

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

**TWELFTH ANNUAL COORDINATION MEETING OF
CATEGORY 2 CENTRES ACTIVE IN THE FIELD OF
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**13 June 2024
UNESCO Headquarters, Paris (Room VIII)**

Background Note

Category 2 centres active in the field of intangible cultural heritage

Category 2 centres under the auspices of UNESCO are established and funded by Member States to contribute to the achievement of UNESCO's objectives by way of global, regional, subregional or interregional activities. The centres are intended to serve as international or regional centres and poles of expertise or excellence to provide technical assistance and services to Member States, cooperation partners and also to the network of UNESCO field offices. The Category 2 centres are expected to contribute directly to achieving the Strategic Programme Objectives or programme priorities and themes of the Organization, and specifically, to UNESCO's programme results at the MLA level. The Organization's current Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the Auspices of UNESCO was adopted by the General Conference at its 40th session ([Resolution 79](#)).

To date, there are eight centres devoted to contributing to UNESCO's actions in the field of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage:

ALGERIA – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Africa (CRESPIAF);

BULGARIA – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe (RCSICH);

CHINA – International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (CRIHAP);

IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF) – Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia (Tehran ICH Centre)

JAPAN – International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI);

PERU – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Latin America (CRESPIAL);

REPUBLIC OF KOREA – International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (ICHCAP);

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – International Centre for Capacity Building in Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Arab States (ICCBICH).

Annual coordination meeting of the Category 2 centres

To strengthen networking, synergies, and cooperation between these centres and with UNESCO, an annual coordination meeting has been organized since 2012, providing a space to share experiences, discuss future strategies and workplans. This meeting is hosted by one of the Category 2 centres in the respective host country. Or, in years in which the 2003 Convention's General Assembly of States Parties (GA) is held in Paris, it happens on the day after the GA. Following this practice, the twelfth coordination meeting of the Category 2 centres takes place on 13 June 2024 (see document LHE/24/C2C/1 for agenda and timetable and document LHE/24/C2C/2 for the list of participants) at UNESCO Headquarters just after the tenth session of the GA on 11 and 12 June 2024.

The eleventh annual meeting was held in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, from 5 to 6 September 2023. It allowed to identify several areas of shared interest for potential collaboration with and among the centres, which fully align with the priorities of UNESCO's programme and budget (see document LHE/24/C2C/3). These include capacity-building development, living heritage and education, as well as safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the context of climate change. Building on the conclusions of this meeting, to support synergies with and between the work of the centres, it is

proposed to focus the discussion of the twelfth coordination meeting on these specific topics, in addition to the usual administrative matters.

Discussion focus 1: safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the context of climate change

Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the context of climate change is part of the thematic initiatives of the 2003 Convention on living heritage and sustainable development. It aims to understand some of the critical risks posed to intangible cultural heritage viability in the ongoing climate emergency as well as the roles for intangible cultural heritage in climate adaptation and mitigation, and to map potential initiatives that are practical and actionable.

Intangible cultural heritage has a dual function in all emergencies, including climate change. It can play an important role as a source of recovery, preparedness and prevention measures to reduce vulnerability and exposure to risks associated with climate change, and in the mitigation of carbon emissions. At the same time, the viability of intangible cultural heritage and its bearers, and the resources they require are also fundamentally at risk from climate change directly, or from the multiplier effects of climate change on other conditions for viability. Distinguishing clearly between these roles and risks and understanding precisely how and when intangible cultural heritage becomes vulnerable or can be harnessed as a positive force to address climate change-related challenges, are important areas for further attention.

Following Decision [18.COM 12](#), UNESCO will convene a Category VI expert meeting (Part I: 19-20 June 2024, UNESCO Headquarters and Part II 25-26 September 2024, online) to lay the groundwork for developing proposals on safeguarding living heritage and climate change. The outcomes will be presented at the nineteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee from 2 to 7 December 2024 in Asunción, Paraguay. Furthermore, the Committee underscored “*the need for strengthened intersectoral cooperation, awareness raising and information sharing under these thematic areas*” (of living heritage and sustainable development) and encouraged the Secretariat “*to explore linkages and cooperation with relevant UN and international bodies working in these fields*” (of safeguarding ICH in the context of climate change) (Decision [18.COM 12](#)).

The Secretariat acknowledges the important work that Category 2 centres are conducting in this area, as key heritage organisations that directly address the intersection of climate change, emergencies, and intangible cultural heritage. These play a significant bridging role in interpreting the 2003 Convention for wider networks of stakeholders and extending the reach of intangible cultural heritage insights to programmes and projects relating to climate change and emergency.

The twelfth coordination meeting of Category 2 centres provides an opportunity to discuss the initial findings from the activities undertaken so far and thus contribute to the ongoing reflection. After a brief presentation by the Secretariat on the recent developments of the thematic initiative ‘Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and climate change’, the centres are invited to share insights, experiences, and projects in this area, in particular concerning the collection of case studies, research, capacity development, awareness raising, information sharing, and partnerships.

Discussion focus 2: Strengthening capacities to safeguard intangible cultural heritage

Pivotal to effective safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, capacity-building is the first funding priority of the 2003 Convention. The [IOS Evaluation \(2023\) of UNESCO's action in the framework of the 2003 Convention](#) highlighted the success and central role of the Global capacity-building programme for the implementation of the Convention, while underlying a growing demand combined to evolving contexts and needs. The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges but also provided new opportunities for digital learning and networking. At the same time, an increased awareness of the important role of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding in responding to sustainable development challenges has resulted in evolving capacity-building needs in a wider range of policy and thematic areas with new audiences (document [LHE/21/16.COM/13](#)).

Partnership with and between Category 2 centres is essential to the optimal development and success of these joint efforts. All the centres have been actively involved in capacity-building for the implementation of the 2003 Convention at the regional and international levels — one of their key shared objectives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they worked closely with the Secretariat to address the similar challenges they faced in this domain. In recent years, they have notably supported the implementation of the reformed Periodic Reporting exercise through online or in-person trainings for country focal points, as well as the training of new facilitators in each region, as reported most recently to the eighteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2003 Convention (for more details see document [LHE/23/18.COM 7.c Rev](#)).

Building on the experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to respond to evolving needs, the Secretariat engaged strategic adaptation and programme development. While focusing on strengthening the regional scope and thematic expertise of its facilitators' network, it has reorientated its approach towards new online and hybrid modalities, and to reaching out to new audiences (IOS Recommendations 8 and 9). This includes combining online learning, in-person training and self-learning, developing training content and tools adapted to hybrid modalities, updating existing materials as well as broadening the programme's thematic scope in areas such as 'Living heritage in emergencies' and 'Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in formal and non-formal education'. To allow users to easily create, manage and deliver training content for different modalities and contexts, and bolster networking and knowledge exchange, the Secretariat in close collaboration with the facilitators' network has developed an online platform (Learning Management System) and is currently populating it with content adapted for this purpose (documents [LHE/21/16.COM/13](#) and [LHE/23/18.COM/14](#)).

The twelfth coordination meeting of Category 2 centres provides an opportunity to discuss progress made, lessons learned and further strategies. Following a brief presentation by the Secretariat on a) recent developments on the capacity-building programme, including an introduction to the evolving learning platform and b) an update on the periodic reporting process and the involvement of Category 2 centres, the participating centres are invited to share their initiatives to explore further collaborations for capacity building. This includes in particular the training of facilitators to strengthen the thematic expertise of the network and responding to demand for capacity building in thematic areas, as well as the development of new courses, materials and case studies.