

CONCLUSIONS

DRYSTONE AS AN ELEMENT OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

INFORMAL EXPERT MEETING

Nicosia, Cyprus, 22-23 January 2016

*A meeting organized
with the support of*

We, the participants in the informal meeting concerning drystone as an element of intangible cultural heritage, which was held in Nicosia, Cyprus, 22-23 January 2016, would like to thank the Sofia Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage for supporting the organization of the meeting on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of UNESCO as well as the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus and the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO for hosting the meeting.

We underline that this meeting marked an important step towards the enhancement of a common understanding about the opportunities and challenges linked to the safeguarding and promotion of drystone as an element of intangible cultural heritage, following its inscription on our National Inventories for Intangible Cultural Heritage. During the discussions, the following topics and challenges of common interest emerged, and recommendations for future cooperation were decided:

Drystone in the countries involved

- Communities, groups of bearers and individuals from Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Spain and Switzerland have expressed their concern for the safeguarding of the craftsmanship and their interest in further promoting their element, which could be achieved within the framework of the UNESCO ICH Convention.
- Considering the diverse nature of the element, it was proposed to employ the term “drystone” temporarily, as a working title. The name of the element will be finalized in a future meeting, following consultations with experts in the field and the communities of bearers.
- “Drystone” refers to stone construction without the use of mortar as binding material. The element is linked with customs and traditional practices associated with the organization of rural space. It has shaped numerous and diverse landscapes, forming various modes of dwelling, farming and husbandry (i.e. creating terraces for cultivation, delineating boundaries of land, constructing seasonal settlements and shelters, managing water resources in a sustainable way, etc). It is invaluable in preventing landslides, floods and avalanches, combating desertification of the land and enhancing biodiversity. Moreover, it has been used in public works and artistic aspects of the craftsmanship have been acknowledged and accordingly exploited by contemporary artists.
- As it is practiced today in all the above mentioned countries, it presents many common features. Some variations of the element have been identified, which reflect how drystone has been developed according to the specific socio-economic and natural environment in each area.
- It could therefore be jointly proposed for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Cooperation for a multinational nomination file

- The preparation of a multinational nomination file for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was acknowledged as an

important initiative which will contribute to the promotion of the drystone, as well as to the safeguarding of the element through implementation of measures and exchange of good practices.

- Participants noted the positive outcomes already achieved as a result of multinational files, such as Mediterranean Diet, which was prepared jointly by seven countries. The preparation of this nomination file will be coordinated by experts from Cyprus and Greece, who will be designated by 15 February 2016.
- The following time frame was agreed:
 - 15 February 2016: Designation of a focal point for the preparation of the file by each country to the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO.
 - 15 June 2016: Submission of the information related to criteria R1, R2, R5 by each country to the coordinators.
 - 9-12 September 2016: Société Scientifique Internationale pour l'étude pluridisciplinaire de la Pierre Sèche – (S.P.S) Meeting in Kefallonia: first draft of the text for the criteria R1, R2 and extensive discussion for the texts for criteria R3 and R4.
 - 15 January 2017: Finalization of the nomination file.
 - 10 March 2017: Official approval by states.
 - By 31 March 2017: Submission of the nomination file to UNESCO.
- As regards the audiovisual documentation, the countries that participate should have a selection of audiovisual material by the end of August, so that it could be examined in the September meeting.