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Intangible Cultural Heritage

LHE

LHE/22/Meeting/3
Paris, 31 March 2022
Original: English

**Coordination meeting in support of the safeguarding of
Ukrainian intangible cultural heritage**

Online, 18 March 2022

1.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. (Paris time)
2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. (Ukraine time)

Summary Document

Introduction

This document presents a summary of the discussions and information gathered from the coordination meeting in support of the safeguarding of Ukrainian intangible cultural heritage, organized online by UNESCO's Living Heritage Entity on 18 March 2022 (see the agenda of the meeting: document LHE/22/Meeting/1). The meeting took place with reference to the Operational principles and modalities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in emergencies of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which provide guidance to States Parties and national/international stakeholders on how best to ensure that intangible cultural heritage is most effectively engaged and safeguarded in the context of various types of emergencies (see the invitation letter of 15 March 2022).

The meeting brought together more than 40 stakeholders (see the list of participants; document LHE/22/Meeting/2) from Ukraine and neighbouring countries hosting Ukrainian refugees (Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) to discuss how best to support Ukrainian living heritage safeguarding in the current crisis.

The information presented in this document, which is a snapshot as of 18 March 2022, was collected both during the meeting and through the written contributions made prior to the meeting in response to UNESCO's request to respond to questions on the situation of living heritage in Ukraine, urgent safeguarding needs for communities and ongoing initiatives in the field of living heritage. This included a message from Karaite community members from Melitopol (occupied city) on their perseverance to safeguarding their living heritage.

Summary of discussions

The following section provides a summary of the discussions from the meeting and the responses to the questions circulated organized around three parts:

Section A: Assessment of urgent needs for safeguarding the living heritage of communities, groups and individuals affected by the crisis;

Section B: Monitoring of ongoing and planned initiatives for safeguarding living heritage in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, and

Section C: Priority areas for future actions for UNESCO to support the safeguarding of living heritage in Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

A. Assessment of urgent needs for safeguarding living heritage

Beyond urgent concerns for the safety and security of communities in Ukraine, the following areas were highlighted as requiring immediate attention:

Strengthening networks of living heritage bearers in Ukraine

- **To strengthen networks among bearers and practitioners remaining in the country, which could be through the extension and support to existing (online) platforms** between key stakeholders of intangible cultural heritage to strengthen information and experience sharing (see the report from Ukraine under Section B).
- **To reduce the administrative and bureaucratic procedures for recognizing elements of living heritage nationally and internationally**, with particular attention to elements that are shared across Ukraine and could serve to unite different communities in the country.

Urgent safeguarding actions

- **To identify and protect bearers particularly in regions most affected by military actions, to assess the level of disruptions to their living heritage and their needs.** In this regard, the National Inventory provides details on bearers and could be a useful source of information. Members of professional unions of masters of folk crafts should also be protected. It was mentioned that bearers could be made exempt from army conscription.
- **To guarantee associated intellectual property rights when archiving living heritage securely and safely** (with assistance from UNESCO on the methodology) in cooperation with communities, researchers, museums and scientific institutions. Digital ways of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage was also highlighted as an important strategy.

Needs for refugees and displaced persons

- **To identify bearers and practitioners who have entered host countries as refugees.** Some countries spoke of the need to partner with a Ukrainian institution or non-governmental organization to reach out to the affected communities about their safeguarding needs.
- **To give opportunities to bearers and practitioners displaced by the conflict to enact and transmit their intangible cultural heritage in the host countries.** This could be through the provision of the materials, tools and spaces needed to practice their intangible cultural heritage, in cooperation for example with museums.

B. Monitoring ongoing and planned initiatives for safeguarding living heritage

In terms of monitoring and coordinating safeguarding efforts, the meeting also served as an opportunity to share information on ongoing and planned initiatives taking place in Ukraine and neighbouring countries among refugee and displaced populations.

Ukraine

In Ukraine, a national working group, which was established in 2021 through the periodic reporting exercise of the 2003 Convention, has been mobilized to monitor and analyze the situation for intangible cultural heritage, including inventoried elements, regardless of whether they are included in the national or regional inventories (information on 33 new elements gathered and submitted to the Ministry of Culture for inclusion in the National Inventory, which currently includes 26 elements). The online platform for sharing information is being established and this initiative includes public and non-governmental organizations, including the Development Centre “Democracy through Culture”, National Union of Folk-Art Masters of Ukraine, National Academy of Arts of Ukraine, Ukrainian Center for Cultural Studies, NGO “Cultural Dialogue”, NGO “Living Culture”, NGO “Djamaat”, Odesa Regional Center for Ukrainian Culture, Historic and Philosophical Faculty of National Mechnikov University of Odesa, and the Bukovyna Regional Scientific and Methodological Center of Culture and Arts.

Non-governmental organizations remain active in the country and have initiated some actions to address urgent safeguarding needs. For instance, the accredited NGO “Democracy through Culture” has launched activities with partners to develop safeguarding plans for intangible cultural heritage particularly at risk, including in the Karaite and Krolevets communities. In addition, jointly with the National Union of Folk-Art Masters of Ukraine, the National Academy of Arts of Ukraine, NGO “Cultural Dialogue” and the Ukrainian Center for Cultural Studies, the NGO is planning to organize a set of meetings with communities to coordinate next steps. In addition, focal points for elements inscribed on the 2003 Convention explained that they were maintaining frequent contact with the bearers of these elements to monitor the situation.

Hungary

In Hungary, several organizations are trying to connect with Ukrainian communities through various channels. For example, the [Hungarian Heritage House](#) and the Capital Circus Budapest have been closely following the situation of affected Ukrainian communities. In addition to accommodating families, the Hungarian Heritage House organizes cultural programmes for refugees (handicrafts, dance house) at its headquarters. The [Capital Circus of Budapest](#) hosted 100 artists aged 5-17 from artist schools in Kiev and Kharkov. In addition to providing accommodation and care, they also offer education and training opportunities and provide the space for young people to practice their cultural heritage.

The Hungarian Museum system is also being mobilized to help protect Ukrainian archives and collections and establish cultural programmes for affected families. Some museums have been in direct contact with their partner institutions in Ukraine, providing professional assistance in saving their collections, some of which relating to living heritage. The Hungarian Open Air Museum plans to launch a museum educational training programme for the implementation of experience programs for refugee children, focusing on the processing of traumas, the practice of cultural activities and the awareness of the importance of one’s own cultural heritage.

Existing databases are also being mobilized to promote awareness and appreciation of intangible cultural heritage from Ukraine. For instance, the [Polyphony Project](#) is a digital archive exploring, safeguarding and presenting the living musical folklore of Ukrainian villages. Such digital archives not only offer a valuable source of information on Ukrainian living heritage, but can be used to engage younger generations in these musical forms and build a sense of solidarity and mutual respect among the Ukrainian refugees and

host society. The [Polyphony Project](#) currently offers safe cloud space for experts and bearers from Ukraine to upload their archives and protect them from possible damage or destruction.

Moldova

Participants from Moldova highlighted the role that museums could play in collaborating with Ukrainian refugees. Cultural institutions are currently organizing free activities for Ukrainian refugees. Online workshops with Ukrainian refugee bearers and practitioners in Moldova could for instance be organized on specific topics such as traditional crafts. The example of traditions around decorating Easter eggs was mentioned as this is a culture that is shared between several countries in the region and could contribute to building connections between refugees and host communities. Another example was the involvement of Ukrainian refugee communities in national cultural events, such as The Festival of Ethnicities, The Days of Ukrainian Culture, The National Day of the Traditional Costume, The National Fair of the Carpet and Craftsmen Fairs.

The National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History has been trying to identify bearers and practitioners who have crossed the border. Local NGOs implementing a project with the Ministry of Culture has also been encouraged to extend its activity toward the documentation of communities, groups and individuals from Ukraine.

Poland

Poland has received the largest number of Ukrainian refugees since the beginning of the conflict, and chief among the concerns expressed by participants was the need to support their arrival in the host countries. Living heritage was highlighted as particularly relevant in this sense to support the continued learning of Ukrainian refugee children in ways that reinforce their cultural identity and sense of belonging. In this regard, Poland expressed interest to work with UNESCO on such programmes in the field of living heritage and education among refugee children. The issue of those without Ukrainian citizenship who are also fleeing the conflict was also raised as point that needed further reflection.

Romania

Participants from Romania emphasized initiatives around common intangible cultural heritage elements in Ukraine, Romania and Moldova. In the regions bordering Ukraine (Bukovina and Maramures), initiatives have been launched intending to share the common intangible cultural heritage between the two countries: for example, a Maramures ethnographic museum organized an exhibition of the Ukrainian ethnic attire in Maramures using the artifacts already existing in their collection and the Suceava County Cultural Centre (the main institution that manages intangible cultural heritage safeguarding in the Bukovina region) organized workshops on decorating Easter eggs for Ukrainian refugees.

Decorating Easter eggs (Pysanky, in Ukrainian) was an intangible cultural heritage element identified as common to both Romania and Ukraine, practiced especially in Bukovina by Ukrainian-speaking Romanians. Documentation activities are ongoing in Romania to register the tradition of decorating Easter eggs in the national inventory with view towards a future multinational nomination file to the Representative List. Traditions of decorating Easter eggs represent a symbol of hope and resurrection, which could be an important message that intangible cultural heritage could deliver in the current crisis. Moreover, 'Culture of Ukrainian borscht cooking', which is currently a backlog nomination for Ukraine, was highlighted as an element that could bring a message of peace, comfort and community for Ukrainian refugees in Romania; Ukrainian refugees are cooking their traditional borscht for their Romanian hosts as a sign of gratefulness.

Slovakia

In Slovakia, libraries and museums all over the country are opening their doors to refugees and providing internet access for adults and safe environment for refugee children to play, learn and do creative and artistic activities. Exhibitions are also planned to promote Ukrainian culture within the museums as was done in other countries in the region. Contact is ongoing between the Ministry of Education and local non-governmental organizations to develop joint actions that could help support integration of Ukrainian refugee children in Slovak schools with living heritage.

C. Priority areas of action for safeguarding living heritage

Based on the feedback received during the coordination meeting and the initial assessment of needs, the following may be considered as areas of immediate priority action to be carried out.

Identifying intangible cultural heritage bearers and practitioners at risk (in neighbouring countries)

Community-based needs identification of bearers and communities who have been displaced could be undertaken in neighbouring countries to assess the situation for intangible cultural heritage and the safeguarding needs of communities. These assessments could be implemented through the 2003 Convention's existing network of partners and actors, such as facilitators or accredited non-governmental organizations as well as through **museums**. Similar intervention could be made in Ukraine itself once the peace returns to assess the needs of bearers and communities whose living heritage was disrupted.

Supporting inventorying and documentation of intangible cultural heritage disrupted by the conflict (in Ukraine)

National inventorying frameworks in Ukraine should be strengthened to support the **identification of intangible cultural heritage that have been disrupted by the conflict**. Information should be centralized and coordinated between key partners. Archiving efforts to digitize related materials, while respecting intellectual property concerns, is important in the immediate term to prevent future damages and loss. A platform for exchange between specialists in Ukraine and outside the country could be established to facilitate this process. Mapping and inventorying of intangible cultural heritage elements among displaced communities in neighbouring countries should also be undertaken.

Drawing on living heritage to strengthen the resilience of Ukrainian refugee communities (in neighbouring countries)

The potential role of living heritage to support the resilience and rehabilitation of refugee populations displaced by the conflict is a priority. Museums and schools in particular were identified as potential actors who could initiate activities related to living heritage with refugee communities. Furthermore, **strengthening the links between living heritage and education** could support the learning of Ukrainian children and youth in schools of host countries. Existing materials from activities conducted under the EU-UNESCO project on 'Engaging youth for an inclusive and sustainable Europe', such as the resource kit for teachers, could be adapted to the current context to better serve teachers integrating refugee children. **Initiatives could also be established based on shared intangible cultural heritage elements between countries.**