

INFORMATION SHEET: IDENTIFICATION AND INVENTORYING POLICY PROVISIONS

POLICY AREA / POLICY ISSUE

ICH Policy Development Process / Identification and Inventorying

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

States may decide to include ICH provisions in related policy or legislation in the culture sector or beyond as well as have a stand-alone ICH policy. Some States wish to avoid having specific legislation to guide ICH safeguarding, and prefer to draft flexible, general policies to encourage ICH safeguarding instead.¹ Many of the ICH policies developed in States Parties to the Convention to date broadly follow the principles of the Convention, although some emphasize State involvement in safeguarding, and even State ownership of ICH. Many include provisions for defining ICH, creating an infrastructural framework for identifying and inventorying the ICH in the State, linking ICH safeguarding to development through tourism or IP protection, and possibly also assisting ICH practitioners or promoting specific elements.

In terms of developing policy relative to identifying and inventorying, it should be noted that the latter are one of the few obligations under the Convention (Articles 11-12). States Parties are asked to ensure the 'widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals as well as relevant non-governmental organizations' in this process (Article 11(b)). Inventories should be tailored to the local situation in a State, but should ultimately, at least, cover the whole range of ICH 'on their territory' and be compiled 'with a view to safeguarding'; the inventory should be regularly updated (Article 12.1). Inventorying is therefore usually one of the main areas of State intervention (whether through policies, regulations or institutional mandates) in ICH safeguarding and is often a leading priority of State Parties.²

The diversity of ICH inventorying approaches already adopted potentially provides an interesting starting point for States Parties considering what options have been pursued by other States. Setting up an inventory is a complex process that may take some time to organize, set up and implement. The Convention simply requires States to have begun the task, not to have finished it, although any elements nominated to the Lists of the Convention do have to be included on an inventory that complies with Articles 11-12.

Because there is no fixed method of inventorying that will work in all States, or even perhaps in all parts of States, it is advisable to focus any initial policy provisions on broad statements about the need for inventorying, key principles and funding allocations or institutional mandates for coordination of inventorying. Specific approaches to inventorying that will be adopted within the State can best be determined through local investigations, consultations, trial inventorying projects and other similar activities. Further policy provisions may follow once these investigations have been done.

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1. Lixinski, *Intangible Cultural Heritage in International Law*, p.126.
 2. Examination of the reports of States Parties 2014, ITH/14/9.COM/5.a, para 40, 43, 44.

WHAT THE CONVENTION AND ITS TEXTS SAY

The Convention

Article 11: Each State Party shall: (a) take the necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory; (b) among the safeguarding measures referred to in Article 2, paragraph 3, identify and define the various elements of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations.

Article 12: 1. To ensure identification with a view to safeguarding, each State Party shall draw up, in a manner geared to its own situation, one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory. These inventories shall be regularly update; 2. When each State Party periodically submits its report to the Committee, in accordance with Article 29, it shall provide relevant information on such inventories.

Operational Directives

OD 1.U.5: The element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies), as defined in Articles 11 and 12 of the Convention.

OC 2.R.5: The element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies), as defined in Articles 11 and 12 of the Convention.

OD 80(a,b): States Parties are encouraged to create a consultative body or a coordination mechanism to facilitate the participation of communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals, as well as experts, centres of expertise and research institutes, in particular in: (a) the identification and definition of the different elements of intangible cultural heritage present on their territories; (b) the drawing up of inventories

Ethical Principles

Ethical Principle 1: Communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals should have the **primary role** in safeguarding their own intangible cultural heritage.

Ethical Principle 2: The **right of communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals** to continue the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills necessary to ensure the viability of the intangible cultural heritage should be recognized and respected.

Ethical Principle 8: The **dynamic and living nature of intangible cultural heritage** should be continuously respected. Authenticity and exclusivity should not constitute concerns and obstacles in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

OTHER RELEVANT LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)³

Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)⁴

UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001⁵

3. Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13055&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

4. Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

5. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

EXAMPLES

Some States rely on regional bodies to manage and update their inventories (e.g. the County Centres for Conservation and Promotion of Traditional Culture in **Romania** and the 11 regional offices of the relevant Ministry in **Indonesia**).⁶

In **Brazil**, there are multiple inventories. About 160 sub-inventories have been compiled to date and over 1,000 cultural elements have been included. Two national inventories have been created for different purposes, namely: (i) officially recognizing ICH through a declaration of its heritage value and (ii) the identification, documentation and investigation of ICH to promote its safeguarding. Since the inventories in Brazil are structured around the concept of cultural reference, bearer communities themselves indicate the elements considered most important and representative of their culture: only those elements will be included in the inventory.⁷

There is no national ICH inventory for **Spain** and, due to the cultural specificity of each Autonomous Community, they have taken different approaches for inventory-making, with different objectives. There are 16 different regional ICH inventories and atlases, five of which register all of an Autonomous Community's ICH (Andalusia, Catalonia, Madrid, Murcia and the Canary Islands) and 11 that catalogue one or several aspects of the ICH of an Autonomous Community (e.g. Aragon and Castile-Leon). The Atlas of Andalusia describes an element's viability according to 12 potential threats, including 'political and economic exploitation, fossilization, reification and media-induced standardization', as well as 'enforcement of environmental regulations without considering the importance of the traditional social uses of land'.⁸

States choose widely differing ways of organizing their inventories. **Kyrgyzstan's** inventory is ordered according to seven domains, including sub-divisions such as epics, sayings and proverbs; traditional technologies; national games; pastoral and nomadic knowledge; traditional systems of self-government; methods of inter-generational transmission of information of ecological and ethnic importance; and ornaments. The domains for **Venezuela's** inventorying include such categories as 'natural with a cultural significance' and 'individual heritage bearer'.⁹

The Automated Inventory System of **Cuba** is divided into four domains and, for each domain, there are other specific classification principles, such as the periodicity of popular festivities or the typology of an oral tradition or traditional food and beverage. The elements are also classified according to location (province, municipality, neighbourhood, rural or urban area), and origin (African, Spanish or other origin).¹⁰

RELEVANT CASE STUDIES IN THE CAPACITY-BUILDING MATERIALS

Case Study 6. Inventory-making and provincial policies for safeguarding ICH in Canada

CS6-v1.0: [English](#)|[French](#)|[Spanish](#)|[Russian](#)|[Arabic](#)

Case Study 7. A community-based inventorying project in Uganda

CS7-v1.0: [English](#)|[French](#)|[Spanish](#)|[Russian](#)|[Arabic](#)

Case Study 8. Inventorying with community involvement in a well-developed institutional and legal context in Brazil

6. Examination of the reports of States Parties 2014, ITH/14/9.COM/5.a, para 76.

7. Examination of the reports of States Parties 2014, ITH/14/9.COM/5.a, para 56, 63.

8. Examination of the reports of States Parties 2014, ITH/14/9.COM/5.a, para 55, 64.

9. Examination of the reports of States Parties 2014, ITH/14/9.COM/5.a, para 58.

10. Examination of the reports of States Parties 2014, ITH/14/9.COM/5.a, para 60.

CS8-v1.0: [English](#)|[French](#)|[Spanish](#)|[Russian](#)|[Arabic](#)

Case Study 9. Community involvement in the documentation of traditional knowledge in the Philippines

CS9-v1.0: [English](#)|[French](#)|[Spanish](#)|[Russian](#)|[Arabic](#)

Case study 47: Documenting the Fimibana theatre (Country X)

CS47-v1.0: [English](#)|[French](#)|[Spanish](#)

Case study 48: The inventorying process in Country X

CS48-v1.0: [English](#)|[French](#)|[Spanish](#)

Case study 49: Online inventorying of living culture in Scotland

CS49-v1.0-EN: [English](#)|[French](#)|[Spanish](#)

Case study 52: Inventorying the intangible cultural heritage in Bawi

CS52-v1.0: [English](#)|[French](#)|[Spanish](#)

FURTHER INFORMATION

Bortolotto, Chiara. 'The French Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Domesticating a Global Paradigm into French Heritage Regime' in *Heritage Regimes and the State*. Gottingen: Gottingen University Press, 2013

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How could provision be made for identification and inventorying in ICH policies?
- How much detail is necessary at the policy level to set up or enable this process?
- What is the relationship between any existing ICH policies or provisions in other policies or legislation?
- What kinds of functions could institutions and bodies perform to support communities in ICH safeguarding that are not already provided for in existing institutions and their mandates?

UNESCO THESARUS KEYWORDS

[inventories](#); [policy making](#); [government policy](#); [communities](#); [intangible cultural heritage](#)