as emotional connections to place (‘spiritual space’ or ‘genius loci’. Regional identity remains active as an evolving concept because it either transforms through regular updates or fades away due to territorial changes and social and administrative reforms.
- National identity refers to the understanding that one belongs to a nation-state together with its shared principles (Brandtjen, 2023). National identity, as a concept, is closely related to such notions as nationhood and nationalism and is built on the shared history which requires common time, shared values and symbols as well as several rituals, traditions and historical events to form and strengthen as a collective identity. Thus, it is defined and shaped by social, political and historical factors and is a sense of belonging to a nation that produces strong emotional responses (Lewicka, 2011). Regional identity can be either subordinated or contrasted with national identity, it is “a common feeling among several different nations and ethnic groups” (Brandtjen, 2023, p. 6).

- European identity – the feeling of being a part of the same cultural and political area, which is not equivalent to, but coexists with national identity (Fligstein, Polyakova & Sandholtz, 2012).

It is relevant in this regard to take up a scheme for analyzing different levels of identity in urban studies (landscape study) proposed by Shao et al. (2017, p. 28), which helps us to understand the formation of identities on different levels from the perspective of urban dwelling, as depicted in

Figure 2. Different levels of identities in landscape study - Shao et al. (2017, p. 28).



Another type of collective identity is an ethnic identity that is significant at the level of local, regional and national identities and is defined by cultural factors and a shared history. It is defined as “the attribution of a concept to oneself and to other individuals, based on the identification process of perceived cultural differences or a common origin” and is closely connected to the concept of national identity (Díaz-Andreu, 2001, cited in Brandtjen, 2023, p. 6). It entails features like language, culture and history of a community and can determine the feeling of being part of a national or supranational entity.

This is evident in the identity of the Transylvanian Székeli. The Szekler identity in Romania has formed in a historical context, which was accompanied by opposition between the process of assimilation into the Hungarian identity and the process of integration into the Romanian nation. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Szeklers were a separate people within the Kingdom of Hungary. Still, since the beginning of the 19th century the Hungarian national revival programme led to the integration of the Szeklers into the Hungarian nation. After 1918, when Transylvania was annexed by Romania, Romanianization campaigns were launched, and the Szekler elites followed the path of collaborating or opposing the Romanian state.

The conflict between the Szekler, Hungarian and Romanian identities continues to this day in the three counties: Harghita, Covasna and Mureş, where the ethnic groups are observed as autonomist demands are juxtaposed with the Romanian state's efforts to forge a unified national identity. The continuous tension stems from the use of the Hungarian language together with Szekler symbols and regional autonomy measures. The Szeklers faced administrative exclusion as well as an internal struggle to define their identity between Hungarian national membership and regional distinctiveness (see case study: Szekler identity between interethnic conflict and cohabitation - the role of intangible heritage in preserving ethnic identity). The preservation of collective identities depends heavily on intangible cultural heritage, which operates at both local, national, and European levels. Through its transmission of traditions, customs, and values, ICH both safeguards collective memory and builds solidarity between different generations and communities.

#### **4. European Identity and European Intangible Cultural Heritage**

The development of European identity depends on uniting shared values with cultural diversity recognition (Fligstein et al., 2012). Multiple researchers have attempted to determine whether a single, unified European identity is a possibility. Delanty (2004) states that European

identity exists as an ongoing development rather than an established fact. The process of cultural heritage integration between different communities drives this development (Fligstein et al., 2012).

Delanty (2003) explains that European identity develops through political and cultural unification of Europe while remaining a dynamic process. The foundation of European identity rests on democratic values together with common rights and EU institutional participation instead of ethnic and linguistic elements which form national identities. European citizens have not adopted this identity uniformly because it exists in fragmented and contested forms. Similarly, Lehning (2001) defines European identity as an emerging political concept based on a supranational consensus of European citizens on the terms of their political association. Unlike national identities, which are often built around a common culture, language or ethnic heritage, European identity is founded on liberal-democratic principles of political rights and participation: “European identity is the disposition of different nationals to consider themselves, their compatriots and their foreign fellow-Europeans as equal members of the European community: it refers to equal concern and respect” (Lehning, 2001, p. 240).

Also, Brandtjen (2023, p. 7) argues that European identity is not a homogeneous concept, so it cannot be defined only by cultural or historical factors. He emphasises that “European identity is not a synonym for the EU” and that it is based on a mixture of regional and political identities. In his view, Europe has historically been a politically, economically and socially fragmented space, and only after the Second World War did it begin to take shape as an entity based on economic cooperation. In the European case, collective identity is to be understood as a process of co-construction, where different states, regions, and communities negotiate their positions within a broader framework. Thus, “European identity is therefore to be conceived as a narrative network embedded in an emerging network of social relation among the people living in Europe” (Eder, 2009, p. 427).

The relationship between European identity and European citizenship is closely connected to the idea of democratic legitimacy and political participation. Lehning (2001, p. 241) argues that European citizenship

should be more than a set of legal rights granted by the EU Member States; it should be a form of “accountability, not to the separate peoples of Europe, but accountability to the people of Europe as a whole”. European citizenship should be an active civic commitment which upholds the common values of the European Union.

Schreiber (2019) studied the intricate bond between European identity and the European Union, emphasising the role of intangible cultural heritage in community cohesion and defining a sense of European belonging. EU cultural policies have used European identity to support their efforts in promoting shared cultural heritage as a response to economic and political crises. The 1973 Declaration on European Identity serves as a prime example of how culture was used to support European integration during economic challenges and geopolitical uncertainties. The European Year of Cultural Heritage declaration in 2018 functioned as a move to utilize heritage as a unifying element during rising cultural diversity (Schreiber, 2019, p. 325).

Brandtjen's survey, conducted between 2020 and 2022, using the question, “Do you feel European?” to participants from different regions of Spain, the UK, France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom, revealed that the majority of respondents in the regions studied have some level of European identity: “The results show that there is a European Identity with interesting differences over the years” (Brandtjen, 2023, p. 3). These results indicate that although national and regional differences exist, there is a feeling of being part of Europe among the population. However, the degree of European identification is considerably different and needs to be analyzed from the national and regional perspectives.

Intangible cultural heritage is an essential factor in enhancing this European identity as it creates a symbolic space of belonging that cuts across national boundaries and promotes cultural diversity within a common framework. The oral traditions, festivals and cultural practices that are shared across different regions of Europe help in the creation of a collective consciousness and a supra-national identity. Intangible heritage thus becomes not only a legacy of the past but also an active vector of European cohesion, which can

serve as a basis for the realization of European citizenship and as a practice which allows communities to sustain and confirm their identity in the context of integrated European space. Intangible heritage is important for promoting social cohesion and building a sustainable and inclusive European identity in a diverse Europe (Brandtjen, 2023).

The construction of a collective identity is not a fixed but a dynamic process, where “collective identities are narrative constructions which allow controlling the boundaries of a network of actors” (Eder, 2009, p. 427). ICH is a common ground between the diverse local, regional and national identities and it contributes to the construction of a collective identity which is based on cultural pluralism and the motto of the European Union: “United in Diversity”. It is possible to argue that this multiplicity of local and national cultural heritages are the building blocks of a single European cultural space rather than being contradictory. By understanding and valuing the cultural heritage of different peoples, bridges are forged across national borders, contributing to a collective European identity based on plurality and inclusion. Intangible heritage is not only an expression of the past, but also a catalyst for social cohesion and active European citizenship, providing a living framework through which values and traditions are passed on to future generations, thus ensuring its continuity and relevance in contemporary society.

In practice, many intangible heritage items are transnational and link several European communities and symbolize shared values or history. For example, the Mediterranean diet – added to UNESCO list in 2013 (<https://mediterraneandietunesco.org>) with co-nominators from Cyprus, Croatia, Spain, Greece, Italy, Morocco and Portugal – stands for certain attitudes towards food.

This makes it possible for Europeans to celebrate these common elements and feel part of a bigger cultural family, as UNESCO states “understanding the intangible heritage of different communities contributes to intercultural dialogue and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life”. Hence, conserving folk songs, oral epics, traditional crafts, or European festivals not

only shields national cultures but also helps create a global European identity based on diversity and cultural exchange.

European identity, as Castano (2004) explains, is the awareness of being a part of a single political and cultural area, with democratic values and fundamental rights as the foundations, and with a shared history created by the European integration process. It doesn't erase the national identities but coexists with them, to create supranational identity that is often considered to be 'thin' and dependent on the political and economic context.

European citizenship is a legal framework intended to strengthen this developing identity: EU citizens have rights and freedoms that go beyond the national context. Nevertheless, Fligstein (2012) underlines that "it has been possible to build a good amount of economic integration and EU-level regulation with no corresponding development of a deep European identity" (Fligstein, 2012, p. 120). Nationalism is still prevalent, and economic crises and migration have exacerbated social tensions, which hinder the formation of a solid European identity.

## **5. UNESCO's Efforts in Safeguarding Intangible Heritage**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that was established on 16 November 1945 to promote international peace and security through cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and communication, thus responding to contemporary challenges through programmes and initiatives adapted to socio-economic and political conditions. Today, UNESCO has 193 Member States and 11 Associate Members, coordinating international initiatives aimed at supporting sustainable development and promoting inclusive education, the protection of cultural heritage and free access to knowledge (UNESCO, n.d.). UNESCO has been instrumental in increasing the importance of intangible heritage worldwide and in Europe.

Among its major achievements are the adoption of the World Heritage Convention (1972), the creation of the *Memory of the World Programme*

(1992) and the implementation of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003) (UNESCO, 2024). UNESCO has also been a pioneer in setting international standards and facilitating cooperation between nations to address global issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss and inequalities in education.

The fundamental principles of UNESCO include promoting peace, human rights and cultural diversity, and encouraging international dialogue and cooperation. The organization is to establish networks of nations to enable the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind, which is so necessary for the maintenance of peace and development as a goal (UNESCO, n.d.). These principles are applied to all of UNESCO's work in its areas of competence, which encompass a comprehensive conception of human development and harmonious coexistence of peoples.

The *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972) initially focused on tangible heritage protection, but UNESCO later recognized the necessity of including intangible heritage. The *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* which UNESCO issued in 1989, became the first international document to acknowledge the value of living traditions, although it lacked legal enforcement (Ortiz & Madariaga, 2021). The *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* program (2001) served as the basis for establishing definitions and promoting intangible cultural heritage.

UNESCO established the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2003 to create a complete legal system for intangible heritage protection which officially acknowledged its role in sustaining collective identity and promoting sustainable development (Duvellé, 2014). The Convention has transformed how states handle and defend their intangible cultural heritage. It established a global system to protect intangible heritage, which supported existing treaties that focused on the protection of tangible heritage, including monuments and sites. The Convention establishes intangible heritage as an essential cultural diversity engine which drives human creativity but faces threats from globalization and social transformations (UNESCO, 2024). Through the Convention,

Member states receive an invitation to locate and protect their intangible heritage while acknowledging communities as fundamental agents in this process.

However, there are criticisms about the effectiveness of the implementation of the convention, especially in terms of listing processes and the actual participation of local communities in the protection of their heritage (Ortiz & Madariaga, 2021). "The 2003 Convention has significantly broadened the international discourse around the definition and meaning of cultural heritage" (Duvelle, 2014, p. 29), but challenges related to globalization, digitalization and social change raise new issues in the protection of intangible heritage in the 21st century.

Currently, UNESCO supports the protection of intangible heritage through mechanisms such as the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* and the *List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding* (UNESCO, 2024), which by 2025 contains hundreds of items, many from European countries. Inclusion on these lists often brings visibility, pride and resources to help preserve these traditions.

The institution has also created a network of Category 2 Centres, such as the *Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe* (RCSICH) and the *International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region* (CRIHAP), which facilitate the exchange of best practices and research initiatives (UNESCO, 2024). In addition, UNESCO promotes safeguarding strategies through the *International Assistance Mechanism*, which supports communities in documenting and revitalizing threatened intangible heritage. "Safeguarding measures should be aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage" (UNESCO, 2003).

All EU countries ratified the 2003 Convention, committing themselves to measures such as documentation, education and policies to support intangible cultural heritage. In general, UNESCO has helped change

mindsets: governments and institutions increasingly view festivals, oral history, traditional knowledge and other intangible practices not as quaint relics, but as vital cultural capital worth protecting. This international recognition has enabled local practitioners (e.g., folk artists, indigenous language speakers, craftspeople) to apply for support for their heritage and has ensured that the protection of intangible heritage is now part of the cultural policy discourse across Europe.

The UNESCO lists have also stimulated cross-border cooperation, such as joint nominations (e.g., Mediterranean diet) that unite countries around common heritage.

In Europe, UNESCO has partnered with the EU on projects to integrate intangible heritage into education and sustainable development. For example, UNESCO and the European Commission have launched an initiative to "promote learning about and through intangible cultural heritage in schools", developing guidelines for teaching living heritage and training teachers in several EU countries (<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage>).

## 6. EU's Efforts in Safeguarding European Intangible Heritage

The European Union and the Council of Europe have recognized the importance of intangible cultural heritage in their cultural policies to defend cultural diversity while building European identity. The first emphasis was on tangible heritage yet intangible heritage has become a main priority for study during the last several decades. The EU Treaties affirm respect for Europe's cultural diversity and the institutions increasingly recognize that heritage - tangible and intangible - is essential for social cohesion and a common European identity.

The European policies developed their understanding of intangible cultural heritage through international heritage recognition efforts which established its importance for identity and social cohesion. *The European Cultural Convention* (1954) initially focused on protecting tangible heritage, but advancements in cultural studies and pressures from globalisation led

to a reevaluation of intangible heritage. It has been defined by the Council of Europe and the European Union as an integral part of European cultural diversity. The *Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (2005) shifted its focus from monument protection to emphasise people and community-based approaches. The Convention establishes cultural heritage rights for people and communities to enhance the heritage value, while promoting social unity and sustainable development (Council of Europe, 2005). It strengthened the position of intangible cultural heritage in policies of inclusion and democratic participation while establishing a European framework that supports the 2003 UNESCO Convention.

In accordance with the *CulturEU Funding Guide* (European Commission, 2021), the European Union provides several funding schemes for the conservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage. They are integrated in a strategic framework that comprises a variety of actions, from artistic mobility to digitization and economic growth. Some of the most important programs that are relevant to the protection and promotion of intangible cultural heritage are *Creative Europe*, *Horizon Europe*, *Erasmus+*, *European Solidarity Corps* and *Connecting Europe Facility*.

The *Creative Europe Programme* (2021-2027) is the main European funding instrument for the cultural and creative sectors, which offers support for artists' mobility, the development of new business models in the cultural sector and support for cooperation between cultural organisations operating on a transnational level (<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe>). It comprises the sub-programmes *Culture* and *MEDIA* which are aimed at intangible heritage and the audiovisual sector respectively (European Commission, 2021).

*Horizon Europe*, the framework programme for research and innovation, has a culture, creativity and inclusive society cluster (*Cluster 2*) that supports digitisation of cultural assets and research into the conservation of cultural heritage (European Commission, 2021).

Another source of funding is *Erasmus+*, which supports learning and training for the acquisition of skills in intangible cultural heritage. The *European Solidarity Corps* also provides funding for volunteering and social inclusion

activities that lead to heritage conservation through community actions. Also, the *Connecting Europe Facility* supports the digitization of intangible heritage through the Europeana platform to give Europeans free access to digital cultural heritage (European Commission, 2021).

These programmes demonstrate the European Union's interest in the conservation and enhancement of intangible cultural heritage, offering financial assistance and plans for its conservation and accrual to future generations. EU regional development funds have been used to revive cultural practices (e.g., through the promotion of local crafts as part of rural development).

Others, such as the European Year of Cultural Heritage (European Commission, 2018a), also had a strong intangible heritage component. This event emphasized the importance of its role in the enhancement of European identity and stated that: "Our cultural heritage is more than just stones and buildings. It is something alive that we share, something that can enrich our lives and help us build our future together" (European Commission, 2018a). Similarly, the long running European Heritage Days (founded in conjunction with the Council of Europe) have also involved traditional music, storytelling, crafts and food heritage events, which enable citizens to engage with each other's cultural practices.

Thus, the EU by encouraging such exchanges enables Europeans to learn about the differences while at the same time learning about the similarities, which is a very important step towards the formation of a single European identity. The idea of *A New European Agenda for Culture* (European Commission, 2018b) also stresses the importance of "increasing cultural participation and the transfer of cultural heritage to future generations through formal and informal education" (European Commission, 2018b).

Importantly, the EU cultural policy has recently begun to look both outwards, to spread the ideals of European heritage abroad, and inwards, to incorporate immigrant and minority cultures into European history. For instance, the protection of European linguistic minorities' traditions (Catalan, Gaelic, Szekler etc.) or the heritage of diaspora communities has become a part of the inclusive approach to what is considered as 'European

culture'. As Schreiber (2019) notes, the EU has attempted to utilize cultural heritage as a means of enhancing solidarity between Member States and promoting cultural diversity as part of a common identity via initiatives including the *European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018*. Nevertheless, the EU still faces challenges in incorporating intangible heritage into a general cultural policy framework, since most regulations and initiatives are still oriented towards tangible heritage.

Another legal mechanism that the EU uses is the geographical indications (GIs) system in order to safeguard the traditional products which are a part of the cultural heritage. According to Ubertazzi (2017), the application of GIs helps the Member States to safeguard elements of intangible heritage not only within the domestic market but also in the international market and thus avoid the misuse or misappropriation of the cultural elements by external economic actors. However, the present system of GI protection has its restrictions concerning the extension to the neighboring countries. In particular, Ubertazzi (2017) notes that the protection of GIs has to be extended to each Member State independently, which results in problems of fragmentation and high costs for communities that seek to conserve their ICH in the international context. There is also a problem of inconsistency in the EU regulation of ICH protection across the regions, which calls for more specific laws to address the protection of ICH across the Member States.

Besides legal protection, the EU also promotes digitization of intangible cultural heritage as a way of preservation and transmission. According to Wagner and de Clippele (2023), digitization poses new issues in the cultural heritage management context, including issues on intellectual property rights, accessibility and ethical use. For instance, the protection of ICH in the digital environment is an issue that raises questions on the collective rights of communities over their cultural elements and the danger of over-commercialisation of heritage. The authors argue that it is crucial that digitization is done with the participation of the communities to avoid the use of their heritage elements in a way that is not authorized or without recognition.

In conclusion, EU and UNESCO initiatives are interlinked: UNESCO offers the means and international support (encouraging states to consider living heritage), while the EU policies incorporate these values into regional policies and identity discourse. Therefore, they give a strong message that preserving a village fiesta in Spain, a weaving technique in Latvia or a folk song in Greece is not a local matter but a part of the process of conserving the cultural diversity of the entire Europe.

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# Legislation and regulations at local, national and EU level

## Chapter 2

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### 1. Introduction

According to UNESCO, “the term ‘cultural heritage’ has changed content considerably in recent decades and now it also includes oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.” (n.d.) Defined by the UNESCO 2003 Convention, ICH emphasizes the living traditions transmitted across generations, providing communities with a sense of identity and continuity. The safeguarding of ICH is a complex, very delicate and difficult process. It necessitates comprehensive legal and institutional frameworks, operating at local, national, and international levels as well as the extremely active attitude of society.

Shared ICH elements by several countries, recognized at the EU level shed new light on unknown aspects of contacts, relationships, influences and understandings in the common historical development of European nations.

## 2. The UNESCO Framework and EU Context

The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage remains the cornerstone of global ICH protection efforts. The Convention calls for signatory states to identify, document, and safeguard ICH within their jurisdictions. The EU, as a supranational entity, aligns with these principles while fostering a framework that supports Member States in implementing safeguarding measures.

The EU cultural policy, articulated through initiatives like Creative Europe, emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity and heritage. The European Heritage Label and other programs aim to raise awareness of ICH as a vital part of Europe's shared identity. However, the EU does not directly legislate on cultural matters; instead, it encourages Member States to act in accordance with subsidiarity principles. This decentralization allows countries to tailor ICH safeguarding measures to their unique cultural landscapes while maintaining alignment with broader European objectives.

### 3. National and Local Approaches to ICH

The legal and institutional frameworks for ICH safeguarding vary significantly across EU Member States. With regard of project's scope, here we will touch only briefly upon the enlisted ICH cases in the consortium member states. Based on the provided comparative information, conclusions on the nature and content of the ICH can be made. In that regard, particular attention will be devoted to the role of UNESCO.

#### 3.1. GREECE

Greece's cultural heritage policies focus on integrating ICH into community life and national identity. The Hellenic Ministry of Culture oversees ICH preservation, supported by local initiatives, such as Rebetiko Music, Leonidio's Easter Ceremony, the Greek music and festivals, Polyphonic Caravan, Tranos Choros (Grand Dance) in Vlasti and Syrrako Festival, Momoeria, New Year's celebration in eight villages of Kozani area and the Byzantine chant. Furthermore, Greece also shares with other Mediterranean countries, (Italy, Spain, Portugal) the Mediterranean Diet, which embodies

traditional food practices emphasizing plant-based foods - vegetables, fruits and whole grains and healthy fats like extra virgin olive oil.

**Rebetiko Music:** Rebetiko is the urban popular song of the Greeks, especially the poorest, from the late 19th century to the 1950s. It went through a process of musical syncretism and developed into a more distinctive musical genre in the 1930s, serving as the basis for further developments in popular Greek music. The so-called rebetika revival started in the 1960s and developed further from the early 1970s. In order to preserve Rebetiko, various initiatives including festivals and educational programs are organized. Importantly, Rebetiko was added in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists in 2017.

The fascinating Greek Easter custom Leonidio's Easter Ceremony is performed in Peloponnese. The ceremony takes place on the night of the Resurrection. As the priests start chanting Christos Anesti ('Christ is Risen'), more than 100 hot air balloons are fired up and released into the sky, which constitutes a formidable culmination of this procession.

Greece also included its music and festivals, which facilitate the intergenerational transfer of cultural codes through the collective practices transmitted from older to younger generations. These cultural practices reinforce in an informal way, the cultural identity of the community securing the endurance of collective memory through song, dance and the telling of old tales and stories.

Polyphonic Caravan was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2020. The Epirus polyphonic song is performed by a group of singers with two to four distinctive roles among them, and touches on almost every aspect of life, such as childhood, marriage, death, historical events and pastoral life. The non-governmental organization 'Apiros (Polyphonic Caravan)' undertook initiatives to safeguard and promote the Epirote songs. (Polyphonic, n.d.)

Tranos Choros (Grand Dance) in Vlasti and Syrrako Festival, inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2022, are celebrated in two Highland Communities of Northern Greece to commemorate the Dormition of the Virgin Mary. Historically, these

Orthodox festivities marked the annual reunion of pastoral communities before the sheep or cattle farmers moved to their winter pastures. The main feature of both festivals are the ritualistic dances.

Momoeria, New Year's celebration in eight villages of Kozani area, West Macedonia was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016. From December 25 to January 5 dancers, actors and musicians are celebrating the coming of the new year. The Momoeria dancers represent the priests of Momos (god of laughter and satire), or commanders of Alexander the Great wearing helmets, pleated skirts, traditional shoes and brandishing sticks dancing under their leader's command to convince the powers of nature not to endanger the livelihood of villagers. The practice is mainly to wish the community prosperity, healthy offspring, good harvests and sustainable management of natural resources. (Brief, n.d.)

Byzantine chant, inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2019, is another Greek ICH. This exclusively vocal music has existed for more than 2000 years and is a significant cultural tradition and comprehensive music system forming part of the common musical traditions that developed in the Byzantine Empire. Passed on aurally across the generations, its main characteristics have remained over the centuries. The Psaltic Art has always been linked to the male voice, women chanters are common in nunneries and participate in parishes to some extent. (Byzantine, n.d.)

### **3.2. ROMANIA**

Romania safeguards its ICH by the Law on Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage - 2008 - a legislative framework that aligns with the UNESCO 2003 Convention. The Ministry of Culture plays a pivotal role in documenting and protecting ICH. The rich and diverse intangible tradition of Romania's is represented by the

Inscribed in 2008 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity Călușarii Dance. This ritual dance is performed in the Olt region of southern Romania, but also formed part of the cultural

heritage of the Vlachs of Bulgaria and Serbia. The ritual probably derived from ancient purification and fertility rites using the symbol of the horse, worshipped as an embodiment of the sun and features a series of games, skits, songs and dances. It includes also the initiation of young men into the ritual by a master who had inherited the knowledge of magic charms and the dance steps from his predecessor. Its preservation is supported by local cultural institutions and annual festivals on Whit Sunday and other folklore festivals, turning it into a veritable national symbol. (Calusarii, 2014)

In 2012 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Horezu ceramics was added as a unique traditional craft in the northern part of Vâlcea County in which men and women generally divide the fabrication processes. Men select and extract the earth, clean, cut, water, trample and mix – transforming it into a clay body to produce a red pottery. The potters shape each object with a special finger technique. The women decorate the objects. The craft is transmitted through families, in workshops from master to apprentice, and at fairs and exhibitions. The element gives the community a sense of identity. (Craftsmanship, n.d.)

The Men's group Colindat, Christmas-time ritual was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2013. These rituals, tied to the winter solstice, integrate music, dance, and oral traditions, reflecting Romania's agrarian heritage. Each year before Christmas, groups of young men gather in villages throughout Romania and the Republic of Moldova to prepare for the ritual. On Christmas Eve, they go from house to house performing festive songs, the hosts offering them ritual gifts and money. Some songs have an epic content, which is adapted to each host's individual circumstances, others are for unmarried girls. (Men's, n.d.) Traditionally unmarried young men (juni) are the main bearers and practitioners of the element. (Gherman, 2022) experienced former group leaders, are responsible for the group's training. The ritual songs are learned at daily rehearsals from the time the group is formed until Christmas Eve.

Another aspect of Romania's ICH is the Folk Music of Maramureş. The Maramureş region is known for its robust music. The musicians play the

fiddle (ceteră), the guitar (zongoră), and the drum (dobă) at large gatherings, annual festival celebrations, and smaller, neighborhood parties. The traditional dancing parties occur regularly in the villagers' homes, where they make music together impromptu, and have poetic competitions all night long. (Romania, 2014)

Traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016. Wall carpets with impressive motifs, weaved in Romania, but also in the Republic of Moldova were produced by a variety of techniques and certain patterns also indicated the weaver's origin. As the UNESCO description highlights, "They had important role in community practices as part of a bride's dowry, at funerals where they symbolized a passage for the soul to the hereafter, etc. Techniques have changed from vertical or horizontal looms practised in some parts, to tight picking (thread by thread) and other forms with weavers now able to work from home. In villages, girls learn the art form from their mother or grandmother, while in cities craft centres, associations and colleges, as well as museums provide classes." (Traditional, n.d.)

### 3.3. CROATIA

Croatia's vibrant ICH reflects its diverse regional cultures. Safeguarding the time-honored traditions are of great importance for Croatian culture. The preservation of intangible heritage was given a legal framework in 1999 by the Act on the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Goods, Article 9 and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Department was established within the framework of the Ministry of Culture and Media in 2004. In 2005 the Croatian Parliament ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), followed by efficient actions related to the protection and preservation of ICH. The Ministry of Culture and Media, through the relevant conservation departments located all over Croatia according to the administrative division of the country, ensures direct communication with relevant persons related to intangible cultural heritage in certain areas. Communities, groups and individuals are educated and

continue to pass on their tradition as a direct contribution of the entry in the national Register, and especially on the UNESCO lists. A positive trend is the involvement of the schools and university institutions as determinants of the identity of both individuals and communities.

The preservation measures implemented by communities and holders of intangible elements inscribed in the National Register include a wide range of activities ( direct knowledge transfer, presentation and documenting of goods, publication of promotional and educational materials, local and national strategic programs and plans, festivals, exhibitions, workshops, education in schools and universities, establishment of relevant centres of intangible heritage, etc.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia has inscribed over 200 intangible cultural goods in the Cultural Property Register of the Republic of Croatia, out of which 17 have been inscribed on three UNESCO lists of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: the Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity (15 goods), the List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (1 good) and the Register of the Intangible Heritage Best Safeguarding Practices (1 good). Some of the guidelines the Republic of Croatia is guided by in conducting activities of the intangible heritage preservation are long lasting results, quality planning, local heritage management, international, European and cross-border cooperation. Special attention is also given to the intangible heritage of minorities in Croatia, as well as to the fair representation of various vulnerable groups in the local community.

Among those, inscribed by UNESCO are the ancient vocal technique from Dalmatia Ojkanje Singing, classified as in Need of Urgent Safeguard. Ojkanje two-part singing, is performed by two or more singers (male or female) using a distinctive voice-shaking technique created by the throat. Each song lasts as long as the lead singer can hold his or her breath. Melodies are based on limited, mostly chromatic, tonal scales. Ojkanje is traditionally passed on orally, audio and video media and organized training within local folklore groups now play an increasing part in its transmission. (Ojkanje, n.d.)

Sarah-Jane, describes the Knight's Tournament in Sinj, known also as Sinjska Alka. It was Inscribed on UNESCO's list in 2010. (2021) The unique equestrian event, takes place in August in the town of Sinj since 1715. The event consists of an equestrian competition where suited horsemen knights gallop at full speed, armed with a lance to attempt to secure a metal ring called the 'Alka,' which is suspended several meters from the ground. (Sarah-Jane, 2021) The Sinjska Alka is one of the only remaining examples of medieval competitions held in Croatia until the 19th century and is an essential part of local history. (Sinjska, n.d.)

The Croat UNESCO ICH list includes also such festivities as Following The Cross On The Island Of Hvar, where an 18 kg cross is carried by barefoot cross-bearers at 1pm on Holy Thursday in six villages. Members of the procession are chosen approximately 20 years in advance by the form of registration. (Za Krizen, n.d.). In 2009 the Annual Carnival Bell Ringers' Pageant From Kastavq in NW Croatia was added. Between January and Ash Wednesday, the carnival aims to invite fertility and growth by men marching dressed in sheepskin with bells. Other religious ICH include the Festivity of the patron of Dubrovnik Saint Blaise, through a ritual of blessings and prayers for the coming year and a parade of traditional songs and dances. (Just, 2014) and the performed by girls Spring Procession Of Ljelje/Kraljice (Queens) From Gorjani, included onto the UNESCO list in 2009.

Music, is another area of vast ICH contributions. Klapa Multipart Singing of Dalmatia, Southern Croatia (2012), the Two-Part Singing and Playing In The Istrian Scale, the Međimurska Popevka and the Becarac singing is a is a humorous type of folk song, all enrich the list of local patterns of expression. The Silent Circle Dance Of The Dalmatian Hinterland "Nijemo Kolo" was included in 2011. The dance, performed without any music, is a closed circle with men leading their female counterparts in quick and unplanned steps. (Sarah-Jane, 2021)

Furthermore, the Traditional Manufacturing Of Children'S Wooden Toys In Hrvatsko Zagorje was added in 2009, the Gingerbread Making From Northern Croatia called Licitars, were also included to the list in 2010. The

Art of Dry Stonewalling, Knowledge & Techniques and Lacemaking from Pag and Hvar are also part on the Croatian ICH list.

Last but not least, the Community Project of Safeguarding The Living Culture Of Rovinj “Batana Ecomuseum” was created to train and educate the public about an important piece of maritime heritage – the batana boat. This project was included in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. The Mediterranean Diet is also part of Croatia’s ICH.

### 3.4 POLAND

Poland’s approach to ICH highlights the interplay between tradition and modernity. National Heritage Board (NHB) under the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage manages ICH. The NHB is responsible for the safeguarding, support and management of local initiatives. The Board maintains a mechanism for the inclusion of ICH examples in a single list. Since 2013 the list has 108 records including a vast variety of local habits, traditions, craftsmanship and festivities. The Board provides also “good practices” suggestions, easily accessible on its website. (Narodowy, n.d.)

Among the UNESCO representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage list are the Nativity scene (shopka) tradition in Krakow, Treebeekeeping culture (Bartnictwo), Polonaise traditional Polish dance, Timber rafting and Falconry. The szopka tradition in Krakow was inscribed in 2018 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is a social practice originating from Christmas celebration customs, centred around constructing cribs featuring the nativity scene, also depicting historical, cultural and contemporary social events relating to life in the City of Krakow, Poland and the world. (Nativity, n.d.) The culminative moment takes place on the first Thursday of every December, when makers present their shopka’s on Krakow Main Square. All the works are exhibited at the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow from December to February.

The Tree-beekeeping culture (Bartnictwo) was the most common kind of beekeeping for all areas of the former Polish-Lithuania Commonwealth until the 19th century. This ecologically friendly and sustainable beekeeping technology is well preserved in rural areas of South-East Belarus and in

some communities in Podlasie region of Poland. The “Brotherhood of barefooted tree-keepers” work on the continuation of old traditions and the preservation of the cultural fabric for future generations. (Treebeekeeping, 2020) The Treebeekeeping was inscribed on UNESCO’s list in 2020. (Treebeekeeping, n.d.)

The joyful Polish group dance Polonaise was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2023. This dance is one of the most explicit symbols of Polish culture consistently cherished and transmitted to next generations. Due to its inclusive nature allowing for the participation from a few to several hundreds pairs, the dance provides for social integration and community belonging. The dancers follow a trajectory proposed by the first pair, during which the pairs perform various figures. The dance remains an indispensable part of youth balls and other celebrations.

Timber rafting (Flisactwo) is practiced mainly in the southern parts of Poland, as well as in other European countries like Austria, Czechia, Germany, Latvia, and Spain. Until today, a community sharing the knowledge, skills, techniques and values of making and navigating timber rafts emerged and the tradition and the building processes have been cultivated for generations. (Decision, 2022) It originated in the Middle Ages, when rafts were used to transport wood, goods and people using natural water flows. Today, this tradition, developed also as a tourist attraction, remains another ecologically sustainable practice protecting water and attracting visitors. Timber rafting was inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2022.

Whereas, Falconry is a millennia old tradition across the world, it was inscribed in 2021 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage as a part of the Polish Cultural Heritage. The falconry community includes supporting entities such as falcon hospitals, breeding centres, conservation agencies and traditional equipment makers. (Falconry, n.d.)

### 3.5. PORTUGAL

Portugal's cultural policies emphasize ICH as a cornerstone of national identity. The Portuguese Cultural Heritage Act (Law no. 107/2001) had foreseen a definition of cultural heritage that recognized its intangible dimension within a broader definition with limited application in practice. After the ratification of ICHC in 2008, Decree-Law no. 139/2009 placed greater focus on the particularities of the ICH in order to translate the international heritage norms into national legislation. In 2011 The National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage was created, taking the format of a digital database – Matriz PCI. The museums were regarded as the main actors responsible for ICH safeguarding, but later changes in the institutional framework have led to the weakening of their role in ICH policies. There are 17 ICH elements inscribed plus three elements inscribed in the category of “urgent safeguard”. Furthermore, there are 84 inventory forms under analysis. The General Directorate for Cultural Heritage coordinates preservation efforts.

Examples of Portuguese ICH consist of the following records. Fado, inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2011. The winter festivities during the Carnival of Podence in 2019. The Community festivities in Campo Maior, inscribed in 2021. During the Festivities of Campo Maior the streets are decorated with paper flowers in various shapes, colours and patterns. The decorations are kept secret until the eve of the festivities, when the town is completely transformed overnight.

Furthermore, the polyphonic singing from southern Portugal Cante Alentejano was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2014. The list includes also the Craftmanship of Estremoz clay figures, which was inscribed in 2017. Portugal shares also the Mediterranean diet and Falconry with several other countries.

### 3.6. Bulgaria

Ordinance № 1 of 8 May 2013 on keeping the Register of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Bulgaria was promulgated in the State Gazette, issue 45 of May 18, 2013. It determines the procedure for keeping by the Ministry of Culture of the register of the intangible cultural heritage of the country. The register shall be maintained as a single electronic database in a way that ensures the integrity and protection of the information against destruction, unauthorized alteration. The Minister of Culture shall determine by an order the officials, who shall keep the register. The museums and the Community cultural centres (Chitalishte) with their practical experience are regarded as the main institutions responsible for the vitality of the ICH of the country.

The methodology and instructions related to the introduction of records in the National List are developed by a team at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore with an Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IEFEM at BAS). The definition "Living human treasures of the UNESCO Pilot Program" is introduced as evidence of living cultural traditions of the citizens of Bulgaria.

Despite the extraordinary diversity of ICH on its territory, Bulgaria has only 7 ICH on the Representative List of Humanity, which were inscribed between 2009 and 2021. 19 elements inscribed in the National Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2010-2014) are available. The reason can be seen in the lack of a coherent system of institutions with vague responsibilities for its registration and protection. The village of Bistritsa is one of the last areas in Bulgaria in which traditional polyphony has been maintained over the centuries. Alas, the traditional practice of multipart singing that is unique to the Bulgarian villages of Dolen and Satovcha in the Blagoevgrad region was inscribed in 2021.

In 2009 the Panagyr of Saints Constantine and Helena was inscribed. Its culmination is the the Nestinarstvo fire-dancing rite, as the climax of the annual Panagyr ritual on June 3 and 4 in the village of Bulgari, in the Mount Strandzha region of south-east Bulgaria. In 2014 the tradition of carpet-making in Chiprovtsi, where hand-woven carpets are made by women of in

north-western Bulgaria. The best-known forms of ornamentation are reproduced throughout the community and even constitute the coat of arms of the town. In 2015, the Surva folk feast (January 13-14) in Pernik region was inscribed in 2015. The core of the celebration is a popular masquerade ritual. The cultural practices associated to the 1st of March were inscribed in 2017. Thus the ancient traditions to celebrate the beginning of spring were sanctioned. The main practice consists of making, offering and wearing a red and white thread, which is then untied when the first blossom tree, swallow or stork is seen. The threads, known as Martenitsa, which is also cherished in other Balkan countries.

Two significant institutions are inscribed in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. The Festival of Folklore in Koprivshitsa, selected in 2016 on the (Inscription: 11.COM 10.c.3) and the Bulgarian Chitalishte (Community Cultural Centre) as a practical experience in safeguarding the vitality of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2017 (Inscription: 12.COM 11.e.2) Bulgarian chitalishte (cultural community centres) are uniformly distributed across the whole territory of Bulgaria. They are established by communities themselves and are open to everyone irrespective gender, political and religious views. The first chitalishta were established in 1856 in connection with the strengthening of educational trends and liberation movements in the country under Ottoman rule and have been recognized as a key organizational unit of Bulgarian society ever since. In accordance with the Chitalishta Act of 1996, chitalishta are non-governmental self-regulatory organizations. By law, they perform cultural and educational activities aimed at safeguarding the customs and traditions of Bulgarian people, ensuring access to information, distributing knowledge and familiarizing the community with the values and achievements of science, arts and culture. Chitalishta are central to the process of transmitting intangible cultural heritage in the country, with elderly members playing a key role in encouraging young people to get involved.

## 4. Shared ICH Elements Across EU Countries

ICH transcends national boundaries, fostering shared cultural identities within the EU. Key examples include:

1. Mediterranean Diet: Recognized as a shared heritage of Greece, Portugal, and Croatia, the diet underscores sustainability and communal traditions.
2. Beekeeping: Traditional apiculture in Poland and Belarus highlights environmental stewardship and rural heritage.
3. Music and Dance: Each country's ICH includes traditional music and dance forms, underscoring the universality of expressive arts. Călușarii Dance from the Olt region of southern Romania, also form part of the cultural heritage of the Vlachs of Bulgaria and Serbia.

## 5. Challenges and Opportunities

Preserving ICH within the EU faces several challenges, including globalization, urbanization, and declining community participation. However, opportunities arise through EU funding programs, cross-border cooperation, and digital technologies for documentation and dissemination.

## Conclusion

The safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) within the European Union reflects a complex interplay between local, national, and supranational frameworks. Each Member State - from Greece to Romania, Croatia, Poland and Portugal contributes uniquely to this collective effort, drawing upon centuries-old traditions while adapting to contemporary realities. The UNESCO 2003 Convention serves as a foundational guide for harmonizing these efforts across diverse cultural landscapes.

The importance of ICH extends beyond its cultural significance. It is a vehicle for fostering social cohesion, sustaining regional identities, and promoting sustainable development. For example, Romania's Călușarii dance and Portugal's Fado music not only preserve artistic expressions but also provide economic opportunities through cultural tourism. Similarly, shared heritage

elements such as the Mediterranean Diet demonstrate the potential for ICH to bridge cultural and geographic divides within the EU.

However, the preservation of ICH is not without challenges. Globalization, urbanization, and demographic shifts threaten the transmission of traditions to future generations. In rural areas, the outmigration of younger populations further exacerbates the decline of traditional practices. Moreover, insufficient funding and lack of public awareness often hinder effective safeguarding measures.

To address these challenges, greater emphasis must be placed on education, community involvement, and cross-border collaboration. Digital platforms offer innovative solutions for documenting and disseminating ICH, ensuring its accessibility to broader audiences. EU programs such as Creative Europe and Horizon Europe can further support these efforts by providing financial resources and fostering cooperation among Member States.

Looking ahead, the role of ICH in fostering European identity and unity cannot be overstated. As the EU navigates an increasingly interconnected world, its cultural diversity remains a source of strength and resilience. By prioritizing the safeguarding of ICH, the EU not only preserves its past but also builds a foundation for a more inclusive and sustainable future. In this context, Romania's weaving traditions, Greece's Rebetiko music, Poland's Szopkarstwo, Portugal's cork production, and Croatia's Ojkanje singing represent more than cultural artifacts - they embody the living spirit of Europe's heritage, connecting communities across generations and borders.

Ultimately, the safeguarding of ICH requires a balanced approach that respects local particularities while fostering a shared sense of responsibility. The experiences of EU Member States illustrate that with coordinated efforts, innovative strategies, and sustained investment, the rich tapestry of Europe's intangible heritage can continue to thrive, inspiring generations to come.

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# Types of ICH - Categorization of intangible heritage

## Chapter 3

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### 1. Definition of intangible cultural heritage (ICH)

In 2003, recognizing the inestimable value of humanity's intangible cultural heritage, but at the same time acknowledging the risks of its deterioration or even loss, UNESCO adopted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* which is a programmatic document aiming to safeguard this type of cultural heritage, to ensure respect for it within social groups and communities, to raise awareness of its importance as well as to provide international cooperation and assistance (UNESCO, 2022).

This Convention defines the concept of *Intangible Cultural Heritage* as follows: "the (c) social practices, rituals and festive events; 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" (UNESCO, 2022, p.5).

The same document set out five dimensions of the *Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ICH):

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

(b) performing arts;

(d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;

(e) traditional craftsmanship" (UNESCO, 2022, p.5-6).

In 2012, the first UNWTO Study on Tourism and Intangible Cultural Heritage added *music* to the dimension "performing art" and *culinary practices* as another distinct dimension of the ICH (UNWTO, 2012).

The UNESCO website (2024) contains a large amount of useful information for understanding the concept of ICH, such as explaining its role and describing its different dimensions. We have selected a few of these below:

"While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life."

"The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State, and is as important for developing States as for developed ones."

On the same webpage, UNESCO also highlights some features of ICH: it refers to traditions but also to contemporary practices; it is inclusive, contributing to "social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity and responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different

communities and to feel part of society at large"; it is representative for the history and culture of communities; and last but not least, it is community-based in the sense that it must be recognized as such by community members.

## **2. Categorizing intangible cultural heritage. Approaches and challenges**

Gireesh and Anand (2022) discuss the challenges of classifying intangible cultural heritage (ICH) according to the UNESCO scheme described above, which divides ICH into five categories: oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices and rituals, knowledge about nature and the universe, and traditional crafts. While this framework is effective at the international level, the authors argue that it fails to fully capture the complex specificity of different cultures, such as India's cultural heritage which is characterized by an exceptional diversity of regional forms of expression, as well as by a rich heritage of traditions passed down intergenerationally.

The same authors argue that the five categories proposed by UNESCO are too general to adequately cover the complexity of Indian culture, which may restrict both documentation and management of cultural heritage. Within 'oral traditions and expressions', they suggest a subdivision by genre (poetry, songs, ballads, legends and myths), as well as classifications based on origin (mythological or anonymous) and mode of transmission (familial or through traditional schools). For 'performing arts' such as traditional dance and music, the authors recommend further classification by specific forms and styles, considering distinct regional variations. The authors give as examples Chhau dance, Kalbelia dance and Ramlila religious drama.

Under 'social practices, rituals and festive events', Gireesh and Anand (2022) propose a classification structure based on typology (religious rituals, family ceremonies, festivals and rites of passage) and cultural significance, thus incorporating practices such as the Kumbh Mela and Durga Puja, which reflect alignment with the agricultural cycle and religious calendar.

'Knowledge about nature and the universe', such as Ayurveda and traditional astronomy, are seen as requiring rigorous documentation, given both their oral transmission and their practical applicability to local communities.

In the area of 'traditional crafts', the same authors suggest a systematic approach involving classifications based on the techniques and materials used, with examples such as metal and textile works, ceramics and wood carving. A notable example is the brass and copper working technique of the Thatheras community in Punjab, already a UNESCO heritage site.

This more comprehensive classification scheme proposed by the two authors could be a tool not only for a more detailed documentation, but also for better preserving regional specificities and for increasing the accessibility of intangible cultural heritage, thus ensuring a more accurate representation and more effective management of the cultural diversity.

Intangible cultural heritage encompasses all intangible manifestations of culture and constitutes a diversity of humanity's living heritage, being at the same time the most important means of promoting cultural diversity. Within it, crafts are a form of active craft culture, reflecting the labor and wisdom accumulated by a nation over a long social evolution. Craft tradition is one of the essential factors that facilitate the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the next (Li et al., 2024).

According to Shi et al. (2024), ICH represents a unique category of cultural heritage that holds important historical, cultural, and artistic value, while serving as a collective human treasure that displays ethnic identity and community belonging. The essential characteristics of intangible cultural heritage enable its adaptation to the digital space, where it becomes accessible through modern formats that reach worldwide audiences, and digitization creates an interactive educational resource for future generations to study cultural heritage.

Fredheim and Khalaf (2016) analyze heritage value categories used in conservation and management while pointing out that these categories are implemented without a complete understanding of the effects of inclusion or exclusion. The authors claim that this results in superficial assessments

of heritage significance because decisions rely on implicit rather than explicit value judgments. Król (2021) stresses that intangible cultural heritage evaluation remains challenging, yet it maintains essential importance for the preservation of tradition and the transmission of history at the global heritage level.

A heritage classification system, called Stephenson's Cultural Values Model, was introduced by Fredheim and Khalaf (2016) with the aim of adapting cultural values to include tangible and intangible elements and to understand the multifaceted nature of cultural heritage.

The classification system consists of three main categories: forms, relationships, and practices, to offer an extensive understanding of cultural heritage beyond conventional classification methods.

'Forms', the first category, reflects on the appearance of heritage along with its architectural elements and historic structures and spatial arrangements. Heritage values the man-made and natural components that generate visual and aesthetic effects in the physical world.

The second category, 'relationships', focuses on the meaningful connections people make with heritage, including identity, collective memories, sense of belonging and spiritual values. Relationships demonstrate how heritage affects communities and individuals through emotional and symbolic bonds, which are meaningful to different social groups.

The third category, 'practices', encompasses the traditions, rituals, and activities related to heritage that help to maintain and deepen its relevance in social life. Human activities, together with natural processes, form part of the practices, which include rituals and the use of historical sites and objects. This category reveals the dynamic quality of heritage through its ongoing transformation due to active utilization. .

In addition to these categories, the authors also introduce the concept of 'dimensions of value' as an additional concept to explain which heritage characteristics become significant. Heritage obtains its value from four essential dimensions: associative value (that connects to people, locations, or events), sensory value (that reflects beauty and aesthetic pleasure),

evidential value (which serves as a source of knowledge and research), and functional value (which demonstrates current usefulness). The authors use their classification framework to develop a versatile system which supports integrated heritage management, while addressing changes in cultural heritage meanings.

The studies conducted by Fredheim and Khalaf (2016) and Król (2021) demonstrates a critical problem within cultural heritage conservation, since current assessment methods remain superficial and limited in scope. In a world where heritage is not just a collection of physical objects, but also a network of relationships and practices that give meaning to collective identities, rigid and simplified assessments cannot capture the real complexity of cultural heritage. The cultural model developed by Fredheim and Khalaf, which unites tangible and intangible heritage elements, provides an essential path for enhancing the authentic management of cultural heritage. The assessment framework should recognize multiple values that communities assign to heritage, so that the conservation and management processes protect its symbolic and social essence.

### **3. Enhancing the variety of forms of ICH using technology**

Contemporary research underlines the importance of integrating technology in the preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage, highlighting how digitization can become an essential tool for the perpetuation of cultural identities in a globalized world. Models of good practice include international projects such as UNESCO platforms dedicated to intangible heritage, where online resources facilitate access to digital documentations, stories, traditions and artifacts, addressing a wide and diverse audience. In addition, local digitization projects, carried out with the involvement of communities, ensure not only the preservation of authenticity, but also the active participation of community members. These models demonstrate how collaboration between researchers, cultural institutions and communities contribute to the protection and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage in the digital environment. The research and application of existing technology in the field of cultural heritage has led to

the definition of the concept of the Heritage Digital Twin (HDT) (Li et al, 2024).

HDT is a collection of digital information corresponding to heritage entities, which includes their own identification data and other relevant digital information. Digital twins are thus a virtual copy of a real object or process that updates in real time. In the case of intangible cultural heritage, digital twins are created to preserve and promote traditions, customs, crafts and other heritage elements that have no permanent physical form.

Modern digital technology, including 3D models, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), is being used to create 'digital twins' of cultural heritage elements. They integrate detailed visual representations, stories and historical information, providing an interactive and educational experience for the public. Such initiatives play a key role in promoting traditional culture in an accessible and attractive format, contributing to sustainable development by adapting traditions to the digital age.

### ***Case study 1: Digitization of a traditional craft***

In the case of the traditional craft "Yangxin Cloth Paste", the entire production process is digitized so that users can learn every step of the work. Li et al. (2024) describe how digital technology is being used to preserve and promote cultural heritage, with a focus on the traditional craft of 'Yangxin Cloth Paste' in Hubei Province, China. The digital platform created for this craft documents all stages of production through digitization, from the choice of materials to sewing techniques, allowing the public to explore and learn the craft in a virtual environment.

The digitization projects apply various modern technologies: photogrammetry for 3D models, physics-based rendering and 5G technology for fast data transmission. The digital platform includes a trading system, where users can buy handmade products, observe the production process and interact with artisans.

According to Li et al. (2024) the digital protection of cultural heritage encompasses two main directions: the restoration of physical artifacts and the digital reconstruction of historic buildings and relics. Virtual restoration involves 3D scanning and digital modeling, as in the case of a digitally restored Buddha statue

replicated by 3D printing. Digital reconstruction of historic sites, such as the city of Zubarah in Qatar, provides a solid basis for heritage protection.

Cui et al. (2021) analyzed the use of digital games as an innovative method to protect and promote Chinese intangible cultural heritage. As cultural preservation efforts have expanded in China beyond the industrial sphere, they have become an integrated social project, bringing together contributions from diverse fields. Digital games are identified as an effective channel to stimulate young people's interest in traditional culture, providing an engaging way to interact with cultural heritage. A ubiquitous element of modern life, digital games go beyond entertainment and influence areas such as politics, economics and education. Given the immense popularity of the mobile gaming market in China, the authors emphasize that these platforms can revitalize young people's interest in Chinese cultural traditions and values.

Cui et al. (2021) highlight examples of successful games that have integrated authentic cultural elements, such as *Xuanyuan Sword and Legend of Sword and Fairy*, which feature historical scenes and classical Chinese texts. These games not only appeal to gamers through their aesthetics, but also provide an educational experience related to Chinese history and literature.

The *Hang-Shi-Ji Restaurant* game, a simulation of a traditional restaurant, exemplifies the application of this method. The game incorporates elements of Hangzhou's culinary culture, and the settings, characters, and dishes rendered are inspired by the Song dynasty period, providing players with an immersive and authentic experience.

Cui et al. (2021) recommend government support for the development of culturally themed games, arguing that such an approach could transform traditional culture into a competitive industry, with benefits for tourism and the local economy. The same authors also suggest that game developers should integrate authentic cultural values, not just aesthetic elements, to create educational and culturally relevant games. This approach can help promote Chinese cultural heritage and build a healthy "game culture".

Thus, we also believe that making games that truly reflect the culture can encourage greater appreciation and respect for cultural heritage, thus contributing to its long-term preservation.

#### **4. Mapping and classifying cultural heritage**

In recent years, some authors have emphasized the importance of systematically studying the intangible cultural heritage of communities and regions through the mapping method. Mapping intangible cultural heritage is part of a broader process of *cultural mapping*, which is defined as follows: "cultural mapping is regarded as a systematic tool to involve communities in the identification and recording of local cultural assets, with the implication that this knowledge will then be used to inform collective strategies, planning processes, or other initiatives" (Duxbury et al., 2015, p.2). Thus, the mapping of this type of heritage has a community involvement component and aims to harness cultural resources for community development. According to Sorea (2009), mapping ICH also means increasing awareness of characteristics of the local culture, which can help to strengthen local identity.

As an example, mapping was used in the project *CarPaTO - Mapping the intangible cultural heritage of Făgăraș Land, Romania* (Sorea & Csesznek, 2020) developed by the Transilvania University of Brasov in 2018-19.

##### Case study 2: Mapping ICH in Făgăraș Land, Romania

*„During the first stage, the project focused on interviewing the specialists in cultural heritage from the Museum of Ethnography of Brasov, the `Valer Literat` Museum of Făgăraș Land, The Brasov County Center for the Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Culture, the Negru Vodă Foundation of Făgăraș, and the ASTRA Museum of Transylvanian Civilization of Sibiu. Furthermore, representatives of the city halls and of the tourist information centers in the area were also interviewed. Thus, the people who were well-informed on the project topic and on the heritage resources considered important locally were identified. The next project stage was field research and consisted of conducting semi-structured interviews with well-informed respondents, taking photos,*

*making video and audio recordings, collecting old photos and other social documents (village monographs, old collections of Christmas carols and/or songs, notes of local leaders etc.) Based on the information acquired through the field research, mapping charts were elaborated for each of the districts in the Făgăraș Land that belonged to Brasov County. The charts were organized by the UNESCO dimensions of intangible cultural heritage and include the results of the research in the field (as transcripts or summaries of the interviews with well-informed respondents), as well as information from the initial documentation interviews and from the studies published in etno.brasov.ro, the magazine of the Museum of Ethnography of Brasov. The charts were organized in an accessible database to enable the preparation of future activities focused on community interests. There was also a book design for a volume on Dishes from Făgăraș Land, as well as a short video presenting the results of the field research. Several thematic cultural routes capitalizing on identity differences at the level of the local heritage were also established. During the dissemination of results stage three events were organized: a photo exhibition focused on highlighting the results of the field research, a culinary exhibition displaying dishes characteristic of Făgăraș Land along with their recipes, and a concert where the music pieces collected in the area were performed” (Sorea & Csesznek, 2020, pp. 156-157).*

Fan et al. (2023) have developed a novel system that combines both image and text analysis for classifying intangible cultural heritage elements. The method combines visual details and textual meanings through multimodal attention and hierarchical fusion to achieve a more complete understanding of each cultural item.

First, the model uses multimodal attention to identify vital visual elements within images and descriptive keywords from the text, while ignoring superfluous data. The model examines both the visual aspects and textual meanings of traditional figurines through its analysis of their appearance and the symbolic representations mentioned in the description.

The hierarchical fusion method develops a unified representation that combines visual elements with textual details to achieve both contextual understanding and accurate classification. Hierarchical fusion enables the model to connect elements such as a child holding a fish with text

describing the fish as a symbol of good luck, all within a single unified framework.

The proposed method demonstrates both robustness and adaptability, as it can handle missing information from either the image or the text by using the available data to produce reliable classification results. The authors state that this method remains adaptable even when some information becomes unavailable. The method operates successfully when users present either pictures or written information exclusively. The model uses the available information to produce a classification even when [only one type of data is provided. When a traditional mask image exists without textual description, the method depends on visual mask features for correct classification.

The paper by Fan et al. (2023) demonstrates an original, promising method for ICH item classification by performing simultaneous visual and textual analysis. Modern digital environments require accessible solutions for cultural heritage preservation and promotion, which this method enables through its ability to extract visual elements and cultural meaning from text for public documentation and dissemination. The combination of visual and textual data provides enhanced contextual understanding of cultural elements, serving as a fundamental advancement for heritage preservation and promotion efforts. Their method uses multimodal attention and hierarchical fusion to create complete representations of cultural objects

Thus, the model developed by Fan et al. (2023) demonstrates potential applicability across different cultural contexts through its ability to extract cultural meanings even when image or text data is missing. This method will serve as a valuable resource for both conservation work and public education, helping people better understand the cultural importance of each object.

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# Explaining tourism heritage value and impact on culture, economy, and society

## Chapter 4

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### 1. Introduction

When we talk about heritage, we must distinguish between different forms of heritage from previous generations. Heritage encompasses the legacy we inherit from previous generations, but also it includes the remnants of ancient civilizations that often left no written records to tell their stories. This inheritance, or heritage can be broadly categorized into material and immaterial heritage or intangible. There are also differences in types of material heritage between immovable and movable heritage, each offering unique insights into human history and culture.

### 2. Material and Intangible Heritage

Material heritage includes architectural structures such as houses, fortifications, temples, city walls, and entire historical complexes or urban areas that endure long after their creators have vanished. Examples abound: the ancient fortifications of Carcassonne in France or Mediterranean old city of Dubrovnik in Croatia, the sprawling temple complexes of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, or the Great Wall of China. These landmarks serve not only as a testament to the ingenuity and artistry of their builders but also as vibrant reminders of the cultural and historical narratives they embody. Over time, these buildings, whether churches,

temples, or fortresses, may undergo changes in appearance or function. Such transformations create historical layers that archaeologists, art historians, anthropologists, and other researchers meticulously uncover to better understand past societies and cultures.

Intangible heritage, by contrast, comprises customs, traditions, beliefs, and rituals - the living expressions of culture passed through generations. It is a realm for ethnologists, ethnographers, sociologists and other scientists that are dealing with symbolic aspects of heritage like the language, tradition and other aspects of culture. Additionally, a distinction exists between immovable heritage, like buildings, and movable heritage, which includes artifacts integral to cultural practices. These may range from monuments or their components to everyday items such as tools, hunting weapons, jewelry, and decorative objects. These various forms of heritage are interconnected, reflecting the lives and practices of specific communities. While rooted in the past, they often persist and evolve, influencing modern cultures and fostering a blending of traditions as ideas, objects, and customs spread through travel and exchange.

### **3. Global Heritage as Shared Responsibility**

From a broader perspective, humanity shares a collective cultural and historical heritage, a global inheritance that highlights the need to protect it from destruction. Understanding this shared responsibility is key to building connections among cultures that may seem different but are often linked by common historical threads or elements. Unfortunately, heritage often lacks proper protection, even from those directly connected to its legacy. For example, the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria suffered extensive destruction during recent conflicts. Venice, despite its UNESCO status, faces ongoing threats from rising sea levels and unsustainable tourism. These cases show the serious consequences of neglect and the urgent need for strong preservation efforts. External threats like war, natural disasters, and environmental decline increase the risks. UNESCO's 1972 Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage emphasizes the dual nature of heritage, which includes both cultural and natural elements.

This view underscores the need to protect cultural and historical landscapes alongside natural ones, recognizing the complex relationships between these parts.

#### **4. Challenges in Heritage Preservation**

Challenges in heritage preservation are complex. Borders, whether state or regional, can make conservation efforts difficult. Human negligence, overdevelopment, pollution, and global climate change also contribute to these challenges. These factors threaten UNESCO's main idea that heritage is a universal resource that needs to be preserved for future generations. UNESCO's World Heritage List highlights and protects sites of important global value, but even these listed sites experience increasing pressures.

#### **5. Tourism and Heritage Sites**

One significant threat is mass tourism. The European Union, for example, has a high concentration of cultural heritage sites. Many of these are UNESCO-listed and attract large numbers of tourists. Modern travel makes it easy for people to explore the world, turning once-remote places into popular destinations. While this encourages cultural appreciation and understanding, it also brings serious challenges. Frequent and heavy tourism adds to pollution and can overwhelm historical sites. For instance, the historic center of Venice struggles with over 20 million visitors each year. This leads to overcrowding, environmental damage, and risks to the buildings. Similarly, Machu Picchu in Peru suffers from significant erosion and damage because of the many tourists. In response, authorities have had to set strict visitor limits and timed entry slots. These examples show the delicate balance needed to keep heritage sites appealing while protecting their future. For example, the walls of a historic Mediterranean city can become flooded with tourists, disrupting local life and speeding up wear on the site. The surge of visitors creates a harmful cycle: the site's popularity brings in money but also endangers its existence. Local residents

often feel pushed out as their daily lives are interrupted by the constant flow of tourists.

## 6. Managing Tourism Pressure

Efforts to balance heritage preservation with the demands of tourism are ongoing. Scientists, civic organizations, policymakers, and activists are working to develop strategies that protect heritage while addressing economic and social pressures. Plans, protocols, studies, and laws aim to safeguard natural and cultural values, yet practical implementation often falls short, leading to the degradation of protected environments.

Very important aspect is linking the scientific community with local communities and tailoring the heritage management according to their site-specific needs. Because UNESCO's role in heritage protection is significant but largely symbolic, effective preservation requires balancing competing interests in everyday life. Collaboration among stakeholders - experts, policymakers, businesses, tourists, and local communities - is essential. Open dialogue, education, and public engagement about the value of heritage and strategies for its preservation are crucial. Equitable representation of all interests ensures that heritage, as a public and global good, is adequately protected.

At the heart of this effort is a shared commitment to preserving heritage for future generations. This entails fostering a sense of responsibility, prioritizing the public good over personal gain, and adopting sustainable practices. As tourists, individuals must educate themselves about the cultures they visit, minimize their ecological and cultural footprint, and respect local traditions and environments. Tourism, when approached responsibly, offers the opportunity to experience diverse cultures and landscapes without compromising their integrity for others.

## 7. Heritage and Identity

Heritage has the power to unite humanity. Europe, for example, exemplifies a tapestry of cultural influences that, despite their diversity, form a shared

identity. This interwoven heritage reflects common mythologies, languages, and traditions that highlight cultural connections across time and space. Appreciating this diversity enhances the value of each unique component while celebrating the collective identity.

On a global scale, heritage illustrates humanity's interconnectedness. From a distant vantage point, such as viewing Earth from space, individual differences fade, revealing a unified whole. Each cultural or natural heritage element contributes to this collective richness. By preserving a single piece of heritage, we uphold the legacy of humankind. Sharing experiences, fostering dialogue, and promoting education about heritage lay the groundwork for collaboration in its preservation.

## **8. Urban Heritage and Depopulation**

Urban heritage faces distinct challenges, particularly in historical city centers. The high cost and complexity of maintaining older buildings, compounded by strict regulations, often drive residents away. For instance in old cities of Venice in Italy or Barcelona in Spain there was, and still is a significant depopulation process going on, which not only empties the buildings of its residents but changes the whole atmosphere of the city, its culture and traditions.

Tourism further exacerbates these pressures, with the rapid pace of modern travel transforming historical areas into transient attractions. While mass tourism poses challenges, it also holds potential for heritage protection if managed thoughtfully. Achieving this balance requires strategic planning, community involvement, and equitable decision-making among stakeholders.

This is the most important and very complicated task. Because residents, political, economic stakeholders hand in hand with experts and scientist, all of them (and us) should work together in finding a solutions, often dynamic ones that can change in accordance to both the internal and the external factors, in everchanging world of today, that impact local community and its

heritage - which is also in many cases like UNESCO sites recognized as world heritage.

In conclusion, safeguarding heritage demands a collective effort to honor the past while ensuring its survival for future generations. By recognizing heritage as a shared global responsibility, we can preserve the natural and cultural treasures entrusted to us and pass them on as a testament to human history and resilience.

## **9. Case Study: Heritage for Whom and for What?**

### **9.1 Introduction and Research Question**

One of the many questions I wish to pose in this text, primarily to myself, is whether heritage is just a product intended for either domestic or foreign visitors, whether they be tourists, curious individuals, hikers, excursionists, or any other "consumers" of culture and heritage. Of course, these audiences may also desire educational content and have a need to learn about something unfamiliar and different to them. The text you are reading stems from nearly 25 years of practical fieldwork and numerous projects in and for heritage. From the outset of these activities, the focus has been on continuous, systematic scientific research in a specific area. Most of these areas suffered greatly during the Homeland War in Croatia and began the painstaking process of rising from the ashes amid privatization, the disappearance of once successful enterprises before the war, gradual depopulation, and later a sort of exodus of young and educated residents through regional projects targeting these areas.

The fact I encountered right from the start of planning and implementing projects was the systematic and deliberate neglect, over decades, of the importance and potential of the cultural, scientific, and educational aspects of historical heritage in certain areas of Croatia, between 1945 and 1990. Awareness of the regional, national, and sometimes global significance of the totality of this heritage could have been very dangerous for the structures of that time. The result of this was that many residents knew almost nothing about the historical heritage of the region where they were

born, raised, educated, and possibly lived and worked. The war devastation during the Homeland War could only exacerbate this situation. After the war, efforts were needed to restore the devastated areas, not just materially but also culturally and socially. Systematic long-term work on the research and protection of cultural heritage was urgently needed, but also on sensitizing and educating local communities, to whom all this work was ultimately intended. All of this would, in the end, benefit the national interest and contribute to the integration of heritage into national development processes.

## 9.2 Project Genesis and Evolution

The systematic projects that form the basis of this text stemmed from my doctoral dissertation research, as well as my experiences during a multi-year scholarship and studies at a prestigious European university. After that, primarily thanks to the project activities of the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports of the Republic of Croatia, the project evolved from an initial project during my doctoral work to several multi-year scientific projects that brought together like-minded individuals from local museums, conservation departments of the Ministry of Culture, speleological clubs, and so on. The project activities were focused on areas deemed to be scientifically the most interesting, and often the most endangered by war destruction, neglect, or certain infrastructural development initiatives (such as the construction of telecommunications infrastructure at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century). At the heart of everything was, of course, the historical heritage of the mentioned areas. As a historian and archaeologist, the main research question and one of the most important goals of my scientific research was to understand the continuity and discontinuity of human existence in a specific space. However, right from the beginning, the question of my personal role and responsibility as a researcher and teacher at the University arose. First and foremost, I refer to the responsibility for the systematic protection of the sites I was investigating. Therefore, from the outset, I worked closely with the relevant conservation departments of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia. These departments granted me permits for the mentioned

research, and I was obligated to submit complete reports on the research findings within a set period. These reports were systematically and regularly published in the Ministry of Culture's publications as part of their routine activities.

### **9.3 Institutional Cooperation and Field Constraints**

However, just as I encountered problems with scientific infrastructure and limited financial resources, so did the field conservators who had to cover vast areas with many sites and objects. Additionally, given the large number of infrastructural, entrepreneurial, and other initiatives, which were often in opposition to the needs of heritage protection, their social and economic position in relation to the other factors in this complex process was neither easy nor simple. Nonetheless, as I worked in the area I focused on, both conservationists and scientific researchers shared a clear awareness that we were, in fact, in the same field, working towards the same goal, albeit from different aspects of the overall endeavor. This allowed for excellent cooperation in most cases, even though there were differing opinions on certain stages of individual projects, but always with mutual respect for differing views.

From the very beginning, I asked myself: for whom are we doing all this, and why? And here, the responsibility and role of the researcher in the community in which they work is paramount. According to current laws in Croatia, excavated and processed movable heritage belongs to the nearest museum institutions. However, the problem was that local museum institutions, if they existed at all, were neither independent (usually part of, for example, a Public Open University or another institution) nor staffed with the necessary experts and curators, and most importantly, were not financially supported. Despite these practical problems, we insisted that all researched heritage belong to the local communities where it was discovered. In the process, no one had an interest in transporting valuable finds to central institutions in the capital or larger regional museums, in a colonial-like manner. On the one hand, because there were no adequate space and infrastructure conditions to store these items even there, and on

the other, because there was a genuine need and interest for decentralization and strengthening all parts of the country.

## 9.4 Implementation Pitfalls

At the beginning, local tourist boards recognized the economic and developmental potential of historical heritage. However, it was very difficult to convince tourism professionals that decades of systematic research were necessary at a given site, especially considering the available financial resources for such research, in order to include the site in developmental projects with a clear vision for its financial viability and sustainability. Despite this, we consistently worked on conceptualizing and developing the idea of an archaeological park, an interpretation and presentation center, and strengthening museum infrastructure.

At one point, we were close to realizing the idea of an interpretation center and the beginning of an archaeological park. The Ministry of Culture recommended our project for a large European cross-border cooperation project aimed at forming two archaeological parks and one interpretation center. The idea was not realized because, at that time, we couldn't find a reliable partner within the local government. Everything fell apart due to the political and financial management aspects of the project at the moment the funds were approved. The local community and its partners were not capable of managing the project in a way that would not only complete it but also ensure its sustainability in all aspects. Therefore, it was wiser to withdraw than to embark on a very risky endeavor.

This was the time when Europe saw successful projects for heritage interpretation centers. In Croatia, the opening of such centers also began. I contributed my research to the realization of a project aimed at presenting the natural and cultural heritage of a national park. This involved creating a detailed plan for the display of the interpretation and presentation center. The work was divided according to different professions and specializations. Eventually, the group I led completed the exhibition plan, which was accepted and defined by a contract. However, the company responsible for the implementation of the project did not heed any of our suggestions, and

the exhibition was created according to their concept, which was completely contrary to the basic ideas we had outlined in the plan. The historical heritage was literally placed in the attic (the most convenient place to store "old stuff" and let it gather dust, out of sight) and presented in the most outdated and conservative manner possible. This was contrary to our original idea for the exhibition and disregarded the expertise and results of long-term research. This reflected a fundamental problem: the lack of communication between disciplines. The architects designing the exhibition should have incorporated the findings of historians, archaeologists, ethnologists, and anthropologists working in the targeted area into their vision for the exhibit. Their job should have been to integrate those findings into their vision, and all of this should have been the result of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work.

Setting aside this specific experience, although it is not an isolated case and may be useful to anyone embarking on similar projects, we can generally ask the question: what is the sustainability of such interpretation centers? Some of these centers will surely survive due to solid foundations and serious institutions supporting them, but many will unfortunately not, due to low attendance, high maintenance costs, or simply because visitors become saturated with similar content. This does not mean we should abandon such projects; we just need to carefully consider their financial sustainability and plan for the long-term operation of such a center.

## **9.5 Beyond Commodification: Authenticity vs. Invented Traditions**

At this point, I would pose the question: is heritage truly a tourist product and something that should have exclusively commercial value to survive? Heritage, when incorporated into the development projects of local communities, can indeed serve as a healthy foundation for their identity, self-awareness, self-respect, and recognizability. Recognizability in the richness of diversity, as opposed to global, multinational commercial uniformity. Unfortunately, in recent times, we have been bombarded with the falsification of historical heritage in the form of completely invented

"historical" festivals and events, of which there are more and more in our tourism offerings. In truth, real situations and phenomena, no matter how difficult their reconstruction may be, are often far more fascinating and interesting.

Educational content should be prepared according to pedagogical standards and the needs of different age groups, levels of interest, and the general education of each potential user. Therefore, an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary approach and teamwork are necessary in such projects. A scientist or researcher may not be familiar with the pedagogical aspects of the educational process, but their data, which is well-researched and published, is essential for educators to integrate into their work. Communication is crucial here. The process continues with the inclusion of an expert in heritage interpretation, who will adjust the "storytelling" about heritage to the age, education, and interests of the end user. We leave the intertwining of visual, textual, and multimedia presentations to those who are experts in that area. We could go on indefinitely, but reality will stop us - along with a whole range of limitations that will make our work more difficult. Nonetheless, it is difficult, if not impossible, to have all these aspects in a single person. Therefore, achieving all these goals requires the art of finding the optimal balance between actual possibilities, foundational ideas, and desired outcomes.

## **9.6 Community Partnership and Capacity Building**

Finally, let's return to the beginning. Without the initiative of the researcher on one side and the local community on the other, nothing of what was described above would be achievable. The vertical and horizontal connections between research infrastructure, the academic community, institutions in culture, and, above all, sincere heritage enthusiasts, whether within or outside the local communities, are essential elements of this complex process. A positive experience came from the local initiative that supported me after I began researching a large and demanding site, without any support from the infrastructure of either my home institution or regional and local resources. In fact, just a few years after starting

systematic research, a local association was established to promote the values of historical heritage in the region, with the main task of supporting scientists who were actively working on it. Soon, we jointly launched a scientific journal, the first and only one in the region, organized scientific conferences, and initiated a number of other activities. For example, in cooperation with the local kindergarten, we worked on educating and informing children about the research activities and heritage that they will inherit from us. We also worked with primary and secondary school students in the area. We are now preparing, in collaboration with the local government and the village mayor, a lecture for residents of nearby villages about the systematic research we conducted in the past and ongoing this year. In the beginning, it was not easy for the members of this association to justify the time invested in these activities, either to their families or to anyone within the local community. It was often viewed with suspicion, caution, and very often misunderstanding.

## **9.7 Current Development: Toward an Interpretive-Educational Hub**

Today, a large interpretative and educational center project is in preparation, intended for the local community, all possible external visitors, and the academic community. Infrastructure conditions are being designed for continued research, laboratories for processing findings, lecture halls, and accommodation capacities for fieldwork and practical training for students of our institution and other academic institutions. Additionally, there will be a heritage interpretation center, which will also serve as a place for information about the current state of research. Field preparations are underway for access to the sites and the development of educational walking tours. Of course, none of this would be complete without a community hall and a gathering place for local residents. From the very beginning, twenty years ago, we made sure that the financial resources we obtained from various sources remained with the local community as much as possible. Whether it involved occasional employment of collaborators, accommodation and meals, vehicle fleet maintenance, or other potential

needs, all efforts were directed at ensuring that heritage was adequately researched, protected, and evaluated. Its integration into development projects then becomes possible and desirable. Interpretation centers open up opportunities for local employment as guards, service workers, guides, and so on. Existing accommodation capacities will be filled by visitors who will stay in the community for more than a day, as is often the case today. There will also be opportunities for placing local agricultural products, handmade goods, and more. Creative entrepreneurs will find opportunities to design bicycle, hiking, or horseback tours, exploring the interesting sites scattered across the area. All of this would strengthen the community, its economic and intellectual potentials, and perhaps even stop the emigration of young and educated residents. I see a niche here for employing our graduates in history, archaeology, art history, ethnology, and cultural anthropology, as well as classical and modern languages. They could find work, with some additional training, as heritage interpreters, mediators of narratives from research, using the skills acquired during their studies.

The above-mentioned European project for the interpretation and presentation of historical heritage clearly demonstrates the disproportion in funding between research and interpretation. With very few exceptions, research is funded by national budgets. The European Union funds and supports interpretation and presentation with the explicit note that the funds are not intended for research. In this case, it was four or five million euros for presentation and interpretation. For the research of part of a site, which would also serve its presentation to visitors, less than forty thousand euros were allocated. This disparity not only highlights the limitations of national economic potential but also reflects an attitude toward heritage. What will we interpret and present if we haven't researched it?

## **9.8 Conclusion: For Whom and For What?**

At the beginning and at the end, the question remains: for whom and for what are we doing all this? The answer is solely and exclusively for the community and within the community. For every member of that community, without exception. Nothing more or less than that. Without any

illusions, it is a laborious and thorny path, full of sacrifices, obstacles, and difficulties. Often, without the understanding of those whose understanding we need the most. Only through persistent work and constant presence on the ground, communication, sometimes even unsuccessful, can we lay the foundations for the development of heritage. In the end, the community itself should recognize its importance and become its authentic interpreter.

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# Managing ICH Conservation and Preservation

## Chapter 5

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### 1. Introduction

**Intangible cultural heritage** is defined in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003) as

“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.”

Intangible cultural heritage defined in this way is manifested in the following domains: “(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; (e) traditional craftsmanship.”. The term **living heritage** is also used for intangible cultural heritage. Other terms that are in use for certain practices, skills and knowledge are: traditional heritage, tradition, folklore, spiritual culture, social culture, etc. The term **intangible**

**cultural property** is used for intangible cultural heritage that is registered in the official Register of Cultural Property.

Safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, i.e. intangible cultural goods, are regulated by **international and national documents and legislation**. The most important document at the international level is the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). By ratifying this convention, national states have undertaken the obligation to build their own system for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. As a result, the systems (national laws, regulations, the body implementing the convention, procedures, etc.) differ between individual nation states. In some countries, in addition to the national law on the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, there are also other legal regulations that (in part) refer to intangible cultural heritage (e.g. regulations on intellectual property, codes of ethics, etc.). Among other documents at the international level, it is necessary to highlight the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society (known as the Faro Convention) (2005) and the ICOMOS International Charter and Guidance on Sites with Intangible Cultural Heritage (2024).

Conservation and Preservation of cultural heritage includes a series of procedures and activities aimed at preserving heritage and passing it on to future generations. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003) defined **safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage** as

“measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage”.

The preservation of intangible cultural heritage is a "shared responsibility" (Faro Convention 2005) of all stakeholders in the system of protection and preservation of cultural heritage, including state, regional and local authorities, cultural institutions (museums, archives, libraries, etc.),

educational institutions (schools, faculties), local communities, groups, families, individuals. Communities, groups and individuals have a special role in safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage. These are people “who participate directly or indirectly in the practice and/or transmission of an intangible cultural heritage element (or a set of elements) and/or who consider it to be part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO 2016:6). Practitioners, guardians or tradition bearers are considered to be those “who have special knowledge of a specific element, or a special role in the transmission or enactment of intangible cultural heritage” (ibid.).

This text briefly defines and gives examples of basic measures for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

## 2. Identifying and inventorying intangible cultural heritage

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003) recommends identifying and inventorying intangible cultural heritage. **Identification** involves the process of describing and naming one or more specific elements of intangible cultural heritage in their context and distinguishing them from other elements. The process of identifying intangible cultural heritage leads to **inventorying** - the entry of a specific element of intangible cultural heritage into the inventory (list) of intangible cultural heritage. Inventories of intangible cultural heritage may exist for the national level, regional, local, or for individual communities and groups. They are often the first step in formulating concrete plans for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, s.a.1).

In different national states, different approaches are applied in **creating an inventory (list) of intangible cultural heritage**. At the same time, it is both a top-down and bottom-up process in which various stakeholders (individuals, local communities, associations, researchers, authorities, etc.) can participate (UNESCO, s.a.1). The creation of an inventory of intangible cultural heritage should be a continuous process and it should involve the members of the concerned community (UNESCO 2003). The process of identifying and inventorying intangible cultural heritage is based on research and creation of documentation.

The **research** aims “to better understand an element (or groups of elements) of intangible cultural heritage through an exploration of forms, social, cultural and economic functions, its practices, modes of transmission and artistic and aesthetic features, its history and the dynamics of its creation and re-creation” (UNESCO 2016: 9). Research should aim to continue the practice and transmission of intangible cultural heritage and should be prepared together with the community (ibid.). Depending on the element or phenomenon of intangible cultural heritage, research may involve the application of specific research methods and the involvement of researchers from different disciplines (ethnology and anthropology, folklore studies, ethnochoreology, ethnomusicology, language and literature, religious studies, art history, etc.). There are different traditions of research and documentation of intangible cultural heritage in different national states. In European countries, the bearers of such activities are often institutions founded in the 19th and 20th centuries, such as academies of science and art, faculties, institutes, museums, etc. In modern times, centers for intangible heritage and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) often carry out research and documentation activities.

**Documentation** is created by “recording the intangible cultural heritage in its current state and variety, through transcription and/ or audiovisual means, and collecting documents that relate to it” (UNESCO 2016: 9). Documentation can include various recording media and formats (written text, audio recording, video recording, etc.). In some communities there are specific ways of documenting intangible cultural heritage (e.g. sacred texts, pattern or template books, etc.) (ibid.). Created and collected documents are often kept in archives, museums, libraries or can be accessed in online databases. Sometimes the availability and dissemination of documentation can be a measure for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. Existing records can stimulate creativity and be an incentive for the transmission and preservation of intangible cultural heritage. In modern times numerous institutions have worked on the digitization of documentation on intangible cultural heritage and have created digital repositories with the aim of making the documentation available to users (Lončar 2018).

### 3. Transmission and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage

In order to preserve intangible cultural heritage in a community, there must be the continued **practice and transmission** of a viable element. Transmission of intangible cultural heritage occurs “when practitioners and other tradition bearers within a community pass on intangible cultural heritage - related practices, skills, knowledge and ideas to other with a view to their future enactment. Traditional forms of transmission may be more or less formal” (UNESCO 2016:30). Therefore, it is important to create favorable circumstances for repetition, i.e. continuous performance within the family and/or community, i.e. through education. If such a transmission does not exist, deliberate actions must be planned and implemented to reinforce the viability of an intangible cultural heritage element.

**Revitalization** of intangible cultural heritage implies “the strengthening of intangible cultural heritage practices and expressions that are seriously threatened” and is considered an appropriate measure when the intangible cultural heritage “demonstrates at least some degree of vitality within the community or group concerned and has not ceased to be living intangible cultural heritage” (UNESCO 2016: 25-26).

Revitalizing the practice and transmission of intangible cultural heritage can include various activities such as raising awareness within the community, encouraging the establishment of an organization that will promote safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, analyzing risks to safeguarding, encouraging experienced practitioners to transmit knowledge, skills and values, providing education and training, creating an appropriate environment of material conditions for continued practice and transmission, etc. (ibid.: 6).

## 4. Registration

The procedure for registering intangible cultural heritage involves a legal process during which elements of intangible cultural heritage are evaluated, isolated and registered into the national register of intangible cultural goods. This procedure differs between nation states and depends on national legislation. The UNESCO brochure mentions Bulgarian, Brazilian and Venezuelan experiences (UNESCO, s.a.1: 12-14). Here, the focus will be on the Croatian experience.

**The register of cultural goods** is a comprehensive list of all cultural goods under national protection. The Register of Cultural Goods of the Republic of Croatia (*Registar kulturnih dobara Republike Hrvatske*) was established in 1999. The Croatian Ministry of Culture and Media is responsible for the administration of this public register, which has been created according to the *Act on the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Goods* of 1999. In 2004 first five intangible cultural good entries were inscribed to the national register (Hrovatin 2012: 126). Croatia is one of the leaders in Europe in terms of the number of registered and protected cultural properties of intangible heritage: 211 elements on the national Register of Cultural Properties; 18 entries on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, 1 entry on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, 2 entries in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (*Registar kulturnih dobara Republike Hrvatske*, UNESCO – Intangible Cultural Heritage, Croatia). It is the result of many years of intensive work of the Department for Intangible Cultural Properties that was established in the Ministry of Culture which periodically convened a special committee. Experts from the Ministry of Culture, the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, the Institute of Croatian Language and Linguistics, the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb and a number of experts from a number of museums and conservation departments of the Ministry of Culture participated in compiling the list for entry into the national register (Hrovatin 2012: 126).

**The aim of the categorization and registration** is to record 1) those intangible cultural properties that still have the possibility of being passed on to younger generations, 2) intangible cultural properties of special importance for the Republic of Croatia, as well as 3) intangible cultural properties that are less recognizable or of lower quality, but, for a certain reason, very important to the local community (Hrovatin 2012: 127). The first doubts when compiling the list for the register were related to the categorization of intangible cultural heritage: whether it should be registered as 1) a traditional skill, craftsmanship, knowledge, custom, social practice or dance, as 2) an individual cultural property related to a specific family or area, or 3) according to the usage of a specific technique of making the traditional object. The registration practice clarified several possibilities, so that register includes traditions that are practiced by one or several people or families, as well as traditions that are practiced only in some areas, but also those that are present in several regions. There are also examples of registering traditions that have been reconstructed or revitalized, and even newer ones created on the basis of a combination of multiple knowledge and skills, because the local community identifies with them (ibid.).

Categorization rarely changes the attitude of the bearers towards heritage, but mainly encourages them to further preserve it and makes them aware of the importance of professional evaluation of their heritage. The decision to register a specific intangible asset is always unique and in some cases predefined categories and rules cannot be followed, as well as a unique form of describing the cultural good.

**The application form** for proposing the establishment of the protection of an intangible cultural good drafted in the Ministry of culture consisted of the following categories: name of the good, information about the proposer, identification data about the cultural good: 1) historical data (first mention, documentation, historical sources and historical overview), 2) description of the cultural good (method of performance, implementation, production, maintenance, rules, etc.), 3) bearers of tradition/knowledge/skills and the significance that the good has for the community, the current state (description, changes in relation to historical

patterns, etc. ), proposal for property protection measures (needs, preservation methods, plans, etc.), notes and attachments (Hrovatin 2012: 129). All proposals are discussed in the Ministry and conservation departments, and with the help of experts decided under which name, category and for which geographical area the cultural good is to be protected.

**Safeguarding measures** are drawn up on the basis of the particularity of the heritage itself and UNESCO recommendations. Depending on the type of property they can include: making and keeping records about them, encouraging the transmission and care in the original and other environments, including the property in planning programs, ensuring sustainability through education, identification, promotion, increase in value, transmission through formal and non-formal education, revitalization of the property, professional and scientific evaluation, further research and raising of public awareness (Hrovatin 2012, p. 132). There is also a ICH UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices).

The registration of intangible cultural goods in the national inventory was one of the prerequisites for **registration on two UNESCO lists**: Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. In addition to a specific form, it was necessary to prepare ten photos, statements or recordings of the bearers that expressly state their agreement with the nomination of the cultural good for the UNESCO lists, as well as short film, bibliography, and, if necessary, discography on that cultural good (Hrovatin 2012: 130).

Although in some cases the decision to register a property may depend on the somewhat subjective attitude of certain UNESCO experts, as well as on the formulation of explanations in nominations and additional political and professional lobbying, the criterion that has so far proven to be the most important is the vitality of certain practices and the meaning that the community attaches to them (Hrovatin 2012: 130-131). **The disappearance of heritage** occurs due to the negative effects of globalization, emigration

of the population from rural areas, migration due to wars, lack of motivation of new generations to learn traditional skills, etc.

**The effects of inventorying** are the intensification of existing and the initiation of new projects of safeguarding intangible heritage . Not only did special attention begin to be paid to registered goods, but also the rest of the traditional heritage is being revitalized and preserved, even those that do not have the prospect of being registered for the time being (Hrovatin, 2012: 132).

**The most common negative impacts** of listing relate to some aspects of tourism (mass tourism, excessive exploitation of heritage, idealization of heritage for tourist purposes, etc.), emigration from rural areas, decreasing number of people who take over traditional knowledge and skills (Hrovatin 2012: 132).

## 5. Awareness-raising about intangible cultural heritage

**Raising awareness about intangible cultural heritage** implies informing about the diversity and spread of intangible cultural heritage, about the threats and risks of its sustainability, the need for its safeguarding and the actions proposed for safeguarding, or the Convention in general (UNESCO, s.a.). Various levels and stakeholders can participate in raising awareness about intangible cultural heritage, e.g. international bodies (UNESCO), state bodies, the media, cultural institutions, educational institutions, centres for intangible heritage, NGOs and other organisations, educators and the private sector. Raising awareness about intangible cultural heritage can be directed towards the general public or towards target groups (e.g. young people). Promotion and enhancement - as awareness-raising tools - aim “to increase the value attached to heritage both within and outside the communities concerned” (UNESCO 2106). In the popularization of intangible cultural heritage, especially among the general public, the media, television, radio, and the Internet play a major role. Cultural institutions participate in popularizing intangible cultural heritage by organizing public lectures, exhibitions and creating promotional materials, and tourist boards and local

governments by organizing public events, manifestations and festivals. Interpretation centres and visitor centres may be dedicated to a specific element or phenomenon of intangible cultural heritage and may have an important role in raising understanding of intangible cultural heritage through various forms of communication. They are usually focused on activities such as permanent and temporary museum exhibitions, public lectures, workshops with specific groups of visitors, etc. (Lončar 2018).

## 6. Education

Education plays a key role in the transmission of intangible cultural heritage. The transmission of knowledge, skills, and practices can take place within the community and family, "from parent to child, from master to disciple as part of an initiation rite, or from teacher to pupil in a more or less formal educational setting" (UNESCO 2016:10). When traditional ways of transmitting knowledge, skills and practices within the family and community become ineffective, it is necessary to plan other ways of transmission, often through organized education. The Convention calls on States Parties "to ensure recognition of, respect for, and enhancement of intangible cultural heritage through education programmes" (ibid.). Educational institutions are thus seen as new spaces that can ensure the transmission of intangible cultural heritage to new generations (UNESCO s.a. 2).

**Formal education** is education that is carried out "in various accredited institutions according to approved programs, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences for personal, social and professional needs, through which recognized diplomas and qualifications are acquired" (s.n. s.a.). Formal education is most often implemented as "structural, chronologically determined regular education for younger people (usually between 5 and 25 years of age) in primary and secondary schools, at universities and in specialized programmes of regular vocational and higher education. In addition to this education, it also includes formal adult education." (ibid.). Formal education requires time and trained staff (teachers). Information about intangible cultural heritage can be included in

individual subjects at all levels of education, through textbooks, working materials, and extracurricular activities (workshops, excursions, museum visits etc.). Vocational education and careers related to intangible cultural heritage are recognized as having a significant role in preserving certain knowledge, skills and practices (Kelemen and Lončar 2019). At the university level, courses dedicated to intangible cultural heritage, especially in the fields of ethnology and cultural anthropology, musicology, language and literature, etc., can contribute to the research of intangible cultural heritage and critical reflection on its safeguarding. University networks that have been established in recent years help to connect curricula and teachers who include information about intangible cultural heritage in their teaching.

**Non-formal education** refers to "organized learning processes aimed at training adults for work, for various social activities and for personal development." (s.n. s.a.). This form of education does not lead to the acquisition of new qualifications, new diplomas or advancement on the qualification ladder (ibid). However, non-formal education is necessary for the transmission of various skills and knowledge, for example through workshops, (short) courses, community learning, capacity-building activities, seminars, conferences, volunteer programs, school associations and cooperatives, project work, etc.

**Informal learning** takes place outside educational institutions, and implies learning without instruction, i.e. situations in which a person experiences something (when they see something new, hear something, do something) and in this way an unlearned experience is unintentionally created. It is "unintentional learning" (from the perspective of the learner) that "results from daily activities related to work, family or leisure" (s.n. s.a.). For example, knowledge about intangible cultural heritage can be acquired by observing, reading, using the media, visiting trade fairs, etc. The creative process of intergenerational transmission that is at the center of the protection of intangible cultural heritage, and through which intangible cultural heritage is constantly recreated - is considered a form of informal education (UNESCO s.a.2).

Given that intangible cultural heritage can be part of education at different levels and in different forms, and include people of different ages and roles in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (culture bearers, heritage professionals, educators, mentors, students, policymakers, etc.), the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is also part of **lifelong education, i.e. lifelong learning**.

## 7. Financing

The Convention calls on the state parties to "adopt appropriate legal, technical, administrative and financial measures" with the aim of establishing or strengthening institutions in the management of the intangible cultural heritage and the transmission of such heritage, then ensuring access to the intangible cultural heritage and establishing institutions for the intangible cultural heritage and facilitating access to them (UNESCO 2003).

At the **state level** there may exist various programs of the Ministry of Culture (public call for programs in culture, programmes that support cultural and artistic amateurism, new media and publishing houses) various programs of the ministries of tourism, economy and agriculture, as well as other institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce.

At the **regional, city and local level**, there can also exist various programs and projects that can be encouraged and supported by experts from various institutions with their advice. By creating a positive environment and greater interest, and with the support of local and state institutions, conditions are created for the implementation of various projects (Hrovatin 2012: 132).

## 8. Conclusion

The idea behind the creation of the 2003 convention was to preserve traditions for future generations (UNESCO 2003). Documentation alone cannot guarantee knowledge transmission. With traditions, the transmission of knowledge directly from person to person is more

important (Hrovatin 2012: 132). The one who learns acquires knowledge through observation and imitation. Ethnologists and other experts can take part in the design of projects in which traditional knowledge could be applied in modern life, help in the preparation of programs for applications to local and state tenders and grants, the establishment of international cooperation, and the like.

In order to obtain long-term and better results, it is important to include a larger number of people and groups in a certain community and to take into account other heritage items (immovable heritage, movable and natural heritage) (ICOMOS 2024).

Listing and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage significantly acknowledges individuals, groups and communities for their efforts in the continuous transfer of intangible skills and knowledge. It can be a basis for creation of well-designed products for market placement and new use of intangible heritage. Along with a sense of belonging and identity, intangible heritage can raise the quality of life, stimulate creativity, and be the basis of a different world view (Hrovatin 2012: 134). It can stimulate various activities that can encompass and include heritage in sustainable development projects and contribute to cultural diversity.

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# Sustainable Tourism Practices regarding ICH and Community Involvement

## Chapter 6

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### 1. Introduction

Sustainable tourism (ST) plays a vital role in preserving ICH by harmonizing economic, socio-cultural, and environmental values. According to UNESCO, ICH encompasses the traditions, knowledge, skills, and expressions that communities hold dear as part of their cultural identity. These practices, passed down through generations, are key to maintaining cultural diversity and resilience. ST offers a way to engage with ICH in a respectful manner, creating socio-economic benefits for local communities while recognizing ICH as a vibrant aspect of living cultures instead of just a tourism product. A fundamental principle of ST is honoring cultural identity, which means protecting local traditions and preventing their commercialization or exploitation. It encourages genuine interactions between visitors and communities, fostering mutual respect and preserving the authenticity of cultural practices. This community involvement is essential, empowering locals to design and oversee tourism projects that safeguard their heritage

while also enjoying economic advantages. Thus, through aligning tourism with cultural values, communities can boost their social well-being and keep their traditions alive. ST also ensures that the economic benefits from ICH-related activities are shared fairly, supporting livelihoods and motivating the preservation of heritage. This approach helps sustain ICH for future generations through the documentation, promotion, and revitalization of cultural practices. Educating visitors about ICH deepens their appreciation, enriching their experiences and helping to protect these cherished traditions.

## 2. Conceptual Foundations

### 2.1 ST and ICH

UNESCO set up the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) back in 2003. As previously mentioned, ICH encompasses the practices, knowledge, skills and expressions that communities, groups, and individuals cherish as part of their cultural identity. Tangible cultural heritage can be touched and seen, but ICH is about the non-physical aspects - those rich traditions and expressions that are passed down through generations. (see Table 1).

Table 1. Expressions of ICH

Expression of ICH	Description	Potential	Weaknesses
Oral Traditions	Storytelling, proverbs, songs, and chants.	Preserve community memory and identity; promote intergenerational learning.	Vulnerable to loss if not actively practiced or documented; dependent on memory and oral transmission.

Rituals and Ceremonies	Religious ceremonies, festive events, and social practices.	Strengthen social cohesion; foster spiritual and communal identity.	The risk of commercialization or misrepresentation through tourism can decline with societal changes.
Traditional Craftsmanship	Pottery, weaving, wood carving, metalworking.	Showcase creativity and innovation; support livelihoods through craftsmanship.	May decline due to industrialization and lack of interest among younger generations.
Traditional Ecological Knowledge	Knowledge of the natural world, including agricultural techniques, medicinal practices, and sustainability strategies.	Promote ecological sustainability; adapt to environmental challenges.	Loss of relevance in modern contexts; risk of extinction with urbanization and lack of documentation.
Performing Arts	Dance, music, and theater.	Engage audiences emotionally; preserve cultural narratives and traditions.	Prone to dilution or misinterpretation requires resources and platforms for sustained

			practice.
Local Customs and Social Practices	Harvest festivals, community celebrations, and other traditions shape community interactions.	Strengthening community bonds; fostering a sense of belonging and continuity.	It can erode with modernization and changes in lifestyle, with the risk of becoming tokenized for tourism.

UNESCO emphasizes that when it comes to safeguarding ICH, communities should be at the forefront of the decision-making process (UNESCO, 2003). This approach helps ensure that tourism respects and promotes heritage without distorting or commercializing it. It's also crucial to present cultural practices in a way that truly honors their essence and integrity. When communities get involved with tourism, the goal is to protect the original meanings and functions of ICH practices. In this light, tourism can actually be a powerful tool for raising awareness about ICH, helping people develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity. That's why sustainable tourism is a key focus in UNESCO's guidelines, highlighting that tourism should support the long-term sustainability of cultural heritage. This means carefully managing tourism flows to prevent mass tourism from overwhelming or changing cultural practices.

## **2.2 Community Involvement in Tourism**

The idea of getting communities involved in tourism planning and management is based on several theoretical frameworks that shed light on its dynamics and effects on sustainable tourism development. These theories lay the groundwork for understanding how to encourage and maintain community participation in ways that lead to fair and effective tourism practices.

Figure 3. Community participation in tourism planning and management backbone



Empowerment theory highlights how crucial it is for communities to take charge of their own development. When looking from a tourism perspective, this means involving residents in decision-making and making sure their voices are heard in shaping tourism activities that affect their lives and livelihoods (Joo et al., 2020). The theory acknowledges that local communities have valuable knowledge and insights about their environment and culture, which are essential for sustainable tourism planning. When communities are empowered, they are given a chance to

actively shape tourism development. This way, it truly reflects their values, priorities, and way of life.

On the other hand, social exchange theory provides a different angle by suggesting that people engage in interactions based on their assessment of costs and benefits. In the context of tourism, this means that residents are more likely to get involved in tourism initiatives if they believe the benefits, like economic gains, improved infrastructure, and cultural revitalization, outweigh any potential downsides, such as environmental harm or cultural commodification (Chang, 2021). Therefore, ensuring that tourism benefits are distributed fairly and addressing community concerns are key to encouraging participation within this framework..

Stakeholder theory broadens our understanding by highlighting the need to consider the interests of everyone impacted by tourism development (Theodoulidis et al., 2017). This encompasses local communities, tourists, businesses, government bodies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The theory underscores the importance of balancing the often-conflicting priorities of these various stakeholders to achieve outcomes that are both sustainable and inclusive. To effectively plan tourism within this framework, it's crucial to recognize how interconnected these stakeholders are and to work towards collaborative solutions that honor the rights and interests of all involved.

While collaborative governance theory focus on the value of partnerships and collective efforts among different players in tourism planning and management. This perspective acknowledges that no single organization has all the resources, knowledge, or expertise needed for successful tourism development. Instead, it promotes shared decision-making, joint problem-solving, and mutual learning among stakeholders (Valderrama & Polanco, 2024). Thru leveraging the strengths and viewpoints of various actors, collaborative governance encourages inclusivity and innovation, making it a powerful framework for stakeholder theory.

Social capital theory highlights how social networks, trust, and reciprocity play a crucial role in community development. When communities have strong social capital, they're in a much better position to come together for

collective action and actively engage in tourism planning and management (Zhao et al., 2011). That's why it's so important to build and strengthen social capital through initiatives that foster trust, enhance community cohesion, and cultivate shared goals - these elements are key to the success of community-based tourism projects.

Empowerment, social exchange, stakeholder inclusion, collaborative governance, and social capital frameworks each bring something unique to the table when it comes to understanding how communities can truly engage in tourism development. It's worth noting that these theories aren't isolated; they can work together to create a more comprehensive approach to community participation. Drawing on these insights, tourism planners and managers can design strategies that support sustainable development while respecting and reflecting the aspirations of local communities.

### ***3. Benefits of ST Practices for ICH***

One of the standout advantages of sustainable tourism (ST) is its knack for providing financial support aimed at protecting and sharing intangible cultural heritage (ICH). By crafting an economic model that draws funds from tourism while keeping cultural expressions genuine, communities can secure the resources they need to safeguard their heritage without being overly dependent on outside grants or government assistance. Take, for instance, how tourism can serve as a stage for local artisans, performers, and cultural practitioners to display their talents. This is precisely why UNESCO (2003) points out that communities involved in tourism can reinvest their earnings into vital areas like infrastructure, educational initiatives, and training for local talent, ensuring that cultural heritage is not only preserved but also passed down to future generations. The income generated from workshops, exhibitions, and the sale of traditional crafts can be used to train younger generations, making sure that this valuable knowledge continues. In Bhutan (Khadi, 2019), the funds from cultural tourism are channeled into supporting the ongoing practice of traditional arts and crafts, ensuring these traditions remain vibrant and evolving.

ST practices can empower local communities by giving them the opportunity to showcase and interpret their own heritage, ensuring that cultural practices are presented in an authentic way. When local practitioners are involved in designing and managing tourism, it helps convey ICH in a manner that remains true to its original meaning and significance. Plus, sustainable tourism strategies foster collaboration between tourism stakeholders and local communities. Through joining forces, these groups can create systems that ensure the benefits of tourism are directed towards protecting ICH. Take Kenya, for instance, where Maasai communities have teamed up with eco-tourism operators to develop cultural experiences that directly support local heritage practices. The funds generated from these tourism initiatives help train new artisans and performers, ensuring that knowledge and skills are passed down through generations. A similar approach can be seen in Mirandela, Portugal, where community involvement in preserving the local language has led to unique tourism experiences.

has the potential to create meaningful job opportunities for local artisans, guides, and performers, enabling them to earn a living while celebrating their cultural heritage. By providing authentic experiences - like participating in traditional ceremonies or learning crafts from skilled masters - tourism encourages younger generations to embrace these practices, ensuring they thrive for years to come. This educational aspect of tourism fosters a genuine appreciation for cultural diversity and deepens visitors' understanding of why preserving cultural heritage is so important.

Moreover, ST can facilitate cross-cultural dialogue, creating spaces for sharing cultural knowledge and nurturing respect for our differences. It's essential to highlight that sustainable tourism takes a holistic approach to preservation, intertwining the protection of cultural heritage with the conservation of our natural environment. Many intangible cultural heritage (ICH) practices are closely tied to the natural landscape, including traditional farming techniques, natural dyeing methods, and ecological wisdom that supports sustainable land use. Like in New Zealand, the Māori community has woven cultural tourism into their initiatives to safeguard the environment, understanding that preserving their traditional knowledge of

the land is crucial not just for cultural identity but also for ecological sustainability (Barcham, 2020). Similarly, in the Azores, the heritage of whale hunting has been transformed into whale-watching tourism, where the local culture surrounding whales is reflected in souvenirs, storytelling, and museum exhibits.

## **4. Challenges and Risks**

### ***4.1 Over-Tourism and Commercialization***

Over-tourism and commercialization present real obstacles in the efforts to protect intangible cultural heritage. It can seem ironic, since these challenges often come from tourists wanting to dive into authentic cultural experiences. When a place gets flooded with visitors, local communities can feel the pressure to tweak or even commercialize their traditional practices, rituals, and customs just to satisfy tourist expectations or make some money. This can result in the "staging" of cultural performances, where sacred ceremonies are cut short, simplified, or taken out of context, slowly chipping away at their original meaning and importance. Commodification - turning cultural practices into sellable products - brings significant risks to the authenticity and integrity of intangible cultural heritage. When cultural expressions are treated like commodities, their true meanings and contexts can easily get distorted or lost. This often leads to a process of simplifying, standardizing, and adapting traditions to fit market demands, resulting in shallow representations of rich and intricate cultural practices.

The pressure to commercialize traditional crafts, music, or cuisine in large quantities can really compromise the quality and authenticity. Instead of sticking to old-age methods and materials, commercial interests often push for changes or even distortions of cultural traditions just to boost profits. This can lead to performances that feel staged, rituals that are overly sanitized, or the emergence of "pseudo-traditions" that lack real cultural depth (Young & Markham, 2020). Young people in these communities, viewing their heritage mainly through an economic lens, might lose interest in preserving and practicing their traditions in their true form.

This creates a tricky situation: while tourism can bring in economic benefits and raise global awareness of cultural traditions, it also risks turning intangible heritage into mere entertainment, jeopardizing its authenticity and long-term survival. Moreover, what tourists expect plays a huge role, as many seek out experiences that are easy to access and entertaining. To cater to these demands, communities might end up altering or standardizing their traditions, losing the rich cultural meanings in the process in favor of more marketable offerings. The lack of community control over how their culture is represented only makes things worse. When outsiders take the reins on decision-making, the chances of misinterpretation and exploitation increase. Sacred rituals can become commodified, and significant traditions might be trivialized, all because profit is prioritized over cultural preservation (Mihalic, 2020). This commodification can also lead to cultural appropriation, where elements of a culture are taken by outsiders without a proper understanding or respect. This not only misrepresents those cultural practices but can also offend and undermine the very identity of the culture itself.

The loss of authenticity resulting from commodification has profound implications for communities. One major effect is the loss of cultural identity, as practices that become commodified often fail to convey the cultural values that bind communities together. Authenticity is deeply connected to cultural value; when cultural practices are turned into commodities, their significance can diminish for locals and tourists, which can hinder efforts to maintain and celebrate heritage (Ricky, 2022). Additionally, commodification can widen social and economic gaps. While outside entities may profit, local communities often see little benefit and bear the cultural and social burdens, which can worsen existing inequalities and create internal conflicts (Mihalic, 2020). To tackle the challenges posed by commodification, it's crucial to commit to sustainable tourism practices that emphasize cultural preservation and empower communities. A positive impact can be achieved by backing community-based tourism projects, promoting ethical marketing of cultural heritage, and fostering respectful interactions between tourists and locals. These strategies are vital for maintaining the authenticity and integrity of intangible cultural heritage

while ensuring that tourism positively affects the well-being of local communities.

#### **4.2 Lack of Community Agency**

Local communities often encounter significant difficulties when it comes to having a say in tourism decision-making processes. These obstacles can strip them of the ability to control how their cultural heritage is showcased, safeguarded, and profited from. In many instances, the power to make decisions about tourism development is held by external players, like government officials, multinational corporations, or large tourism operators. This creates an imbalance where local communities, particularly marginalized groups, find themselves with little influence over how tourism impacts their cultural practices and environment. When these communities are left out of the conversation, they risk losing control over their own heritage. Another challenge is that many local communities often lack the financial means and technical know-how to effectively engage in tourism planning and management. Smaller communities may struggle to develop and manage tourism initiatives that both protect their heritage and allow them to benefit from tourism. Additionally, there's often a gap in education or awareness within local communities regarding the potential effects of tourism on their cultural heritage. Without a solid understanding of how tourism can serve as a tool for sustainable development, these communities might miss the chance to advocate for their rights or ensure their needs are reflected in tourism policies. As tourism infrastructure grows, residents may find themselves forced to relocate to accommodate these developments. Take Venice, for instance; the surge in tourism has led to many residents being displaced because they can no longer afford to live in the city, thanks to the rising cost of living driven by the influx of tourists (UNESCO, 2017). As communities adjust to the pressures of tourism, they may experience a cultural disconnect that can dilute the essence of their cultural practices, resulting in a loss of authenticity and a gap between the community's heritage and its modern expressions.

### **4.3 Environmental Concerns**

The unsustainable practices at cultural heritage sites are causing a serious chain reaction that endangers both the environment and the very cultural treasures that communities are trying to protect. The surge of tourists flocking to these spots is really putting a strain on local resources. This is causing some serious issues like water shortages, deforestation, and a spike in energy use. These effects not only throw local ecosystems out of balance but also create major risks for biodiversity. The growing number of visitors leads to soil erosion, damage to vegetation, and disturbances in local ecosystems, which can weaken the structural integrity of historic buildings and archaeological sites. Moreover, water pollution from poor waste management and excessive groundwater extraction for tourism facilities is speeding up the decay of ancient structures, especially in places where water is vital to the cultural landscape. Air pollution from nearby urban development and transport systems releases harmful substances that can corrode stone monuments and architectural features.

On top of that, unchecked tourism infrastructure development often interferes in buffer zones meant to safeguard these sites. Pollution from transportation, lodging, and tourism activities taints the air, water, and soil, while inadequate waste management worsens environmental damage, creating both visual and health risks. Some of these were able to stand out during Covid lockdown, like Venice water that changed colour. Climate change, fueled by these unsustainable practices, brings new challenges like extreme weather, rising sea levels, and shifting rainfall patterns that these heritage sites simply weren't built to handle. Physical damage is also a concern, stemming from overcrowding, inappropriate tourist behavior, and infrastructure expansion. The building of hotels, roads, and other facilities encroaches on natural habitats and alters historical landscapes, while increased foot traffic and vehicle use contribute to soil erosion, loss of vegetation, and the deterioration of archaeological remains. These effects not only lessen the aesthetic and cultural significance of heritage sites but also jeopardize their long-term preservation.

## 5. Recommendations and Future Directions

Training programs and capacity building are crucial for empowering communities. These customized initiatives can provide local populations with valuable skills in cultural documentation, heritage management, and sustainable tourism practices. These programs should focus on areas like storytelling, eco-tourism management, and marketing cultural products, all while encouraging entrepreneurship and financial literacy. It's also vital to facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer, helping traditional skills evolve in today's world. Language and hospitality training can prepare community members to connect with global tourists while staying true to their cultural roots.

Participatory approaches in tourism planning are just as important. Inclusive workshops should allow community members to voice their opinions on shaping tourism strategies, ensuring their priorities and values are front and center. Collaborating with stakeholders, like government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector, can help create a shared vision for tourism development. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of tourism through community-led assessments ensures that management adapts to cultural, social, and economic needs. Plus, digital tools can enhance the promotion of intangible cultural heritage through virtual tours, multimedia storytelling, and online platforms. Financial incentives and funding for infrastructure and cultural initiatives can bolster these efforts. Raising awareness among tourists through educational campaigns fosters respect and understanding.

To effectively blend intangible cultural heritage with sustainable tourism, strategic policy development should prioritize community engagement, capacity building, and participatory methods. From laying these strategies into action, sustainable tourism can protect intangible cultural heritage, promoting cultural preservation while encouraging equitable development.

## 6. Conclusion

ST plays a vital role in protecting ICH by offering a well-organized way to keep alive the traditions, practices, and knowledge that shape cultural identity. Through fostering genuine cultural exchanges, supporting local economies, and encouraging the sharing of knowledge between generations, ST helps ensure that ICH remains a lively and essential part of community life. It also highlights the need for inclusive participation, giving communities the power to manage tourism projects that truly reflect and honor their cultural values. However, there are significant challenges to face, like cultural commodification, environmental harm, and the loss of authenticity, which require immediate and coordinated action. Policymakers, researchers, and practitioners alike must prioritize weaving ICH into tourism policies, create capacity-building programs for local stakeholders, and adopt participatory planning methods. These steps are crucial for building a sustainable future where ICH and responsible-generative tourism can thrive together, providing lasting benefits for both cultural preservation and socio-economic growth.

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# Marketing and methods of promoting ICH

## Chapter 7

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### 1. Introduction

The importance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is associated with the knowledge that becomes known from one generation to the next. This transmission of knowledge has economic and social value within a state can be related to minorities as well as to the main social groups and is as crucial for developing as for developed states (Gross-Gołacka, Kavoura, Asonitou, & Martini, 2024).

Cultural management uses concepts from marketing that are based on the promotion of products and services and refers to the 4 ps (product, place, promotion, price). This Chapter examines the factors related to the management of ICH, drawing on concepts described in the marketing theory for the 4 ps that can be implemented for the initiation of an advertising campaign. These basic concepts are then examined and related to ICH.

### 2. Product

ICH as presented by UNESCO needs not only to be preserved, but also to be transmitted to future generations and promoted for the benefit of the local community by opening up related jobs for local people.

Around the world, many expressions of culture do not have a tangible substance, although they have been recorded. These intangible forms of

expression may include: music, festivals, gastronomy, sports etc. These forms of culture cannot be physically stored, such as in a museum, but only experienced “through a vehicle that expresses it. Such cultural vehicles are called “Human Treasures” by the UN” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intangible\\_cultural\\_heritage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intangible_cultural_heritage)).

In 2001, a committee in Turin (Italy) developed a working definition of “intangible cultural heritage”. Building on the views expressed at the time of the Washington Conference and the results of a series of studies, UNESCO drafted a new definition of ICH describing it as skills and knowledge that passes from people to other people who create products and involve spaces that are essential for their sustainability. In that way, a sense of continuity is created among communities that aim to preserve cultural identity but also cultural diversity and creativity of humanity (Matsuura, 2001).

In addition, it was expected that UNESCO would prepare a new international process for the safeguarding of ICH. Safeguarding should be based on specific objectives: a) the preservation of human creations that may disappear forever b) their recognition at the global level, c) the strengthening of identity, d) the possibility of social cooperation within and between groups, e) the safeguarding of historical continuity, f) the promotion of the creative diversity of humanity, g) the facilitation of access to the fruits of this creativity.

UNESCO adopted the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH, taking into account intangible and tangible heritage. The Convention identified features of modern life, such as globalization, social transformation and intolerance, that is at risk of vanishing because consideration to protect it has not taken place (UNESCO, 2024a).

Understanding the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic groups helps in intercultural dialogue and encourages mutual respect for different thought. However, in the era of globalization, it is imperative to find methods to preserve and communicate ICH to the next generation, as it represents an essential factor of cultural diversity (UNESCO, n.d.).

The Nara Document on Authenticity embodies the spirit of the Venice Charter, 1964, builds on it and enriches it, responding to the broadened

scope of research and interests in cultural heritage in the modern world, including the IPC (ICOMOS, 2012).

The Nara Document refers to the fact that in order to have human development we need to protect cultural heritage.

New perspectives and threats have emerged in recent years. It is imperative to examine how ICH interacts with technology (artificial intelligence, virtual reality), telecommunications, hypertourism, climate change, cultural homogenization, language interaction and fusion, urban expansion and sustainable development. In particular, the protection of languages is one of the most important elements for the preservation of ICH, according to Karl Von Habsburg ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intangible\\_cultural\\_heritage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intangible_cultural_heritage)). In the era of globalization and identity conflicts, language can become a target of attack as a symbolic cultural asset.

## **2. Place**

The management of an ICH issue concerns a specific local area and proposes a unique selling proposition (USP), which can be implemented at local, national and global levels.

The concept of place refers to the place in the distribution of actions for the ICH.

## **3. Promotion**

For the promotion of the ICH, the target group must be determined, so that the promotion is directed to specific groups (families, couples, young people or to everyone). Emphasis should be placed on people with special needs (e.g. live broadcast of events). It is also necessary to determine the time for such a promotion as well as the actors and stakeholders involved. The type of advertising campaign must also be determined, e.g. information campaign or reminder campaign.

Regarding the way in which the promotion is carried out, a questionnaire is necessary to determine the views of the target groups, which is distributed via google link. Based on the responses collected, the format and wording of the campaign (e.g. humorous, serious realistic message) as well as the visual approach will be determined.

The visual communication of such campaigns is the subject of research on the local ICH and the information collected and should be carried out by professional designers and graphic artists in collaboration with local communities and experts or scientists in the respective field of ICH. The result of such teamwork will highlight diversity versus homogeneity, which prevailed during the 20th century.

"... twentieth-century Western modernism laid the foundations for an epistemological hegemony of the West in regional cultures, dominating through modernist models of knowledge, life and existence, according to globalized forms of functioning, production, intellectual and aesthetic values" (Decolonising Design Group, 2019).

One example, among others, that has proven to be good design practice, is the branding and communication system of a city, which was designed taking into account local heritage and human values, transformed into a modern representative visual identity: (D&AD Awards Winners, 2024).

Based on the choice of the promotion method, the corresponding media, traditional and/or social, will be used, based on the statistics showing which of these media are preferred by the target group. An example of ICH management is the advertorial, where an area and its ICH are promoted. It is also proposed to use innovative interface technologies that bridge the virtual and physical worlds, such as augmented, virtual, and mixed reality applications, to enhance the user experience through mobile phones and online exhibitions (Briciu, Briciu & Kavoura, 2020).

Different tools can also be used to encourage the active participation of young people through digital platforms, such as:

-Lego game series, Online game platforms (H4GG, 2025; WKC Chronicles, 2025).

Employing modern technologies in the promotion of ICH can create the appropriate environment for the participation of new generations (university and high school students). Young people, being familiar with technological developments, find a space to express themselves, while at the same time coming into contact with traditions, learning about their past and cultivating empathy.

Artificial Intelligence is another example of the use of digital technologies, which can offer many ways to promote and showcase local traditions, art, music or other types of culture.

UNESCO recommends that Member States integrate AI systems, where appropriate, for the “preservation, enrichment, understanding, promotion, management and accessibility of tangible, documented and intangible cultural heritage, including endangered languages, as well as indigenous languages and knowledge” (Pinto, 2024).

Governmental or community actions can include up-to-date educational programmes related to the application of AI systems in these areas in their promotional programmes, ensuring a participatory approach targeting institutions, schools and the general public. AI systems offer opportunities and challenges in relation to ICH when addressing specific categories of users. For example, when addressing communities, AI can help by offering innovative programs that will communicate their heritage to a wider audience. At the same time, communities should be aware of the risk of abuse as they may adapt “myopic” community interests or explanations of intangible cultural heritage from one perspective, without being able to hear the multitude of opinions that may exist on a topic. For general users, AI can make intangible cultural heritage more accessible and interesting, but there is a risk of misleading with misinformation. Overall, education through AI can make intangible cultural heritage known to a wider audience, however, there is always the potential for unethical use of data (UNESCO, 2024b).

#### 4. Price (cost)

Another concept, in the promotion of the ICH, concerns the costs of its promotion. For example, the purchase of time and space in traditional and social media are decisive for the choice of media to be used to promote the ICH. For example, the cost of printing 100 posters for an event related to the promotion of the ICH. A village with 500 citizens would need ten posters of size 50X70cm, while outdoor advertisements at bus stops would be used for a city.

In addition to knowing the 4 Ps, the 5th P is also linked to marketing and is related to the “people” factor. The information provided is critical and may affect the overall result.

We must take into account that although there are many locations, rituals and events related to the ICH, the information may be asymmetric. This means that there may be a disconnect between the message creator and the consumer. The added value of the promotional effort may not be provided if there is no clearly defined information about the ICH.

Furthermore, the actors involved in the promotion of ICH must choose the appropriate technology for each location, museum and collection, rituals and beliefs, events and cultural practices. Not all cases are promoted in the same way. For example, an open-air museum requires a different approach than that of a small museum. Another example may be the use of an audio guide somewhere that does not fit with the heritage of the area.

It is important to focus on marketing with the values of ICH in mind. It is suggested to plan to raise financial funds to promote ICH through sponsorships. Sponsors can participate by displaying their distinctive logos in promotional activities. Sales promotion can also be used, such as loyalty cards (loyalty subscriptions), e.g. those who visit an area can collect points and contribute to sustainability and environmental protection, or the creation of applications where participants in an APC event can recycle their empty bottles in an environmentally friendly manner. Experiential marketing can also be implemented in the promotion of ICH (e.g. gastronomic events related to ICH). Similar actions can be announced through a Press Release and a business analysis (strengths, weaknesses,

opportunities, threats -SWOT) can be created assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the promotion.

## **5. Ethical Treatment of Promotional Activities**

The broad promotion of ICH incorporates the ethical treatment of cultural objects of all peoples and groups. Especially with AI technologies, we need to consider how they will be inclusive and respectful of cultures and knowledge systems of indigenous peoples. For this reason, UNESCO has published the Report on Indigenous Peoples 2023 (Pinto, 2024).

It highlights the risks faced by ethnic communities with the development of artificial intelligence, including the misuse of data, cultural biases and potential exclusion from digital developments.

The key themes of the report are data sovereignty, the development of inclusive artificial intelligence, cultural bias and the digital divide. In terms of data sovereignty, the report advises that indigenous communities should “maintain control over their data to prevent exploitation and ensure that their cultural knowledge is not misappropriated” (Pinto, 2024). Local communities should also be actively involved in the development of AI systems to ensure that their cultural values are respected and incorporated. All participants in technological products that promote ICH should consider how to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or misleadingly portraying local cultures. Finally, government agencies and other authorities should take into account that indigenous communities often have limited access to and knowledge of digital technologies. The knowledge and access gap should be adequately addressed to ensure that they can benefit from AI applications.

The further elaboration of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions dictates that local communities must be respected and have their rights recognized, practiced, preserved, controlled and owned by them, their cultural heritage and knowledge, including expressions of music, songs, stories, ceremonies, dances, symbols, languages and knowledge. This heritage is usually oral, does not belong to individuals and is transmitted to future generations. UNESCO has emphasized in its reports the necessity of legal recognition of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions to

protect them from misuse. All techniques for promoting ICH should consider the ethical protocols for the conservation of cultural heritage (Adjei n.d.).

The Australian Government has published ethical protocols on how to promote indigenous cultural works of art and heritage. It also provides training scenarios on how to apply the ethical protocols when promoting traditional and cultural expressions of art and knowledge of indigenous communities (Creative Australia, n.d.).

Examples of citizen participation and engagement in the design of strategies, branding and ethical promotion of local communities, which highlight local identity and contribute to sustainable development, are listed below at the following link: (City Nation Place, 2024).

## 6. Conclusion

This chapter highlights the importance of marketing techniques and methods for promoting ICH in a sustainable and ethical way in digital and physical environments/using traditional and new technologies.

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# The importance of ICH preservation, understanding and promoting of EU integration processes

## Chapter 8

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*“I believe that developing a sense of European identity enriches and strengthens our local, regional, and national identity and heritage, as you become part of a community of 500 million citizens who have such rich histories and interwoven cultures. By becoming European you will share all of this. I think it is wonderful and inspiring that in today’s Europe anyone can take delight in our shared cultural heritage.”* (Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for education, culture, youth and sport, 15 November 2017)

### 1. Introduction

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is part of humanity's fabric of culture and comprises oral traditions, arts of performance, social practices, rituals, festive events, and traditional knowledge and skills. The conservation of ICH is now a pressing concern at a worldwide level, particularly in the European Union (EU), whose diversity and shared heritage represent founding values of integration. As Hanna Schreiber claims “the EU policy towards intangible cultural heritage is a ‘work in progress’” (2019), still determined by old paradigms. However, we should remember that the conservation of ICH not only secures the continuation of traditional practices but also fosters mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation among the EU Member States. This chapter examines why ICH conservation is significant,

mechanisms at disposal to conserve it, their efficiency, and how they contribute to the integration processes of the EU.

## **2. Why Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage Is Important**

ICH preservation is significant due to several factors. For instance, it upholds cultural diversity, a foundation of human creativity and innovation. Each practice, tradition, or mode of expression has a unique worldview that provides insight into the background and identity of those who practice it. If we fail to preserve such traditions, vital aspects of human civilization would be lost to homogenized culture. Cultural diversity helps make societies richer through fostering creativity and inspiring new modes of expression that drive innovations in arts, education, and other sectors.

Second, ICH fosters social cohesion and belonging. Festivals, rituals, and customary practices create social bonds among people and generate intergenerational dialogue and transmission of values and knowledge. When people actively participate in keeping their traditions alive and celebrating their traditions, they become more attached to their identity and proud of their heritage. Such collective identity can reduce social tensions and generate unity in culturally diverse societies. Furthermore, such practices offer platforms of collective reflection that reaffirm shared objectives and aspirations.

Third, safeguarding ICH contributes to sustainable development. Cultural tourism, for example, brings economic value to communities while introducing their unique heritage to global audiences. Festivals, crafts, and cuisine can host visitors and create jobs, particularly in distant locations with few other opportunities. In addition, traditional knowledge systems, particularly in agriculture, medicine, and management of resources, offer options that speak to today's environmental concerns. Such systems can aid in addressing global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

Finally, protecting ICH fosters peace and understanding through shared values and respect for diversity. In the context of the EU, this is particularly significant because diversity and heritage make up the very foundations of a

united but diverse European identity. The celebration and affirmation of diverse expressions can overcome xenophobia and foster cross-cultural dialogue. When societies appreciate and acknowledge other people's heritage, they can create inclusive societies that allow mutual respect and cooperation.

### **3. Mechanisms for Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the protection of ICH relies on a combination of legal, institutional, and community-based approaches. These approaches occur at international, regional, national, and local levels and often complement each other.

The essential pillar of the international level is the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which provides a worldwide framework to identify, document, and conserve ICH. It encourages state parties to take institutional and legal measures to safeguard heritage. State parties to the Convention have to make inventories of their ICH and submit periodic reports on their actions. Such worldwide recognition also enhances consciousness and encourages worldwide cooperation to conserve endangered traditions.

National regulations are the next tier of ICH protection. Some EU Member States have enacted legislation to protect ICH through listing heritage, providing funding, and supporting research and documentation. The legal frameworks generally follow international recommendations and fit into local contexts. For instance, some countries have developed policies that integrate ICH into curricula at schools to transmit it to generations to come. The governments also offer funding for heritage preservation that can be utilized to sponsor museums, centres of culture and research.

The heart of ICH preservation is community engagement. Local communities are custodians of heritage and play a central role in transmitting knowledge, practices, and traditions. Community-led initiatives like festivals, workshops, and documentation projects help to ground preservation in living practice. Communities often engage with governments

and NGOs to gain access to resources and technical input to create replicable models of heritage conservation.

Both the state and the local communities have the capacity to engage in formal and informal education initiatives that allow raising awareness of ICH's value to pass it to generations to come. Formal education institutions, festivals, and workshops often become platforms to teach and learn. Formal education institutions can integrate ICH into curriculums to provide learners with an opportunity to engage with traditions firsthand. Community storytelling and apprenticeships are also significant informal education initiatives that allow passing down traditions.

Probably the most spectacular exemplifications of the preservation of ICH are the numerous celebratory festivals, which not only showcase ICH but also increase its practice and make it accessible to communities. They also offer scope for cross-cultural conversation and dialogue. Festivals can host visitors, generate economic value, and provide platforms to artisans, performers, and other practitioners of culture. Such festivals have a propensity to bring together diverse communities with a common heritage and a sense of unity.

With the advancement of technology new opportunities for the nurturing of ICH emerged. Today digital archiving preserves ICH for generations to come. Digital platforms also increase access and global visibility. Online databases, virtual museums, and interactive platforms make it possible to access and learn about ICH anywhere in the world. They also offer comparative and research possibilities without leaving home, thus dismantling borders and prejudices both nationally and internationally. However, making such access universally available involves bridging digital divides and fostering digital literacy.

#### **4. Evaluating the Efficiency of Preservation Mechanisms**

The efficiency of ICH preservation mechanisms depends on implementation, resource distribution, and community participation. The success of their application is determined by the following factors:

effectiveness of legal frameworks, secured financing, level of community involvement and education and awareness.

While instruments like the UNESCO Convention provide recommendations, their success depends on domestic adoption and implementation. It is difficult for some countries to implement such principles into policies. Inadequate application and lack of harmonization between national and local governments can weaken preservation initiatives. As we could see in chapter 2, even among the countries involved in this project, very diverse experiences can be noticed. As Gergova identifies, regardless of the rich cultural life and nurtured traditions in Bulgaria, only a handful is registered in UNESCO's ICH list due to dysfunctional administration, unclear division of competences and neglect for national culture and traditions. At the same time, in Croatia one can observe a consistent approach, which leads to an extensive list of activities inscribed at the same list. In other words, filling such gaps requires capacity-building and more effective institutional frameworks. The project demonstrates the varying level of concern over preservation of intangible heritage by prominently putting conservation policies at the forefront in Croatia.

ICH preservation is dependent on sufficient financial resources. The majority of initiatives rely on public or private finance that can vary with the economy or priorities. Where stable and long-term funding mechanisms exist to finance research, documentation, and community-based initiatives, the results are immediately visible. Piecemeal activities are not sufficient for the endurance and effective promotion of ICH. Private sector partners such as businesses and cultural foundations can also provide additional resources. However, their involvement should not replace the role of the state in providing favorable conditions for the endurance of ICH.

The local communities remain indispensable for the preservation of ICH. Among the numerous cases, discussed in the previous chapters, there is no single case where ICH exists beyond the local community. In that sense, without mechanisms that actively engage with local communities ICH efforts will be less effective and durable. If preservation initiatives lack community involvement, they risk being out of touch with the practices that they aim to

preserve. The local communities might also consider them external and silently reject them. Community participation in decision-making will make preservation initiatives more responsive to their aspirations and needs. Empowerment of practitioners through capacity-building programs can also enhance their capacity to sustain traditions.

One of the most significant features of ICH activities is not only their preservation, but also their consistent educational activities serving as intergenerational transmission belts. Successful initiatives tend to incorporate educational programs that cultivate understanding and appreciation of ICH. Such programs have to be funded regularly and incorporated into broader policies of culture. Public awareness can be achieved through media campaigns, exhibitions, and workshops that can generate public support for preservation. Collaboration between educational institutions and institutions of culture can enhance the scope and impact of such programs.

The dissemination and documentation of ICH has been revolutionized by digital technology. But their reach can be limited by unequal access to technology and digital literacy. Ensuring that digital platforms become accessible and inclusive is key to their full potential. Collaborative efforts to create multilingual materials and open-access databases can make digital archives more accessible.

Despite such difficulties, good practice in ICH preservation can be found right across the EU. Romania's documentation of folk dance, Greece's promotion of Rebetiko music, and Portugal's preservation of Fado show that well-focused initiatives can have significant cultural outreach and tangible economic benefits.

## **5. The Role of ICH Preservation in EU Integration Processes**

“United in diversity” aptly accents the nature of the integration process. Not only the twenty seven states are organized around their uniqueness, but also within these countries, one can easily identify numerous regional and local communities, jealously preserving their habits, traditions, customs and festivities. In his reflection on the evolution of poetry in Europe, T.S.Eliot

acknowledged that “that no one nation, no one language, would have achieved what it has, if the same art had not been cultivated in neighbouring countries and in different languages.” (Eliot, 1948, p.112) This is no less relevant for any other dimension of culture. A brief reflection on the celebrated traditions of each of the discussed cases, provides examples of local uniqueness, which too often resemble festivities in other countries. Determined by the shared religious experience, climate conditions, change of seasons and local settings, the Carnaval, the mask parades or the departure of winter and the longing for spring, are all triggers of communal activities. Each one unique and yet, following a shared perception of worldview and acknowledging same priorities.

The preservation of ICH provides the necessary background for the nurturing of the senses of belonging and uniqueness, which determine individual and social identity. In that sense, only when these fundamental principles are secured, the sense of openness and inclusion can unfold its integration capacity. By stressing common values and traditions, ICH unifies while being respectful of Member States’ diversity.

The main advantages brought by ICH are cultural cohesion and identity, promotion of mutual understanding, economic opportunities, strengthening of EU policies and social coherence. ICH preservation highlights that common heritage brings EU Member States together. The traditional music and dance or the Mediterranean Diet represent some of those traditions that cut across borders and make people part of a broader European community. The EU reinforces its cultural identity and brings people together through celebrating such commonalities. The preservation of ICH enriches also national narratives, which are often preceded by the local and regional customs and habits. Hence, a closer look at various unique traditions, reveals cultural connections and exchange way beyond the current state borders. Valuing and identifying with diversity in such common heritage increases the richness of European cultural heritage.

Cross-frontier initiatives such as cultural festivals and exchange programs create dialogue and cooperation. They provide Member States with a forum to showcase their unique heritage while learning to find similarities. These

interactions generate mutual respect and understanding and reduce misunderstandings and tensions between cultures. Collaborative ventures such as exhibitions and research projects also highlight the interrelatedness of European cultures. The transmission of common elements of the Intangible Heritage by several countries or communities is a reservoir of new information on interrelations of cultures in the past and on man's universal relationship and conceivability with nature. Simultaneously, it reduces tensions and dismantles fake nationalist narratives aiming to incite tensions among neighboring societies.

In the contemporary globalized environment, which promotes standardization and unification, there is a noticeable longing for social and economic uniqueness. The renaissance of localism, with its customs and habits, provides conditions for the development of cultural tourism. The intangible cultural heritage enriches regional development and employment opportunities. Shared heritage sites and festivals attract foreign tourists to the EU and enhance its worldwide cultural reputation. Investment in ICH sectors such as traditional cuisine and crafts can create long-term economic opportunities for communities. Promoting Europe as a destination to have a cultural experience enhances its value in the global tourism market.

The aligning of intangible cultural heritage with the broader EU policies on education, sustainability and regional development maximizes the role of culture in helping to reach the EU's strategic goals. For instance, incorporating ICH into policies on sustainability can help to drive forward traditional practices that benefit environmental goals. Cultural heritage also plays a role in social cohesion and fighting inequalities and supports EU social cohesion priorities. This is best visible in the active engagement of diverse communities. The preservation of intangible heritage crosses cultural divides and fosters inclusiveness. It increases bonding among urban and rural communities, youth and elder generations, and majority and minority communities. All this contributes to a more harmonious and united society with diversity being a strength and not a divide.

## Conclusion

Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage is not merely a question of culture but also a central component of European Union integration processes. The EU assures its unity, diversity of culture, and sustainable development through preserving ICH. Mechanisms such as the UNESCO Convention, national legislation, and grassroots actions provide important instruments to this effect, though their efficiency depends on adequate resources, participation of people, and consistency with policies.

For integration into the EU, ICH preservation contributes to developing a shared identity, respect between nations, and cross-border cooperation. It highlights the importance of cultural heritage in developing a united Europe while maintaining Member States' unique traditions. Against the backdrop of ongoing globalization and modernization that endanger traditional lifestyles, the EU must prioritize intangible cultural heritage preservation to build a more integrated, inclusive, and culturally diverse future.

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# Contemporary challenges and solutions for the management of ICH (multiculturalism, crises, etc.)

## Chapter 9

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Managing Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in the modern world means overcoming several challenges, including multiculturalism and crises, including pandemics, natural catastrophes, and wars. This part looks at present problems and proposes answers to ensure the effective maintenance and promotion of intangible cultural legacy.

### 1. Introduction

A dynamic expression of human ingenuity, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) develops with every generation and includes customs, language, and knowledge influencing society identity. ICH preservation is the protection of historical objects and upholding of the continuity of cultural knowledge influencing our present and future. ICH, according to UNESCO, consists in oral traditions, performing arts, social gatherings, rituals, festive celebrations, knowledge and practices connected to nature and the cosmos, and traditional craftsmanship. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is a UNESCO treaty adopted by the UNESCO General Conference on 17 October 2003. Emphasizing ways to protect individuals, educate them, raise awareness, and strengthen their capacities, the Convention aspires to safeguard intangible cultural assets. Through

education, knowledge sharing, and skill development, the Convention seeks to protect intangible cultural assets under the jurisdiction of every State Party so fostering their preservation, enhancement, and support.

By means of educational activities, awareness campaigns, and informational programs, the Convention aims to improve the acknowledgement, respect, and progress of a society's unique cultural legacy. To protect intangible cultural treasures, businesses and communities need specialized training courses and educational campaigns. The preservation of a community depends on the objects from its cultural legacy being used once again. Protecting intangible cultural assets has become more important in higher education because of institutional goals and quick technology developments.

When problems are solved and creative ideas are produced, intangible cultural assets are more likely to survive and get preservation. Growing homogeneity among countries and the process of globalization help to prevent the spread of unique customs and values. In educational environments, traditional rituals and cultural expressions usually get less attention.

Different academics presented different points of view on the notions of "intangible cultural heritage," "oral traditions and expressions," "performing arts," "knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe," "knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe," and "traditional craftsmanship." Establishing the Cultural Properties Protection Committee and other specialized organizations to find and protect Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) objects, Japan was the first country to support ICH globally. Since the 1970s, UNESCO has worked to protect Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) worldwide, therefore advancing the idea of ICH preservation in many countries and supporting their development of policies.

## **2. ICH Management's Difficulties**

Increased migration and intercultural interaction brought about by globalization have produced different interpretations and even conflicts

over the ownership and presentation of intangible cultural legacy (ICH). Different cultural groups could have different ideas on the value and meaning of common history, which would cause conflict. In a multicultural environment, the need of suitable representation and the possibility of cultural appropriation take first priority. The difficulty is balancing the effect of world cultural influences with the preservation of local customs. Although it can also cause traditional knowledge to be eroded or diluted, including external cultural elements might enhance local customs. Maintaining the originality and energy of ICH depends on harmonizing local and worldwide inspirations. Particularly with regard to sensitive elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), different cultural ideas and practices can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Practices judged holy or forbidden in one culture may be seen differently in another, thus requiring careful negotiation and respect. Good management of these possible problems and the promotion of mutual respect depend on open communication and multicultural understanding. By restricting social gatherings and physical contacts, pandemics like as COVID-19 have greatly hampered the traditional spread of ICH.

Epistemologically, multiculturalism comes from a shared identity and may thus be rather incorporated into liberal nationalism. It respects one's own cultural right while coexisting. It has divided immigrants, confirmed (if not created) unchangeable and uniform cultural ethnic minority, and guaranteed them equal rights. The "we vs. them" debate in multicultural societies produces different heritage models or interpretations of cultural diversity. Administering cultural legacy under this multicultural setting entails recording, communicating, and conserving the cultural legacy connected with minority populations. Particularly impacted are celebrations, customs, and oral traditions depending on direct communication as well as rituals. The shift to digital channels has brought chances as well as challenges for the viability of these events. Many ICH practitioners - including artists and crafters - depend on cultural events for their income, which has been badly impacted by pandemic-related restrictions. The lack of money and possibilities can endanger the continuation of old knowledge and abilities. The existence and preservation

of their legacy depend on these people getting both logistical and financial help. Natural events include earthquakes, floods, and wildfires can destroy physical places, resources connected to intangible cultural legacy including religious sites, ancient buildings, and cultural objects. The loss of these tangible relics might throw off the practice and transfer of intangible heritage. These tragedies' psychological and emotional effects can impede communities' abilities to preserve their cultural customs. Communities often find ways to preserve their Intangible Cultural Heritage by means of memory and group activity even though they lose everything. The continuance of cultural history depends critically on the tenacity of the human spirit. It is imperative to help communities to keep their customs over difficult times.

Conflicts, including war and civil disturbance, often lead to the deliberate destruction and elimination of intangible cultural legacy in order to eliminate cultural identity and history. Although intangible culture deserves global preservation, political mobilization is more realistic under well defined threshold conditions that promote worldwide consensus and action. The destruction of immovable cultural treasures not only disturbs the public conscience but also carries major consequences that go much beyond the loss of singular human achievements. Cultural sites, artifacts, and customs are assaulted leading to permanent damage and loss. Community displacement disturbs the cultural knowledge and behavior passing on to next generations.

Conflicts undermine the family and community events as well as the social systems necessary for the spread of intangible cultural legacy. Traditional knowledge and skills could be lost when these systems fall apart. Younger generations could show alienation from their cultural background, therefore upsetting the cultural continuity. To help with post-conflict reconciliation, ICH can support healing, understanding, and communication. By means of cultural traditions and storytelling, one can help to close gaps and rebuild confidence among people. Afterwar stability and normalcy might come from cultural events. Four types of destruction are defined by UNESCO: deliberate damage, forced neglect, looting and trafficking, and collateral damage. A major component in the relationship between culture and the

subtleties of politics is now clearly cultural legacy. This has significant consequences about the roles heritage takes in armed conflict. As such, examinations of this junction have become a major focus of legacy research. Although it is not a new occurrence, the destruction of cultural treasures during wars steadily causes great global disgust. Ironically, many countries claim exclusive ownership over shared cultural assets as globalization reduces distances and promotes connectivity. As cultural nationalism dominates debates, cosmopolitan points of view - also known as cultural internationalism - have become politically incorrect.

### **3. Methodologies for Management of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)**

Good management of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) calls for a multifarious strategy stressing community involvement, technological adaptability, strong policy frameworks, sustainable development, and crisis readiness.

#### ***Methodologies Based on Communities***

Effective ICH management rests mostly on a dedication to community-centered approaches. Participatory documentation and inventorying – where communities directly identify, record, and inventory their legacy – begin this process. Using approaches that honor local knowledge – such as oral histories and community mapping – ensures that communities keep control over the recorded resources. Moreover, protection based on community is rather important. By means of apprenticeship programs and intergenerational seminars supporting conventional transmission techniques, community leaders and practitioners empower themselves. Establishing venues for celebration and practice helps ICH to remain continuous. Underlying all of these initiatives are moral questions. Before any research or documentation is undertaken, free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) must be obtained absolutely first. Dealing with problems of ownership, intellectual property rights, and benefit-sharing as well as

fostering polite portrayal and avoiding cultural appropriation helps to preserve ICH's identity.

### ***Digital and technological strategies***

Digital age technology and digital techniques are very important. Digital documentation and archiving preserve ICH using 3D modeling, digital photography, and audio and video recordings as well as digital technologies. Long-term preservation is guaranteed by building easily available online archives and databases in line with strong storage and backup mechanisms. Digital transmission and education use platforms for online exhibitions, virtual tours, and instructional films to include ICH into learning environments and thereby encourage language revitalization. Still, careful use of technology is absolutely important. Aware of the digital divide, efforts should be directed at granting access but still keeping awareness of the possibility for misrepresentation. Technology should be a tool to help rather than a replacement for conventional transmission.

### ***Institutional Frameworks and Policy***

Good ICH management depends on robust institutional frameworks and policies. Integrating ICH into national and local policies means building legislative frameworks, distributing resources, including safeguarding into cultural strategies and development plans, and so strengthening International cooperation and coordination assist projects in underdeveloped areas, helps to share best practices, and strengthens networks and alliances. Awareness-raising and education help ICH to be included into school curricula, create public campaigns, and equip professionals in pertinent domains.

### ***Development and Sustainability***

One cannot overestimate ICH's contribution to development and sustainability. Sustainable tourism and ICH create projects honoring cultural values that help nearby populations. Supporting traditional crafts and businesses, ICH and economic development help to train and encourage

fair trade. Understanding the intimate interaction between ICH and the surroundings, ICH and environmental sustainability complement conventional methods that help to conserve and include ICH into projects of sustainable development. These kinds of authenticity are influenced by several elements, including the context, beliefs, actions, cultural identification, performances, and audience opinions, so they do not contradict one other. Knowing the points of view of practitioners will enable legislators to make good decisions that would serve tourists as well as practitioners. Encouragement of ICH among residents is absolutely essential since without knowledge and use, ICH cannot persist. Younger generations, however, show less interest in ICH, which compromises its growth and influences people's inclination to be practitioners. It is imperative to support younger people in handling challenges they come across in striving to preserve and pass on ICH as a long-lasting tourist resource.

More authority given ICH practitioners and associations will help to guarantee ICH remains a worthwhile travel destination. This approach can gain from the coexistence of tourism and cultural legacy management, thereby defining the tasks of every sector. ICH practitioners can protect cultural values and increase the socioeconomic value of ICH by adopting commercial marketing applying a parallel relationship approach. Achieving social and economic growth without sacrificing the future of next generations depends on sustainable travel. While resource-based techniques study how cultural heritage (ICH) values are passed on, community-based and resource-based approaches can help grasp sustainable travel. Three main steps have to be done to make ICH a sustainable tourist resource: motivating development in both tourism and concurrently protecting ICH by means of encouraging ICH among residents, giving ICH practitioners more authority, and so ensuring sustainability of ICH. Encouragement of ICH among inhabitants will raise their curiosity and worth in social, cultural, and financial realms.

### ***Crisis, Reaction and Readiness***

At last, crisis readiness and responsiveness are really essential. While digital preservation protects against loss, risk management plans for ICH sites and practices help to lessen the effect of disasters and conflicts. Along with helping community-led projects both during and after disasters, emergency response systems offer financial and logistical support. These all-encompassing strategies will help us to guarantee the protection and energy of ICH for next generations.

### **4. Conclusion**

A complete strategy including active community involvement, the use of technology, solid policy frameworks, long-term development, and proactive crisis management is required to properly preserve and manage Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH).

A fundamental idea in ICH preservation, community-centeredness has to be grasped and implemented. Beginning with participatory documenting and inventorying – in which communities directly name, document, and categorize their cultural legacy – this process proceeds. Two ways honoring local knowledge and points of view are oral histories and community mapping. This guarantees that communities maintain ownership and control over their kept resources. From the perspective of the society, protection is also quite vital. Through apprenticeship programs and seminars for people of many generations supporting conventional ways of passing on information, community leaders and practitioners empower themselves. Establishing particular venues for practice and celebration of ICH helps to sustain it even farther. These initiatives all revolve on crucial moral issues. Before any study or documentation is conducted, individuals have to provide their free, prior, informed permission (FPIC). Respect ownership, intellectual property rights, and benefit-sharing will help to maintain ICH's authenticity and purity by means of strong struggle against cultural appropriation.

Maintaining ICH alive these days mostly relies on digital techniques and technology. Digital cameras, 3D modeling, audio and video data, and digital photography are utilized for digital documentation and archiving to record and maintain ICH safe. The only ways to guarantee that digital resources will be around for a long time are to create online archives and libraries easily accessible and establish robust storage and backup systems. Through digital tools - online exhibits, virtual tours, and instructional films - education and digital transmission deliver ICH to more people. Using digital tools to help bring back and disseminate languages and designing instructional materials including ICH for both official and informal learning environments will help to further boost its influence. Still, smart application of technology is quite crucial. Considering the digital gap, efforts should be taken to guarantee equitable access while looking for possible misrepresentation. Technology should help to enhance rather than replace conventional means of communication.

Strong institutional structures and policies are required to sufficiently control ICH. Including ICH into national and local policies entails safeguarding ideas in cultural policies and development plans, building legislation to defend ICH and enable its expansion, and allocating the appropriate national and local funds. Through publications, conferences, and seminars, international cooperation and collaboration serve to create networks and partnerships. They also allow one to exchange best practices and knowledge. This supports worldwide initiatives to safeguard ICH in areas experiencing conflict and great danger of disaster. Awareness-raising and education initiatives involving ICH in school curriculum at all levels, public awareness campaigns, and professional training in pertinent fields such education, tourism, and cultural heritage management will enable everyone to learn more about and appreciate ICH.

ICH's participation in sustainability and expansion is becoming more and more crucial. By raising awareness of ICH and ensuring that tourism companies uphold traditional values and avoid turning history into a commodity, sustainable tourism programs benefit nearby areas. By providing tools and training, ICH and economic development support traditional crafts and enterprises connected to ICH expand. This aids in the

expansion of cultural items and fair trade of them. ICH promotes conventional knowledge and practices that assist in environmental protection since it is intrinsically linked to its surroundings. It supports environmental sustainability on its own as well as including these into more extensive schemes for sustainable development.

Maintaining ICH going through unanticipated events ultimately rests on being prepared for and able to manage a crisis. Methodologies of risk management are crucial for ICH operations and sites. These cover strategies for lessening the consequences of pandemics, natural disasters, and war. Making recovery strategies helps ICH to get back up and running following disasters; its digital preservation and recording aid to prevent data loss. Emergency response systems provide financial and logistical support to those working with ICH and groups impacted by emergencies. They also enable community-led initiatives track and safeguard ICH both during and following crises. These all-encompassing, linked plans will enable us to ensure ICH survives and passes on to next generations.

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# Ethical considerations in ICH

## Chapter 10

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### 1. Introduction

*"Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage requires a bridge between respect for cultural diversity and ethical stewardship, ensuring communities retain ownership and voice in sharing the rich tapestry of human traditions."*

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) are all those elements recognize as essential to cultural identity by communities. Therefore, ICH is alive and ever-evolving, passed down through generations. It includes a rich tapestry of oral traditions, performing arts, social customs, rituals, festive celebrations, and a deep understanding of their surroundings. The beauty of ICH is that it gives communities a strong sense of identity and continuity, while also promoting appreciation for cultural diversity and human creativity. However, the documentation and preservation of ICH raise critical ethical concerns, particularly regarding cultural ownership and intellectual property rights, as many traditional practices and knowledge systems belong collectively to communities rather than individuals. The present chapter focuses on the different aspects of interconnecting ICH and ethics, starting with the definition of ethics and moving to the perspectives and

concerns raised over the years in this domain, which are found across literature.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

Preserving cultural and intangible heritage requires a clear understanding of ethics and culture. Ethics, derived from the Greek *ethos*, refers to principles guiding human actions toward the good. Culture encompasses the knowledge, art, morals, customs, and beliefs acquired socially, forming both material (art) and immaterial (customs, knowledge) dimensions that underpin social identity. There is an intrinsic relationship between culture and identity, shaped through interactions with others in a specific time and space. Cultural interpretation helps individuals discover themselves and find meaning in their reality. Recognizing cultural diversity is essential for fostering intercultural dialogue and ensuring the survival of minority cultures. Neglecting or erasing a community's ICH undermines its identity and imposes cultural dominance, ultimately diminishing the richness of cultural interaction in today's global society. Protecting ICH is, therefore, a critical step in promoting inclusivity and sociocultural re-creation.

### 2.1 Defining Ethical Practices in ICH

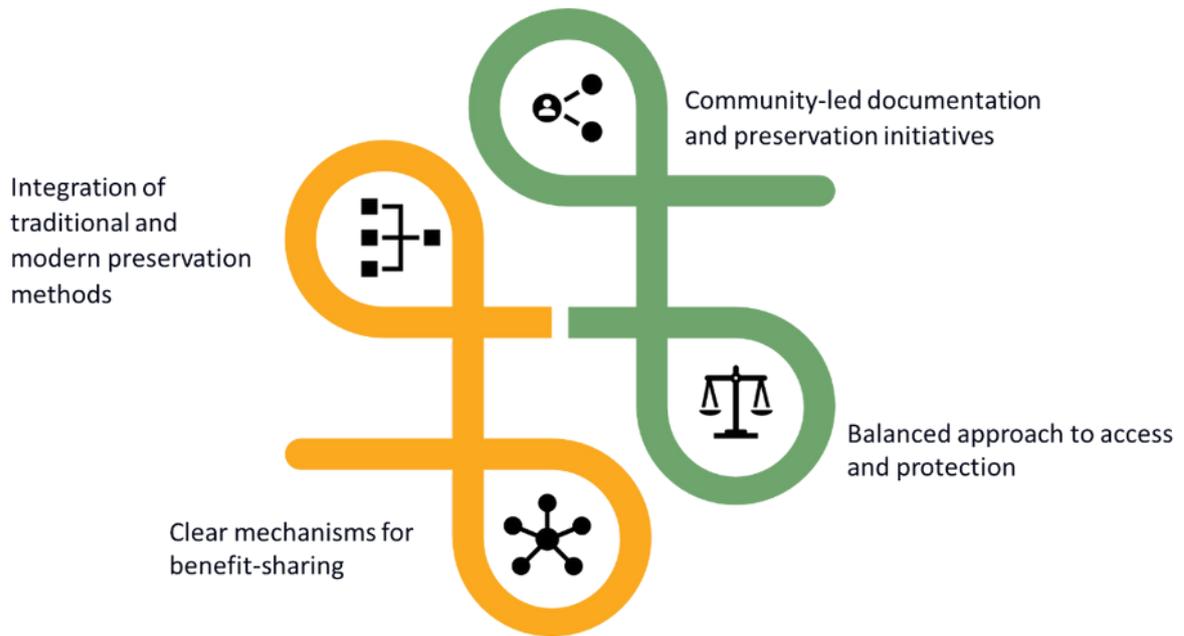
ICH embodies the rich and vibrant traditions, practices, and expressions that are meaningful to communities as vital to their cultural identity. Thus, caring for it is essential for preserving cultural diversity and fostering intercultural dialogue in the ever-globalizing world. However, the ethical dilemmas surrounding the protection of intangible cultural heritage are quite complex and nuanced. A fundamental ethical principle is ownership and control by the community. Since ICH is deeply connected to the communities that create and nurture it, they should play a central role in decisions about its documentation, preservation, and sharing. This brings up relevant questions about the power dynamics between local communities and outside stakeholders like governments, NGOs, and cultural institutions. Authenticity and integrity are also major concerns. As ICH naturally evolves, safeguarding efforts should not aim to "freeze"

cultural practices, as this could undermine their authenticity. Instead, initiatives should promote the ongoing vitality and adaptation of ICH. Cultural rights are another key ethical consideration. While communities have the right to uphold and pass down their heritage, these rights need to be balanced with individual human rights, intellectual property issues, and fair access to cultural benefits. UNESCO (2003) offers guidelines that highlight the importance of respecting communities, embracing cultural diversity, and practicing sustainable heritage management.

## **2.2 Principles of Ownership and Custodianship**

Ownership and custodianship of ICH present a range of intricate challenges when it comes to preserving culture. According to UNESCO's 2003 Convention, ICH encompasses the practices, expressions, knowledge, and cultural spaces that are deeply connected to communities. ICH is fluid and collective, which makes it tough to claim exclusive ownership, unlike traditional property. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) points out that ICH can't be neatly categorized under conventional property laws since it evolves alongside the communities that uphold it. Legal frameworks often find it hard to tackle these complexities, especially given the limitations of intellectual property laws. The concept of custodianship introduces even more difficulties, particularly when it comes to defining who the responsible custodians are and what their roles should be. Additionally, there's the modern challenge of balancing documentation with traditional ways of passing down knowledge. Current issues also include the risks of commercial exploitation, cultural appropriation, the effects of globalization, and how digital technologies influence access and preservation. To address these challenges, Stefano and Davis (2017) suggested a framework for sustainable ICH management that focuses on preservation initiatives, effective methods, and mechanisms for sharing benefits (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Dimensions for sustainable ICH management



Looking forward, this perspective is reinforced by UNESCO's operational directives, which emphasize the need for evolving protection strategies that respond to contemporary challenges while respecting traditional practices. The complexity of ICH ownership and custodianship requires ongoing research and policy development.

### 3. Ethical Challenges in Documenting ICH

The idea of informed consent goes beyond just ensuring honesty between researchers and those documenting or sharing cultural memories. It highlights the importance of individual and community autonomy in making decisions about their cultural practices and how they are preserved and shared. Establishing informed and thoughtful consent is crucial to prevent the appropriation and misuse - sometimes even exploitative use - of cultures, especially those of minority groups. To achieve this, communities need to be empowered to assess the effects of their actions (as noted in principle 9, UNESCO, 2003), whether that's directly or by allowing others to study and engage with their heritage. It's essential for the community to take shared responsibility in recognizing threats to their culture and to

actively participate in decision-making processes aimed at preventing or reducing these risks (as outlined in principle 10, UNESCO, 2003).

### **3.1. Representation and Misrepresentation**

The way ICH is represent and sometimes misrepresent is a crucial issue in preserving culture. It brings up important questions about authenticity, ethics, and the dynamics of culture itself. When talking about ethics, it often revolves around accurately showcasing the cultural expressions of communities while trying to avoid the pitfalls of commodification or distortion. Misrepresentation can be particularly harmful, especially when cultural practices are commercialized or altered for outside audiences, as this can change the very identity of those cultures. When cultural elements are oversimplified or reproduced, it can strip away their authenticity, leading to stereotypes and silencing the voices of marginalized groups.

A great example of ethical representation is found in community muralism, where underrepresented groups use public art to express their cultural identity and address social issues. However, recent studies show that these murals are in danger of being erased due to urban development and a lack of protective measures, which underscores the ethical obligation to safeguard these cultural expressions. Moreover, efforts to digitize and provide fair access to documentary heritage need to be carried out with careful legal and policy considerations, ensuring that the rights and voices of the cultures involved are prioritized. While many institutions focus on acquiring cultural materials with clear provenance and verified authenticity, the ongoing challenge is to distinguish between genuine cultural representations and staged authenticity, which can dilute the true essence of cultural identity. Food, in particular, is a powerful way to maintain cultural authenticity, serving as a means to express heritage and resist the homogenizing effects of globalization. Therefore, its need a comprehensive approach to cultural representation that emphasizes authenticity, ensuring the ethical preservation and promotion of ICH for future generations.

### **3.2. Cultural Sensitivity and Appropriation**

Recent research points that the intricate issues surrounding cultural appreciation and appropriation highlight the importance of finding a balance between celebrating cultures and considering ethical implications. The term "cultural tariffing" refers to how our views on appropriation are influenced by the perceived costs and benefits of cultural exchanges (Oshotse et al., 2024). To truly engage with a culture, we need to foster genuine interactions, ensure fair exchanges, and obtain consent from the communities involved. Unfortunately, cultural exploitation often arises from commodification, misrepresentation, and economic disparities. When Indigenous ceremonies are transformed into tourist attractions, they lose their sacred significance, which can be distressing; stereotypical representations perpetuate harmful myths; and in the realm of traditional crafts, artisans frequently receive little compensation while middlemen reap the rewards, exacerbating inequalities (Gertner, 2019). Additionally, tourism infrastructure can displace local communities and disrupt their cultural heritage. To promote ethical cultural engagement, we must prioritize respect, fair economic practices, and community consent to safeguard cultural authenticity and identity.

### **4. Ethical Considerations in Preserving and Promoting ICH**

Preserving ICH is all about finding that sweet spot between protecting traditional practices and adapting them to fit our modern world. Supporters emphasize the importance of keeping cultural expressions true to their roots, as this is vital for safeguarding identity and ensuring cultural diversity for future generations. On the flip side, some critics argue that cultural practices need to evolve to remain relevant in our increasingly globalized society. One of the biggest hurdles in preserving ICH is figuring out how to allocate resources effectively. Research into ICH tourism points out the necessity for sustainable resource management, evaluating the impacts of tourism, and understanding how visitors behave. New strategies are emerging that prioritize place-making, embrace technological advancements, and focus on environmental sustainability to boost

preservation efforts (Katelieva et al., 2020). Even with these challenges, preserving ICH is essential for maintaining cultural diversity, fostering community resilience, and passing down knowledge through the generations. The disappearance of cultural practices isn't a foregone conclusion; it's something we can actively work to prevent.

#### **4.1 Commercialization of ICH**

The commercialization of ICH for tourism and market purposes raises some serious ethical concerns. ICH is a vital part of cultural identity and belonging, and when it gets turned into a commodity, it risks losing its authenticity and original meaning, becoming just another product for outsiders (Hsu et al., 2022). This shift can change the context of cultural expressions, potentially diminishing their social and spiritual importance and threatening the identity of the communities that cherish them. One major ethical issue is the uneven distribution of economic benefits. While outside stakeholders cash in on ICH commercialization, local communities, the true guardians of this heritage, often see very little financial gain (Zhang et al., 2023). This economic disparity leads to exploitation, especially for indigenous and marginalized groups who may not have the means to safeguard their cultural heritage from being appropriated. Cultural heritage tourism has faced criticism for taking advantage of local cultures while providing scant benefits to the communities involved. Many rural areas find themselves economically reliant on tourism, leaving them with few options but to commercialize their heritage, which only deepens cycles of commodification and disempowerment. Tackling these issues calls for ethical and fair approaches that prioritize community empowerment, equitable economic distribution, and the preservation of the inherent value of ICH.

#### **4.2 Balancing Global Promotion with Local Relevance**

The global promotion of ICH brings a mix of challenges and opportunities, especially when it comes to respecting the communities that originated these traditions while also spreading them more widely. There are differing views between cultural institutions and migrant communities regarding how

to preserve and share ICH, highlighting the need for strategies that can bridge these differences. The commercialization of ICH often makes heritage professionals uneasy, exposing ongoing tensions between the goals of conservation and the demands of the market. In the tourism sector, practitioners grapple with the crucial task of keeping authenticity intact while steering clear of alienation or cultural distortion.

Digital platforms offer exciting new ways to communicate and promote the values of ICH, but they also risk turning these traditions into mere commodities if not handled with care. To effectively promote ICH on a global scale, it's vital to adopt a participatory approach that involves local communities, academics, the private sector, NGOs, and governments. Such collaborative efforts can help preserve cultural heritage while protecting cultural identities and addressing the under-representation of migrant communities in heritage participation and safeguarding initiatives. This multi-stakeholder model encourages inclusivity and tackles the complexities of preserving ICH in our interconnected world.

## **5. Recommendations for Ethical Practices in ICH**

To truly engage with ICH effectively, it needs ethical frameworks that put community involvement and empowerment front and center. It's crucial to see local communities as key players, making sure their voices and contributions are at the heart of preservation efforts. When people participate meaningfully, it not only promotes sustainability but also ensures that initiatives resonate with community values. Plus, integrating digital technologies can boost accessibility and inclusivity, giving a platform to marginalized voices and creating more opportunities for engagement.

### ***Community-Centered Approaches***

A fundamental principle in ICH preservation is the idea of community self-government. It's essential for researchers to build relationships rooted in trust, open dialogue, and mutual respect. Ethical engagement begins with obtaining culturally appropriate informed consent and goes further to

include active collaboration in setting research goals and methodologies. Community members should be at the forefront, playing a vital role in shaping outcomes that not only advance scholarly research but also serve their own interests.

### ***Ethical Documentation and Representation***

Documenting ICH is a delicate task, especially when it comes to sacred or restricted elements. It's essential for communities to have control over what gets recorded and shared, which means research methods need to be flexible and respectful of traditional ways of passing down knowledge. Thoughtful translation and representation are key to preserving the authenticity of cultural expressions while also making them accessible to a wider audience.

### ***Digital Challenges and Opportunities***

While digital technologies bring exciting opportunities for documenting and preserving ICH, they also come with some serious challenges, like concerns over data sovereignty, privacy, and the risk of cultural misappropriation. It's crucial for researchers to establish clear protocols that safeguard community interests, ensuring that data management is ethical and strikes a balance between access and control.

### ***Equitable Benefit-Sharing***

Research should really aim to bring real benefits to the communities that contribute to it. This means giving proper credit, ensuring everyone has equal access to the findings, and backing initiatives that are led by the community itself. When it comes to commercial uses, it's crucial to set up fair agreements regarding intellectual property rights and compensation to avoid any kind of exploitation.

### ***Sustained Engagement and Accountability***

Building long-term partnerships with communities is crucial for conducting ethical research. Keeping an eye on the impacts of projects and tackling any unintended consequences, can help fostering trust and ensuring support for cultural preservation efforts continues to thrive.

### ***The Role of International Organizations***

UNESCO and various global organizations are crucial in establishing ethical standards, particularly through frameworks like the 2003 Convention. These institutions not only offer capacity-building, policy guidance, and financial support but also champion community involvement, cultural diversity, and sustainable heritage practices. Through embracing these best practices, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage can be assured and lead to more ethical, fair, and sustainable results, protecting cultural legacies while promoting social unity and understanding among communities.

## **6. Conclusion**

The documentation, preservation, and promotion of ICH come with a set of intricate ethical challenges that require thoughtful consideration and a balanced approach. As cultural heritage professionals and stakeholders dive into the world of ICH, they face sensitive issues that can significantly affect communities, traditional knowledge systems, and the sustainability of cultures. At the core of ethical ICH practices is the essential principle of respecting community rights and cultural sovereignty. UNESCO's Code of Ethics highlights that communities should have primary control over their cultural expressions and decide how their heritage is documented, preserved, and shared. This principle is especially crucial in today's fast-paced digital age and the global exchange of cultures. When it comes to documentation, there are serious ethical concerns surrounding consent, representation, and cultural sensitivity. Researchers and heritage professionals need to be vigilant, ensuring their methods don't undermine the integrity of cultural practices or reveal sensitive cultural knowledge. The

International Council of Museums (ICOM) guidelines emphasize the necessity of obtaining informed consent and setting up clear protocols for data collection and storage that honor cultural practices. Preservation efforts must strike a balance between protecting cultural heritage and recognizing the fluid, evolving nature of living traditions. There's a strong ethical obligation to avoid "freezing" cultural practices in time or imposing outside standards of authenticity. Instead, preservation initiatives should empower communities to maintain and pass on their heritage in ways that resonate with contemporary life.

The promotion and sharing of ICH raise questions about cultural appropriation, commercialization, and benefit-sharing. Stakeholders must ensure that promotional activities do not lead to exploitation or misrepresentation of cultural practices. It's really important to set up fair and just benefit-sharing systems that ensure communities receive the recognition and compensation they deserve for their cultural contributions. Moving forward in this way requires a collective commitment to ethical principles when it comes to managing ICH (see Table 2).

Table 2. Call to Action matrix

<b>For Communities</b>	<b>For Researchers</b>	<b>For Policymakers</b>	<b>For Global Organizations</b>
<b>Assert their rights in ICH management</b> <b>Develop internal protocols for heritage documentation and sharing</b> <b>Engage actively in policy discussions affecting their cultural heritage</b>	Adopt participatory research methodologies Implement robust ethical guidelines in research practices Ensure transparent communication with community stakeholders	Develop legal frameworks that protect community rights Create mechanisms for meaningful community consultation Support sustainable heritage management initiatives	Strengthen international cooperation in ethical ICH practices Provide resources and support for capacity building Facilitate dialogue between stakeholders

The idea that ICH can evolve while still holding onto its core values opens up exciting possibilities for a cultural landscape that is both inclusive and adaptable, one that genuinely reflects the rich and diverse tapestry of human experiences. The tension between preserving and evolving ICH highlights the importance of tackling essential questions about how to strike a balance between safeguarding heritage and encouraging innovation. This challenge calls on communities, policymakers, and scholars to navigate the complex relationship between cultural continuity and change in today's world. Therefore, denoting the urgent need for a stewardship framework that prioritizes collective ownership and management of cultural assets, recognizing the unique bonds between local communities and their heritage while also addressing the historical injustices tied to cultural appropriation. Taking care of cultural heritage is crucial for keeping it alive, meaningful, and sustainable for the generations to come. The moment to take action is now, calling all community members to work together to protect, preserve, and promote intangible cultural heritage in ways that honor those who created it, respect those who safeguard it, and ultimately benefit all of humanity.

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# Funding and Resource Mobilization for Intangible Cultural Heritage

## Chapter 11

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### 1. Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is a vital part of every community's identity, but it often faces extinction risks due to globalization, urbanization, and other socio-economic factors. To ensure its preservation and transmission to future generations, developing effective strategies for funding and mobilizing resources is necessary. This chapter explores various approaches to providing financial and other support for projects related to the research, documentation, preservation, and promotion of ICH, focusing on opportunities for cooperation with government institutions and non-governmental organizations, referring to the mapping of the situation in Bulgaria and best practices.

### 2. Resources for research

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (adopted in 2003) is the primary and defining international instrument that aims to protect and promote the living cultural heritage of humanity. It encompasses oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. <sup>1</sup> It emphasizes the importance of the communities that are the bearers of this heritage and encourages their participation in its safeguarding. It also calls

upon States to create national inventories of intangible cultural heritage and to take measures for its preservation.

In its efforts to support the safeguarding of living heritage, the Secretariat of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage develops a set of online education and knowledge management tools, providing valuable data and resources to all stakeholders. These tools are designed to facilitate access to information and promote the effective safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

Among the main resources are digital visualizations allowing immersion in the world of ICH, exploring its connections with nature and the factors that threaten it. Alongside this, 62 thematic open-access training materials strengthen capacity in key areas such as inventorying, policy development and requesting assistance. The sustainable development toolkit with over 30 case studies demonstrates the contribution of ICH to sustainable development. A video animation on gender issues and ICH, accompanied by presenter notes, has been created for educational purposes. An interactive bibliography with over 1000 references for scientific research related to the 2003 Convention provides a valuable resource for researchers and practitioners. An electronic register of intangible cultural heritage has been created (<https://www.unesco.org/en/intangible-cultural-heritage/grid?hub=365>) and a Register of good practices for the safeguarding of ICH - Bulgaria (<https://bulgariaich.com/index.php?act=content&rec=59>). It aims to identify and support bearers of traditional knowledge and skills, thereby ensuring the transmission of this valuable knowledge to future generations.

### 3. Identification of Funding Sources

The safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage require dedicated efforts and sustainable funding. In this context, international organizations, particularly UNESCO, play a crucial role. UNESCO, through its 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, lays the foundation for international cooperation and support. UNESCO's Participation Programme (<https://www.unesco.org/en/member-states->

[portal/participation-programme](#)) provides specific funding opportunities for projects that align with the organization's priorities, emphasizing the documentation, transmission, and awareness-raising of ICH. The UNESCO Participation Programme is an important tool for the financial support of projects that are consistent with the key priorities of the organization. It is specifically designed to assist member states, with a particular focus on developing countries. This program is distinguished by its wide scope, providing funding opportunities in a variety of areas that are essential for the development of society. These include the preservation of rich cultural heritage, the development of quality education, support for scientific research, and the promotion of media literacy. National Commissions for UNESCO in member states play a crucial role in supporting and promoting intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Each commission acts as an intermediary between national institutions and UNESCO, assisting in the development and implementation of projects related to the preservation of ICH. The commission provides advice and guidance on applying for UNESCO funding programs, such as the Participation Programme, and assists communities in the process of documenting and preserving their cultural heritage. In addition, it actively participates in raising awareness of the importance of ICH through the organization of events, conferences, and publications.

European funds offer significant funding opportunities. The Creative Europe program (<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe>) supports projects in the fields of culture and creativity, including those related to ICH. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) can finance projects that contribute to the development of cultural tourism and the preservation of cultural heritage in the regions. The EIT Culture & Creativity call, co-funded by Horizon Europe, supports short, results-oriented projects that address current challenges in these sectors. Particular attention is paid to projects in areas such as fashion, architecture, cultural heritage, audiovisual media, and games, with the aim of accelerating commercialization and market uptake of innovations.

In cross-border regions, opportunities can be sought from the Interreg program (<https://interreg.eu/calls-for-projects/>) to develop various products and solutions that stimulate regional development, which may include

those related to cultural heritage and, in particular, intangible cultural heritage.

Erasmus+ offers significant opportunities to fund initiatives and projects aimed at preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage. This connection is deeply rooted in the Erasmus+ concept, which emphasizes cultural diversity, inclusion, education, youth participation, and international cooperation. The program supports projects in the field of education for the transmission of knowledge and skills related to intangible cultural heritage through workshops, trainings, exchange of good practices, and the development of educational materials. Youth and civic participation are the focus, with Erasmus+ encouraging the participation of young people in the preservation of cultural heritage through youth exchanges and volunteer projects. Projects promoting international cooperation are supported through three key actions: Key Action 1 (KA1) for the mobility of individuals, Key Action 2 (KA2) for cooperation between organizations, and Key Action 3 (KA3) for supporting policy reform. Specific examples of projects include documenting traditional crafts, youth exchanges to study local customs, educational projects to include cultural heritage in curricula, and training to preserve crafts. ([https://www.es-hormones.org/what-we-do/research/european-research-funding/funding-programmes/erasmusplus/?gad\\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAw5W-BhAhEiwApv4goBE6MGGXwod4fHluq1SznkKrzZ31ZtE8nBJV\\_xgqFqLVymumtC7RbRoC53oQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.es-hormones.org/what-we-do/research/european-research-funding/funding-programmes/erasmusplus/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAw5W-BhAhEiwApv4goBE6MGGXwod4fHluq1SznkKrzZ31ZtE8nBJV_xgqFqLVymumtC7RbRoC53oQAvD_BwE))

In parallel, the Ministry of Innovation and Growth of Bulgaria creates funding opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the "Small Innovative Grants" procedure, part of the "Research, Innovation and Digitalization for Smart Transformation" program (2021-2027). Additionally, SMEs can take advantage of nearly 1,000 innovation services through the Cooperation Platform between higher education institutions, research organizations, and businesses. These initiatives provide diverse opportunities for young people and SMEs to develop their creative and innovative ideas, contributing to the cultural and economic development of the country. (<https://www.epc.bg/en/open-for-submission-procedure-bg16rfpr002-1005-small-innovative-grants-for-small-and->

[medium-sized-enterprises-\(smes\)-programme-research-innovation-and-digitalization-for-smart-transformation-2021-2027-n23\)](#)

The creation of various productions based on intangible cultural heritage and their presentation to a wide audience, including foreign ones, is also funded through the programs of the Recovery and Resilience Plan ([https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/recovery-and-resilience-plan-bulgaria/bulgarias-recovery-and-resilience-supported-projects-nation-wide-investment-scheme\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/recovery-and-resilience-plan-bulgaria/bulgarias-recovery-and-resilience-supported-projects-nation-wide-investment-scheme_en)).

Opportunities for mobilizing resources can also be found through the financial instruments of the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism (<https://www.eeagrants.bg/en/about-us>). A good example of such a realized project related to intangible cultural heritage is the project "Traditions unite us". The project activities include preparation of the performance/spectacle "Traditions unite us" (and its presentation in 10 small settlements in the regions of Kardzhali, Smolyan and Plovdiv and in Norway), creation of a children's school for making dolls with traditional costumes and traditional masks, organization of a traveling exhibition of puppets with folk costumes and outdoor open lessons in making dolls in 10 settlements in Bulgaria.

To ensure the sustainable preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Bulgaria, it is essential to identify and utilize diverse funding sources. Firstly, state programs play a key role. Through the programs of the Bulgarian National Science Fund (BNSF), project proposals thematically focused on the research and documentation of ICH can be supported. The Ministry of Culture, through the National Culture Fund and the "Intangible Cultural Heritage" program (professional ensembles and bearers of intangible cultural heritage), provides opportunities for funding projects related to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. Regarding the National Culture Fund, support in the "Cultural Heritage" direction is prepared in accordance with the legal framework and definitions of cultural heritage in the Cultural Heritage Act of the Republic of Bulgaria and the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural

Heritage. It is aimed at the preservation, research, and promotion of intangible cultural heritage through an integrated approach, as well as the digitization of cultural heritage. It aims to develop means for improved access to cultural heritage through digital technologies and the transmission of cultural content through cultural tourism and the introduction of sustainable models for cultural industries at the local level. It currently exists in two modules – "Preservation and Promotion of Cultural Heritage" and "Cultural Industries and Cultural Tourism".

The "Intangible Cultural Heritage" program aims to support the professional presentation of folk art, revitalize the activities of professional folk ensembles, and preserve and maintain folk heritage at a high aesthetic level. Activities include the creation of new artistic products, performances, thematic concert programs, etc., the development and implementation of educational programs for pupils and students, and the development of creative schools. The expected results of the activities are aimed at creating comprehensive cultural products that showcase the diversity of Bulgarian folklore and contribute to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. These products will improve opportunities for exploring and studying folklore and traditions, attracting the interest of learners. Additionally, conditions will be created for the development of the creative potential of young artists in the field of folklore, including musicians, singers, and dancers. Ultimately, opportunities for access to cultural content will be expanded, ensuring wider dissemination and accessibility of cultural values. ([https://mc.government.bg/files/10578\\_Programa%20-%20Ansambli%20-%202024.pdf](https://mc.government.bg/files/10578_Programa%20-%20Ansambli%20-%202024.pdf))

The National Youth Program (2021-2025) sets as its main goal the improvement of the quality of life and the realization of young people in Bulgaria, with an emphasis on investing in their potential. The program is aimed at young people between the ages of 15 and 29 and also includes national and local structures, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders. Within thematic area 3, "Leisure, Creativity, and Culture," the program aims to provide young people with opportunities to participate in various initiatives that enrich their leisure time, encourage their creative expression, and preserve traditions. It also strives to enhance their personal

and social culture and affirm their identity. (<https://nism.bg/en/nacionalna-programa-za-mladezta-2021-2025>) Additionally, many municipalities in Bulgaria have programs to support local cultural initiatives, including those focused on ICH, and a budget is allocated annually for this municipal project fund "Culture" (<https://kultura.sofia.bg/>; <https://culture.plovdiv.bg/> <https://www.varna.bg/en/91>)

#### **4. Strategies for Cooperation with State Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Private Donors**

UNESCO has set a goal to broaden the participation of various organizations, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), communities, experts, professional centres, and research institutions, in the safeguarding of intangible heritage, based on the adopted convention. It has established an intergovernmental committee and an intangible heritage fund to implement the Convention, which require national reports and raise awareness in safeguarding intangible heritage.

The 2003 Convention emphasizes the essential role of NGOs in safeguarding and promoting intangible cultural heritage (ICH). At the national level, States Parties are encouraged to integrate NGOs into their efforts, especially in identifying and defining ICH, as NGOs often have the closest contact with the communities that are bearers of this heritage. At the international level, accredited NGOs can provide advisory services through the Intergovernmental Committee. Since 2010, the General Assembly has accredited over 170 NGOs. NGOs whose activities are related to ICH are encouraged to apply for accreditation, especially if they are from developing countries.

States Parties are encouraged to establish coordination mechanisms facilitating the participation of communities, groups, individuals, experts, and research institutions in key activities, such as identifying and defining ICH, compiling inventories, developing and implementing programs and projects, and preparing nomination documents. Last but not least, States Parties are called upon to create and update directories of stakeholders who can conduct scientific, technical, and artistic research for the effective

safeguarding of ICH, in accordance with Article 13 of the 2003 Convention. These directories serve as a valuable resource for identifying key partners in cultural heritage safeguarding.

Among the good examples of such organizations in Bulgaria are the National Committee of ICOMOS – Bulgaria, the Bulgarian History Association, the Balkan Heritage Foundation, and the non-profit association "Meshtera – Traditional Knowledge and Crafts" (NGO Information Portal in Bulgaria ([ngobg.info](http://ngobg.info))). The Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (ISSS) for 2021-2027 is a framework created by the European Commission to help regions and member states identify and develop their competitive advantages. This is achieved by focusing investments in key areas where there is growth potential. It is a key document that every member state of the European Union has developed to direct its investments in research and innovation. This strategy is not unique to Bulgaria but is part of a pan-European initiative aimed at promoting economic development and regional competitiveness.

Bulgaria's Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation for 2021-2027 (ISSS), adopted by Council of Ministers Decision No. 1015, is a key tool for the development of a sustainable and competitive economy. It provides a framework for financing innovation, including projects in the field of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), through the "Competitiveness and Innovation in Enterprises" (CIEP) and "Research, Innovation and Digitalization for Smart Transformation" (RIDST) programs. ISSS supports ICH projects in the "New Technologies in Creative and Recreational Industries" area, promoting: Digitalization of cultural heritage (digital archives, virtual museums); Innovative products and services (tourist experiences, educational programs); Support for creative industries (crafts, folklore).

Various state and municipal documents provide guidelines for developing a cultural development strategy, including cultural heritage and the intangible cultural heritage segment (Plan Bulgaria 2030, Cultural Development Strategy, Municipal Integrated Development Plans, which must include a section on cultural heritage). These documents map the existing situation,

clearly define stakeholders, and, with identified funding sources, only a vision and initiative are needed to develop research, preservation, and promotion of intangible cultural heritage.

Successful preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) requires complex collaboration strategies with various stakeholders. Interaction with state agencies, which possess the necessary resources and expertise, is paramount. Effective partnerships are built through active participation in advisory boards and working groups, as well as through the organization of joint events. To ensure sustainability, it is imperative to combine diverse funding sources and build capacity within local communities to take a leading role in preserving their heritage.

Successful collaboration with state agencies is complemented by partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs often have extensive experience working with local communities and can provide valuable support for projects related to ICH research, documentation, and preservation, as well as facilitate the exchange of experience and best practices. In addition, collaboration with private donors is essential. To build trust and support, it is necessary to develop personalized sponsorship proposals and ensure transparency and accountability in the use of funds.

The inclusion of communities in the processes of research, documentation, and preservation, as well as the organization of events to promote local ICH, are key factors in ensuring the sustainability and continuity of cultural heritage. Within the framework of regional cooperation, Bulgaria actively participates in the work of the Council of Ministers of Culture of Southeast European Countries and the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The coordination of our country in the establishment of a Fund for Cultural Cooperation in SEE, which will support cultural exchange and establish Bulgaria's leading role in the region, is significant. In addition, the country is involved in various other initiatives such as the International Foundation "Forum of Slavic Cultures", Danube Cooperation, the 17+1 initiative, and the Network of Cultural Institutes of the European Union countries. These partnerships offer untapped potential that requires the planning of additional initiatives to maximize opportunities.

## 5. Good Practices

In Bulgaria, there are successful examples of initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe under the auspices of UNESCO, registered in Sofia, is an important example. It plays a key role in coordinating efforts to safeguard ICH in the region and in promoting cooperation among various stakeholders. The UNESCO Regional Centre in Sofia promotes regional and international cooperation by creating specialized networks for coordinating activities and exchanging information on the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. In its efforts to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in South-Eastern Europe, UNESCO, through the Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, established the Regional Network of Experts on Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2007. This network provides a platform for the exchange of experience and knowledge among experts from the region, with annual meetings held in various countries contributing to strengthening cooperation. To support capacity building for the implementation of the 2003 Convention at the national level, the Centre initiated in 2018 and maintains a network of universities in the region to strengthen communication between universities, researchers, institutions and bearers of intangible cultural heritage, as well as to encourage information exchange and future cooperation. In addition, the Regional Centre establishes and maintains a network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the field of intangible cultural heritage in the region. This network aims to encourage the participation of NGOs in the processes of safeguarding and promoting intangible cultural heritage, as well as to create a platform for regular communication and information sharing. Through information sessions, the UNESCO Regional Centre Sofia aims to inform about the possibilities for accreditation to UNESCO and to promote a more balanced geographical representation of NGOs accredited to the 2003 Convention, with a focus on the South-Eastern Europe region. Additional information about this network can be found in the Facebook group: (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/430669334489084/>).

In addition to these networks, there is also a Network of Category 2 Centers for Intangible Cultural Heritage. These centres, established and funded by Member States, contribute to the achievement of UNESCO's strategic goals. The Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, under the auspices of UNESCO, is one of these centres, which actively promotes cooperation and implements initiatives for the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage in the region.

It is particularly important to encourage the bearers of this intangible cultural heritage to practice the activities and transmit knowledge and skills to future generations. Bulgaria is fortunate to still possess, to this day, a significantly preserved form of folk culture in its syncretism – as an inseparable combination of sound, movement, word, ritual, etc. UNESCO created the UNESCO pilot program "Living Human Treasures", of which "Living Human Treasures - Bulgaria" is a part. Along with this, Guidelines for the Establishment of National "Living Human Treasures" Systems have been formulated (<https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/00031-EN.pdf>).

## **6. Guidelines for Mobilizing Resources for ICH: Strategies and Tools**

Recognizing the need to safeguard intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the face of contemporary challenges, ensuring effective funding, grants, and resources for the research, documentation, preservation, and promotion of ICH projects requires a comprehensive approach. This approach should be grounded in international instruments such as the 2003 UNESCO Convention and supported by diverse funding sources, including European funds, government programs, and UNESCO initiatives. The relevance, significance, and sustainable results of funded initiatives depend on establishing cross-sectoral partnerships between organizations in the field of culture and the tourist industry, local organizations and institutions and/or representatives of the local community, voluntary civil associations, the private sector, and media, etc., as well as on working with youth audiences. At the core of this approach is the establishment of a unified information portal, serving as a centralized online resource. Such a portal

will provide easy access to information on all available funding sources for ICH in Bulgaria, including detailed data on national and international programs, application criteria, deadlines, and required documents. To ensure the sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) projects, it is necessary to implement a comprehensive approach that includes several key strategies: developing training programs to assist organizations and communities in preparing project proposals, building a network of experts to provide consultations and mentorship, promoting public-private partnerships to mobilize additional resources, and disseminating best practices and successful projects to inspire and motivate other organizations and communities.

## Resources

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<https://www.unesco.org/en/intangible-cultural-heritage/grid?hub=365>

<https://bulgariaich.com/index.php?act=content&rec=59>

<https://www.unesco.org/en/member-states-portal/participation-programme>

<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe>

<https://interreg.eu/calls-for-projects/>

<https://www.ese-hormones.org/what-we-do/research/european-research-funding/funding->

[programmes/erasmusplus/?gad\\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAw5W-BhAhEiwApv4goBE6MGGXwod4fHluq1SznkKrzZ31ZtE8nBJV\\_xgqFqLVymumtC7RbRoC53oQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.ese-hormones.org/what-we-do/research/european-research-funding/funding-programmes/erasmusplus/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAw5W-BhAhEiwApv4goBE6MGGXwod4fHluq1SznkKrzZ31ZtE8nBJV_xgqFqLVymumtC7RbRoC53oQAvD_BwE)

[https://www.epc.bg/en/open-for-submission-procedure-bg16rfpr002-1005-small-innovative-grants-for-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises-\(smes\)-programme-esearch-innovation-and-digitalization-for-smart-transformation-2021-2027-n23](https://www.epc.bg/en/open-for-submission-procedure-bg16rfpr002-1005-small-innovative-grants-for-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises-(smes)-programme-esearch-innovation-and-digitalization-for-smart-transformation-2021-2027-n23)

[https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/recovery-and-resilience-plan-bulgaria/bulgarias-recovery-and-resilience-supported-projects-nation-wide-investment-scheme\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/recovery-and-resilience-plan-bulgaria/bulgarias-recovery-and-resilience-supported-projects-nation-wide-investment-scheme_en)

<https://www.eeagrants.bg/en/about-us>

[https://mc.government.bg/files/10578\\_Programa%20-%20Ansambli%20-%202024.pdf](https://mc.government.bg/files/10578_Programa%20-%20Ansambli%20-%202024.pdf)

<https://nism.bg/en/nacionalna-programa-za-mladezta-2021-2025>

[https://kultura.sofia.bg/;](https://kultura.sofia.bg/) <https://culture.plovdiv.bg/>

<https://www.varna.bg/en/91>

<https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/00031-EN.pdf>

# Conclusions

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) stands at the crossroads of memory, identity, and innovation. Throughout this handbook, we explored its many dimensions - from definitions and legal frameworks to tourism, sustainability, ethics, contemporary challenges, and EU integration. Taken together, the chapters reveal a central truth: ICH is not merely a collection of customs or traditions preserved in isolation, but a living, evolving testament to humanity's capacity to create meaning, strengthen social bonds, and adapt to changing times.

Safeguarding ICH is both a cultural duty and a societal opportunity. ICH connects individuals to their communities, communities to their regions, and nations to a shared European and global heritage. It contributes profoundly to social cohesion by reinforcing a sense of belonging and continuity. At the same time, ICH plays an increasingly important role in sustainable development, offering economic opportunities through cultural tourism, creative industries, and local entrepreneurship - provided these are managed responsibly and ethically.

The chapters of this Handbook also demonstrate that the preservation of ICH requires a delicate balance between protection and openness to change. Traditions cannot be fossilised; they must remain meaningful to the communities that practice them. As globalisation, digitalisation, demographic shifts, climate change, and cultural homogenization exert pressure on traditional practices, the challenge is to ensure that heritage evolves without losing authenticity or community ownership. This reinforces the need for participatory approaches where bearers and practitioners guide decisions about how their heritage is documented, shared, and transmitted.

Legislation, policies, and international frameworks - such as the UNESCO 2003 Convention and the Faro Convention - provide essential tools and structures. Yet, their effectiveness ultimately relies on community engagement, adequate funding, intersectoral cooperation, and well-designed educational programs. The digital era offers new possibilities: virtual archiving, digital storytelling, online learning, artificial intelligence, and immersive technologies can enhance accessibility and awareness. Still, these tools must be used with caution to respect cultural rights, data sovereignty, and ethical representation.

Within the European Union, ICH carries additional significance. It supports the vision of a “United in Diversity” Europe by highlighting shared cultural elements across borders - from festivals and craft traditions to music, culinary heritage, and ecological knowledge. At the same time, it celebrates the richness of regional identities and local specificities. In this way, ICH becomes a powerful medium for integration, dialogue, and solidarity. By strengthening the visibility of local cultures and enabling cross-border cooperation, ICH fosters a sense of shared European belonging without erasing national or regional distinctiveness.

As we look to the future, safeguarding ICH requires long-term commitment, interdisciplinary partnerships, and the cultivation of cultural literacy among younger generations. Communities must remain central to all preservation efforts, and policymakers must continue to recognize ICH as a dynamic resource for cultural vitality, social wellbeing, and sustainable development.

Ultimately, intangible heritage is a living bridge between past, present, and future. By valuing, protecting, and responsibly promoting it, we ensure that the creative spirit of humanity continues to thrive and inspire generations to come.



Website

[www.inthrace.unitbv.ro](http://www.inthrace.unitbv.ro)



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