



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Culture and Tourism



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

**Hellenic
National Commission
for UNESCO**



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Venice Office
Regional Bureau for Science
and Culture in Europe

Final Declaration

6th Annual Regional Meeting on Intangible Cultural Heritage

*“Promoting a shared vision of intangible cultural
heritage in South-East Europe”*



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Intangible
Cultural
Heritage

Athens, Greece, 10-11 May 2012

A meeting organized within the initiative



United Nations
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CULTURE

A BRIDGE TO DEVELOPMENT



We, the participants in the Sixth regional seminar of the South-East European Experts Network on Intangible Cultural Heritage (Athens, 10-11 May 2012), hereinafter ‘the Network’, thank the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Hellenic Republic and the Hellenic National Commission of UNESCO for having hosted and organized, together with the UNESCO Venice Office for Science and Culture in Europe, this annual seminar.

We underline that this meeting, which is a follow-up to the previous meetings in Arbanassi, Bulgaria (June 2007), Safranbolu, Turkey (May 2008), Zagreb, Croatia (April 2009), Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Romania (May 2010), and Belgrade, Serbia (May 2011) marked a further step forward to enhance a common understanding of opportunities and challenges linked to the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage in the region.

During our discussions, the following topics and challenges of common interest emerged, and recommendations for future action were proposed:

Youth

1. Inspired by the First South East European Youth Forum on World Heritage, organized jointly in 2011 by Croatia and Slovenia, we recommend the organization of a SEE regional Youth Forum on intangible cultural heritage, as a significant platform for exchanges, dialogue, education, training and awareness-raising. In this sense, we welcome the proposal by Cyprus to organise a Mediterranean Youth Forum in 2013 on “Intangible cultural heritage: exploring our common roots”, in collaboration with the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet).
2. We call upon the production of quality awareness-raising, pedagogic and educational materials for youth on intangible cultural heritage, based on models such as the UNESCO World Heritage in Young Hands Kit.
3. We emphasize the importance to better integrate intangible cultural heritage in school curricula and education systems, as well as in informal education programmes and activities, while underlining the need to enhance cooperation between relevant ministries and institutions to this end.

Networking and cooperation

4. Bearing in mind that digitization of intangible cultural heritage is an emerging priority for the region, we recommend the establishment and regular update, within the website of the Sofia Regional Center for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, of a regional database for national inventories, as a tool for shared documentation and comparative analysis, with multilingual (English / French) analytical summaries and presentations.
5. We encourage the establishment of closer cooperation ties between the countries of the region in specific common fields of action, such as the production of documentary movies and visual recording of intangible cultural heritage, and the organisation of related dissemination events (e.g. visual anthropology film festivals).



6. We stress the necessity of coordination at national, regional and local levels between the institutions, policies, and programmes responsible for the implementation of the different UNESCO cultural conventions (with special reference to the 1972, 2001, 2003 and 2005 conventions), as a way to reinforce integrated and interdisciplinary approaches to the safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage.
7. Taking note of the good practices presented during the meeting, we stress the importance to further reinforce cooperation on the cross-border and multinational dimensions of intangible cultural heritage (nomination files, research projects, publications, master programmes, trainings, films and documentaries, etc.), while at the same time ensuring the respect of cultural diversity and of local/national specificities, as well as the full involvement of local concerned communities.
8. We underline the need to simplify and streamline procedures and guidelines for the completion of nomination files to the Lists foreseen under the 2003 Convention, with special reference to the extension of enlisted elements.
9. We express appreciation for efforts by UNESCO concerning the training of trainers and the preparation of training materials on the implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, as well as for the organisation of national training workshops on community-based inventorying, supported by the UNESCO Venice Office (the first one having taken place in Montenegro in 2011, and the second one due to take place in Bosnia and Herzegovina in May 2012). Concerning the latter activity, we encourage the organisation of similar workshops in other countries in the region.
10. We propose to establish a web-based forum as a platform for exchanges and discussion on intangible cultural heritage between the participants in these annual seminars and other interested experts, to be possibly hosted within the website of the Sofia Regional Center for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
11. We underline the need to explore and develop partnerships for accessing international financial opportunities, with special reference to the EU-funded programmes.

Culture and development

12. We emphasize the need to strengthen and enlarge the cooperation with various public and private entities (such as ministries, foundations, banks, private organizations, NGOs, etc), in supporting activities on intangible cultural heritage, in order to raise resources and enhance the value of intangible cultural heritage for sustainable development, social cohesion and economic viability of local communities.
13. We propose to enlarge the next meeting of this network to the participation of such potential new partners from the civil society and the private sector, in order to explore opportunities for ethical and socially responsible co-financing models (grants, sponsorships, microcredit, etc), and promote share experiences on the promotion of intangible cultural heritage as a driver for local sustainable development.
14. We highly appreciate the initiative of Bulgaria to dedicate the 8th conference of the Ministers of Culture of South-Eastern Europe, due to take place in Sofia on 10-11 September 2012, to the theme of "Intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development", and recommend this Network to focus one of its future sessions on intangible cultural heritage and the economics of culture.



The way forward

15. We thank wholeheartedly the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Hellenic Republic and its partners for its generous hospitality and we express appreciation for the kind proposal of Bulgaria to host in Sofia the next meeting of the Network in 2013, at the Regional Center for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe.
16. We take note with interest and appreciation of the proposals advanced by the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, based in Sofia, for possible activities of regional scope to be implemented in 2012-2013, including: the organisation of a seminar on “traditional crafts and skills in SEE: museums in the open”, to take place tentatively in October 2012; the production of a joint film on traditional games and masks and related events; the preparation of a publication on intangible cultural elements from SEE inscribed in the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage Lists; a possible joint research project on wine making as a means for intercultural dialogue and common understanding in the region; and the organisation of a travelling exhibition on a theme of common interest. To this end, the participants remain waiting for further information from the Sofia centre in order to take appropriate follow-up action within their responsibilities.
17. We encourage the Hellenic Republic, as well as the countries participating in this meeting that are currently members of the Intergovernmental Committee for the 2003 Convention (namely, Albania, Croatia, Cyprus and Italy), to inform the next General Assembly of State Parties (4-8 June 2012) and the Intergovernmental Committee of this meeting's results and recommendations.
18. We undertake to transmit through our governments the recommendations of the meeting to the Forum of the Heads of State of South-East Europe that will be held in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 2 and 3 June 2012, as well as to the next conference of the Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe that will take place in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 10 and 11 September 2012, while inviting them to take the necessary measures for their implementation, so that intangible cultural heritage becomes an ever more effective instrument of intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and sustainable development in the region.

Athens, Greece, 11 May 2012