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

**Expert meeting on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage** **in urban contexts**

**16 – 17 June 2025 (Part I)**

**UNESCO Headquarters, Paris**

**18 – 19 September 2025 (Part II)**

**Online**

**Survey methodology and overview of results**

1. **Introduction**

An online survey was conducted between 7 October and 7 November 2022, as part of the initiation of the 2003 Convention’s thematic initiative on [safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts](https://ich.unesco.org/en/urban-contexts). The aim of the survey was to collect experiences and examples linked to the relationships between living heritage safeguarding and urban planning. This information was then used to supplement and inform desk research on the topic, as well as to prepare for expert consultations, including the present meeting. This document describes the design and execution of the survey and offers an analysis of its results and findings.

1. **Survey**

Survey coverage

With 39 questions in total, the survey consists of Part 1 (thirteen questions, addressing the respondent’s background), Part 2 (five questions, addressing the identification of intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts and threats to intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts), Part 3 (eleven questions, addressing the integration of intangible cultural heritage in urban planning), Part 4 (six questions, addressing potential actions or recommendations), Part 5 (four questions, addressing key stakeholders, experts and institutions related to this thematic initiative).

The survey questions can be accessed from the dedicated [webpage](https://ich.unesco.org/en/surveys-on-thematic-initiatives-01277) of the 2003 Convention.

The survey was sent by the Secretariat of the 2003 Convention to the following stakeholders: States Parties (233); focal points of elements inscribed on the Lists and programmes selected for the Register of the Convention (611); NGOs accredited under the 2003 Convention (433); and UNESCO Category 2 Centres (47).

Survey respondents

A total of 64 responses was received from 39 countries (with reference to over 50 cities): Electoral Group I; 36%, Electoral Group II: 5%; Electoral Group III: 17%; Electoral Group IV: 25%: Electoral Group V(a): 14%; Electoral Group V(b): 3%. Of the respondents, 64% were women, while 34% were men.

In terms of area of expertise, the respondents identified themselves as:

* Intangible cultural heritage experts (53%)
* Researchers (24%)
* Policymakers or public officials (13%)
* Architecture (4%)
* Others (4%)

1. **Analysis of survey responses**

The responses to this survey are not inclusive or proportionally representative of all countries, regions, professional perspectives or topics, and do not provide a basis for any quantitative form of analysis. Nevertheless, they form an important and useful body of observations and information for the new intersectional field of intangible cultural heritage and urban planning, as well as a snapshot of our understanding of this field at the time of the survey. The following brief analysis seeks to capture key insights from the responses to the survey.

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**Examples of living heritage that exist in urban contexts:** The respondents provided a set of examples of traditions and practices of living heritage in urban contexts from around the world. These include practices and expressions related to masks, foodways, festivals and seasonal celebrations, sauna culture, physical practice and traditional built heritage trades, amongst others.

**Threats**: In response to the question on threats in urban contexts that impact the transmission of intangible cultural heritage (and which may be exacerbated when not considered in urban planning), the respondents identified the following as major challenges:

* Rapid urbanization altering ways of living (33%)
* Destruction or changes to spaces associated with cultural practices (24%)
* Unemployment or low incomes (9%)
* Lack of public spaces (7%)
* Globalization (5%)
* New technologies (5%)
* Migration (4%)
* Climate change and disasters (4%)
* Others (9%)

**Integration of intangible cultural heritage in urban planning**: Many respondents emphasized the need to incorporate intangible cultural heritage safeguarding into urban planning. When asked to name examples of connections between built environments and living heritage that could be taken into consideration in urban planning, most responses highlighted living heritage practices that are held in public spaces, parks and ecosystems, such as lakes and riversides, religious spaces (including mosques and churches), and several public facilities such as museums and performance venues. Many respondents also identified ‘historic centres’ as a key factor linking living heritage with the built environment, as well as streets for the practice of processions and festivals.

**Methodologies, tools or mechanisms**: The respondents were also asked to name methodologies, tools, or mechanisms established or applied for the inclusion of intangible cultural heritage in urban plans, such as policies, legislation, financing, or others. Close to 40% of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of any such examples. However, legislative and regulatory frameworks (e.g. laws on the protection of cultural practices) for the inclusion of intangible cultural heritage in urban planning were mentioned frequently, as well as the need to involve local communities and bearers into planning processes. Awareness raising, coalition building around living heritage safeguarding and multisectoral coordination were mentioned by a group of respondents.

**Benefits of integrating living heritage safeguarding in urban planning**: The survey enabled the identification of benefits that respondents believe can result from the integration of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding into urban planning. In this regard, 38% of the respondents identified ‘social cohesion and well-being’ as the main benefit, followed by ‘sense of identity’ (27%), ‘sustainable livelihoods’ (11%), and ‘inter-generational communication’ (7%), respectively. Similarly, the following benefits were also indicated, each accounting for 4% of responses: ‘protection of local economies’, ‘intra and inter-community tolerance’, ‘informal social support structures’, and ‘urban-rural integration’. Lastly, ‘environmental protection’ was indicated as an additional benefit by 2% of the respondents.

**Challenges**: The respondents provided numerous inputs about the existing challenges for integrating intangible cultural heritage into urban plans. These include: lack of awareness of urban planners and policymakers about the importance of living heritage safeguarding and its associated benefits, competing priorities for local governments in the face of limited financial resources, lack of legislation and proper policies to ensure the inclusion of living heritage safeguarding in urban plans, and the potential contradiction between urban development and the protection of historic and cultural heritage. Other challenges worth noting include the importing of urban planning frameworks that do not reflect local sociocultural aspects, limited time to learn about other fields, and reluctance to change.

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**Emphasis on historical heritage and public spaces**: According to many respondents, historical and cultural heritage, along with the existence and use of public spaces, are key planning areas for integrating intangible cultural heritage into urban plans. This is consistent with one of the major threats identified in the practice and continuity of intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts - the intervention or physical modification of public spaces in which practices are traditionally carried out, such as bazaars for local trade and craftsmanship.

In this regard, the respondents suggested the following:

* To clearly understand the importance of public spaces in relation to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, it is necessary to improve coordination between the urban planning and cultural heritage authorities.
* Community participation is essential in efforts to integrate intangible cultural heritage with urban planning, especially in the use of public spaces. To facilitate this, round tables and workshops with bearers, the government, designers/architects and other relevant actors should be conducted, as well as public meetings/consultations to collect feedback from communities.
* Further links must be established between cultural heritage and creative industries; for example, parks and gardens could be used as platforms for musical performances, and public squares as bazaars for local trade and craftsmanship.

**Future actions**: Lastly, when asked to consider measures for integrating intangible cultural heritage safeguarding into urban planning, the participants most frequently cited (among others) the need to advance educational efforts at all levels to raise awareness among multiple stakeholders. This includes presentations and exhibitions, conferences and seminars, and other educational programs. Similarly, the respondents emphasized the need to mobilize alternative financial or funding sources; to update existing legislative and regulatory frameworks; and to enhance communication efforts to sensitize policy and decision makers and further disseminate the benefits of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding in urban contexts.