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Intangible Cultural Heritage

**PRO FOOD**

LHE/26/PRO FOOD/1

Paris, 5 May 2026

Original: English

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

**CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SAFEGUARDING FOODWAYS: LESSONS FROM THE  
INTERNATIONAL FOOD ATLAS PROJECT**

**INTERNATIONAL FOOD ATLAS AND DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR SAFEGUARDING,  
PROMOTING AND TRANSMITTING FOODWAYS TO FUTURE GENERATIONS**

**19 and 20 May 2026**

**Online**

**Concept note**

## Introduction

The meeting 'Capacity building for safeguarding foodways: Lessons from the International Food Atlas project' is organized in the framework of the '[International Food Atlas and Digital Platform for safeguarding, promoting and transmitting foodways to future generations](#)', generously funded by the Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, within the framework of the UNESCO Programme on Culture and Digital Technologies.

This global results meeting will take stock of the first cycle of field project activities, including capacity-building, policy research, and the documentation of safeguarding experiences. It will also serve as a space for peer learning among stakeholders involved in the project, providing an opportunity to share experiences and identify key lessons, challenges, and opportunities in safeguarding foodways as living heritage.

## Context

Foodways are a defining marker of cultural identities. They involve knowledge, know-how, and social practices transmitted within communities that relate to the sourcing, preparation, and consumption of food, including the provision of ingredients and the roles of all people involved. Traditional foodways, both those related to everyday life as well as those associated with special occasions, such as rituals, social practices and festive events, constitute an important part of the intangible heritage of communities everywhere in the world. These practices and knowledge can also strengthen links between culture and local development by supporting local economies, fostering social cohesion, and nurturing a sense of local pride, ultimately enhancing transmission and safeguarding of living heritage.

Recognizing the value of foodways as living heritage and their holistic contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the project 'International Food Atlas and Digital Platform for safeguarding, promoting and transmitting foodways to future generations' was launched in 2023 to advance knowledge, develop interactive tools and harness digital technology to support their safeguarding. The project seeks to:

- Develop a digital platform to strengthen the visibility of foodways as living heritage—showcasing their diversity and their interlinkages with sustainable development and highlighting good safeguarding experiences from communities and countries around the world.
- Create opportunities for stakeholders to engage in dialogue and learn about safeguarding foodways as living heritage, through national and international gatherings, tailored capacity building activities, as well as peer-to-peer exchanges.
- Generate knowledge on the contribution of safeguarding foodways towards community well-being and sustainable development, through research and analytical study.

An **inception phase** of the project was carried out between September 2023 and December 2024 with the objective to establish an overview of the thematic area of foodways and identify ways forward for its implementation. Through desk review, expert consultations and field research, valuable insights were gathered on safeguarding practices across different regions, and capacity-building needs were identified.

Building on these findings, the project entered its **implementation phase** in 2025, involving

activities led by thirteen UNESCO field offices in sixteen countries across all five regions.

At country level, the activities have focused on three interrelated components:

1. **Capacity-building activities for communities**, state actors and other relevant stakeholders based on identified needs and drawing on the global network of facilitators of the 2003 Convention as well as the training curriculum of the UNESCO global capacity-building programme for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage for sustainable development.
2. **Documentation of core information on community-led good safeguarding experiences** with the active participation of the communities, and for possible inclusion in the UNESCO online platform for sharing good safeguarding experiences. Special focus is being placed on safeguarding initiatives led by or involving youth, Indigenous Peoples, women, and Afro-descendants.
3. **Policy research and analysis** on how foodways are integrated in existing national and sub-national frameworks, policies and programmes concerning culture, heritage and other relevant policy areas with a view to making recommendations for strengthening this integration to support safeguarding.

At the global level, the online platform for sharing good safeguarding experiences, commonly referred to as the 'Article 18 platform', is being developed with a dedicated focus area on foodways as living heritage. A [preliminary version](#) of the online platform was launched in May 2025, and is being further populated.

## Objectives and structure

UNESCO is organising the present meeting to share the lessons learnt from the first implementation cycle of project activities at country level undertaken between 2025 and 2026. It is designed to facilitate reflection and exchange on the three components outlined above under country-level activities:

1. **Capacity-building activities**, focusing on how the project's capacity building activities have supported and enhanced the safeguarding of foodways as living heritage, and identifying the approaches that have been most effective for the communities.
2. **Documentation of good safeguarding experiences**, sharing examples of community-led safeguarding experiences of foodways as living heritage, and discussing how digital technologies can further support and increase visibility of these safeguarding efforts.
3. **Policy research**, presenting findings on the current policy landscape for the safeguarding of foodways as living heritage in the project countries, and discussing prospects for future developments.

The programme will take place over two days, with three-hour sessions. For each component, five to six project countries will present their experiences, followed by plenary discussions.

Participants are invited to share concrete examples illustrating how project activities have supported the safeguarding of foodways as living heritage, with particular emphasis on key lessons learnt and practical insights gained.

## Participants

The global results meeting will bring together a diverse range of stakeholders whose contributions have been central to the implementation of the project activities at country level.

National counterparts and coordinators will provide institutional perspectives on project implementation.

Community members actively engaged in safeguarding foodways as living heritage will participate as key knowledge bearers, sharing their lived experiences, perspectives on current challenges, and insights into opportunities emerging from the project.

International and national experts, including members of the Global network of facilitators of the 2003 Convention, will contribute technical expertise, particularly in the area of capacity-building, and will support the facilitation of discussions.

The UNESCO Secretariat of the 2003 Convention will convene and frame the meeting, while implementing field offices will share their insights and experience in coordinating and implementing the project activities.

## Meeting information and contact

The meeting will take place online on **19 and 20 May 2026, from 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. (Paris time)** and will have interpretation in English/French.

The working documents for the meeting will be published on the meeting page: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/events/capacity-building-for-safeguarding-foodways-lessons-from-the-international-food-atlas-project-01068>

For information regarding the workshop, kindly contact Ms Pravali Vangeti, Project Coordinator ([p.vangeti@unesco.org](mailto:p.vangeti@unesco.org)).