

SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE HERITAGE TO ENSURE A FUTURE FOR RELIGIOUS HERITAGE IN A SECULARISED SOCIETY

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Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is pre-eminently living heritage. Examples of intangible religious heritage are processions or crafts in monasteries. New forms of ICH sometimes arise or familiar customs are given a new interpretation. ICH is strongly connected with the people who practice it and is always dynamic. In a secularised society, it is constantly looking for ways to remain relevant in a changing religious and social context.

In line with the UNESCO Convention on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), PARCUM is committed to safeguarding of intangible religious heritage by empowering communities to create support and a future for their customs and traditions. As a museum and centre of expertise for religious art and culture, PARCUM, guides several heritage communities to safeguard their ICH.



Procession of Godelieve © PARCUM

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH)

- > ICH = Traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants
- > UNESCO Convention on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)
- > Dynamic and living heritage
- > Strong connection with people who practice it: communities, groups or individuals
- > Search for relevance in a changing society
- > Safeguarding = ensuring a future for ICH
- > Examples of safeguarding actions: research, communication, transmission, education...

Role of PARCUM

- > Empowering communities to create support and a future for their customs and traditions
- > Process guidance by safeguarding ICH
- > Guiding ICH communities towards the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage
- > Integral and integrated heritage approach: ICH as a mean to foster dialogue between different groups in society (f.i. interreligious dialogue)

Examples of projects

- > 'Op handen gedragen': project on procession culture. The project's aim is to inspire procession organizers to give a future to their processions by helping them to rethink it and to develop tools to bring it to young generations. The project developed a network of procession organizers all over Flanders.
- > Pilgrim's table Saint-Julian Hospital Antwerp: safeguarding pilgrim's customs in collaboration with Flemish Association for Pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela
- > Saint Anthony Celebration's: starting a network of Saint Anthony Celebrations's all over Flanders and guidance towards the National Inventory on Intangible Cultural Heritage
- > Hosting of Iftar meal in museum PARCUM (postponed due to Covid-19)
- > Multifaith tours: members of different religious communities enter into dialogue with each other about their religious heritage
- > 'Hemelsbreed': project on religious heritage of different religions in Flanders, including ICH (such as Iftar meals, processions in orthodox churches or bar mitzwa celebration in Jewish communities..)



Jewish rituals © PARCUM



Pilgrim's table © PARCUM

Conclusion

Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is a concrete way for heritage communities to enter into dialogue with each other, with society and with their heritage itself. There is a constant interaction between preserving the core of the tradition and the search for new forms of expression in order to keep this living heritage relevant even today. In this way the heritage communities ensure the future of their living heritage.