



What do you know about Intangible Cultural Heritage?

**FAQs about Intangible Cultural Heritage
in the Netherlands**



International convention

The Kingdom of the Netherlands ratified the UNESCO convention in 2012. In 2017, following the first international nomination submitted by the Netherlands, the craft of the miller was inscribed on the (international) Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

'ISN'T IT JUST A LIST OF TRADITIONS?'

☐ yes ☐ no

177 countries united by UNESCO convention

In 2003 UNESCO adopted a new international convention: the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. UNESCO's aim with this convention is to secure a sustainable future for practices, traditions, skills and rituals that are cherished and passed down from generation to generation. The importance of this new convention has clearly been recognised across the globe: 177 countries have ratified it in just 15 years.

Why protect living heritage?

Why would you protect living heritage? UNESCO has noted that intangible cultural heritage and the associated knowledge are extremely vulnerable. Many examples of intangible cultural heritage are at risk of being lost due to globalisation, commercialisation and individualisation. By focusing on this area, UNESCO is keen to ensure that the wealth of cultural diversity and human creativity that we can see around the globe is safeguarded. After all, energy flows where attention goes.

Not just 'a list', but a global convention

The Netherlands ratified the UNESCO convention in 2012. This was an important step, as much of our own intangible cultural heritage is also vulnerable. One requirement of the convention is that each country lists the intangible cultural heritage that exists within its borders and makes it visible. The Netherlands does this at www.immaterieelerfgoed.nl.

The Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Netherlands offers an insight into the traditions that communities, groups and individuals consider important for themselves and others.

This has generated considerable interest: more than 130 different forms of intangible cultural heritage have now been inscribed on the Inventory. In addition, around 100 other communities are participating in the Network, which has deliberately been made easily accessible, and in this way they are making their heritage visible.



Sustainable development

Meuse hedge laying is an extremely sustainable way of separating parcels of land and protecting small insects and animals. Since this skill has been inscribed on the Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Netherlands interest in it has grown, as has the number of people practising this effective and environmentally friendly method of nature management.

'ISN'T THIS FENCING OFF TRADITIONS?'

☐ yes ☐ no

Living heritage

Intangible cultural heritage is a dynamic thing and never stops developing. The aim of the UNESCO convention is certainly not to folklorise, preserve, musealise or freeze this heritage. How do you prevent that from happening? UNESCO has opted for a bottom-up approach. Rather than UNESCO or the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage, it is the communities, groups and individuals who actually practise these traditions who decide what is important. Intangible cultural heritage must remain exactly where it is: at the heart of society.

People take responsibility

Responsibility therefore explicitly lies not with museums or organisations responsible for preserving historical buildings (as is the case with many examples of tangible heritage), but with the people who put their heart and soul into managing, maintaining and renewing this heritage.

No 'fences', just a sustainable future

The purpose of the Inventory is to make the richness and diversity of the intangible cultural heritage that exists in the Netherlands visible. A nomination is always submitted on the initiative of the heritage communities themselves. They are the people who consider it important that their intangible cultural heritage lives on; who are keen to pass it down to future generations; who adapt their traditions to the new age. In short, they are the people who work on the future of their heritage.

Sign up

If you practise a form of intangible cultural heritage yourself, you can register with the Network of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Netherlands via the website. The Network's aim is to make the full spectrum of intangible cultural heritage in the Netherlands visible and to promote mutual cooperation and exchange. Would you like to actively participate in or experience intangible cultural heritage? Take a look at the website www.immaterieelerfgoed.nl to find out what is happening in your area and sign up with one of the communities, groups or craftspeople.



Setting the trend in Paris

Staphorst dotwork was once world famous, went into decline and is now experiencing a renaissance. It could even be admired on the catwalks in Paris during the presentation of renowned fashion designer Walter van Beirendonck's 2017 spring/summer collection. The invention of a new kind of paint means the printed fabric is now suitable for machine washing. Partly thanks to this development, this printing technique, which involves the use of stamps, has now been future-proofed.

‘METWORST RACES, MASCERADE IN BRIELLE, PAPER CUTTING ART... ISN'T IT JUST A LIST OF CURIOSITIES?’

☐ yes ☐ no

Richness and diversity

The Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Netherlands throws the spotlight on the richness and diversity of intangible cultural heritage in our country – heritage that is cherished by enthusiastic volunteers. The first 130 traditions inscribed on the Inventory attract the interest of over 20 million people, both young and old and from all cultural backgrounds, every year.

International interest

It is not surprising that intangible cultural heritage from the Netherlands is attracting increasing international interest. Examples from recent years:

- in Paris: Staphorst dotwork on the catwalk;
- in Mexico: significant interest in Marken embroidery;
- in Milan: Hindeloopen paintwork at a prominent design fair;

- in Colombia: a great deal of interest in Dutch flower parades;
- and did you know that Dutch pewterware is hot in China?

In December 2017 UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage also decided that the craft of the miller, the first international nomination submitted by the Netherlands, could be inscribed on the (international) Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Inspiration and innovation

Artists, designers, inventors, chefs and scientists repeatedly draw inspiration from intangible cultural heritage. It is also a driver of innovation. The craft of the miller is inspiring innovators to develop ideas for the sustainable generation of energy using water and wind. This form of intangible cultural heritage is therefore contributing to sustainable developments that will be part of our future.



Celebrating one's roots together

The Rotterdam summer carnival is an annual, three-day festival celebrating the tropical carnival. On average, two thousand people with roots in around twenty five different countries with a tropical carnival tradition take part. The festival has been attracting as many as 500,000 to a million visitors for many years.

'DOES INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE HIGHLIGHT THE DIVERSITY OF THE NETHERLANDS?'

☐ yes ☐ no

Millions of Dutch people get involved

Intangible cultural heritage is for everyone and strengthens social cohesion. The figures speak for themselves:

- The first 130 traditions inscribed on the Inventory attract the interest of more than **20 million people** every year!
- Around **500,000 people** support this intangible cultural heritage (in many cases as volunteers) and feel a close connection with it.

Connecting a diverse society

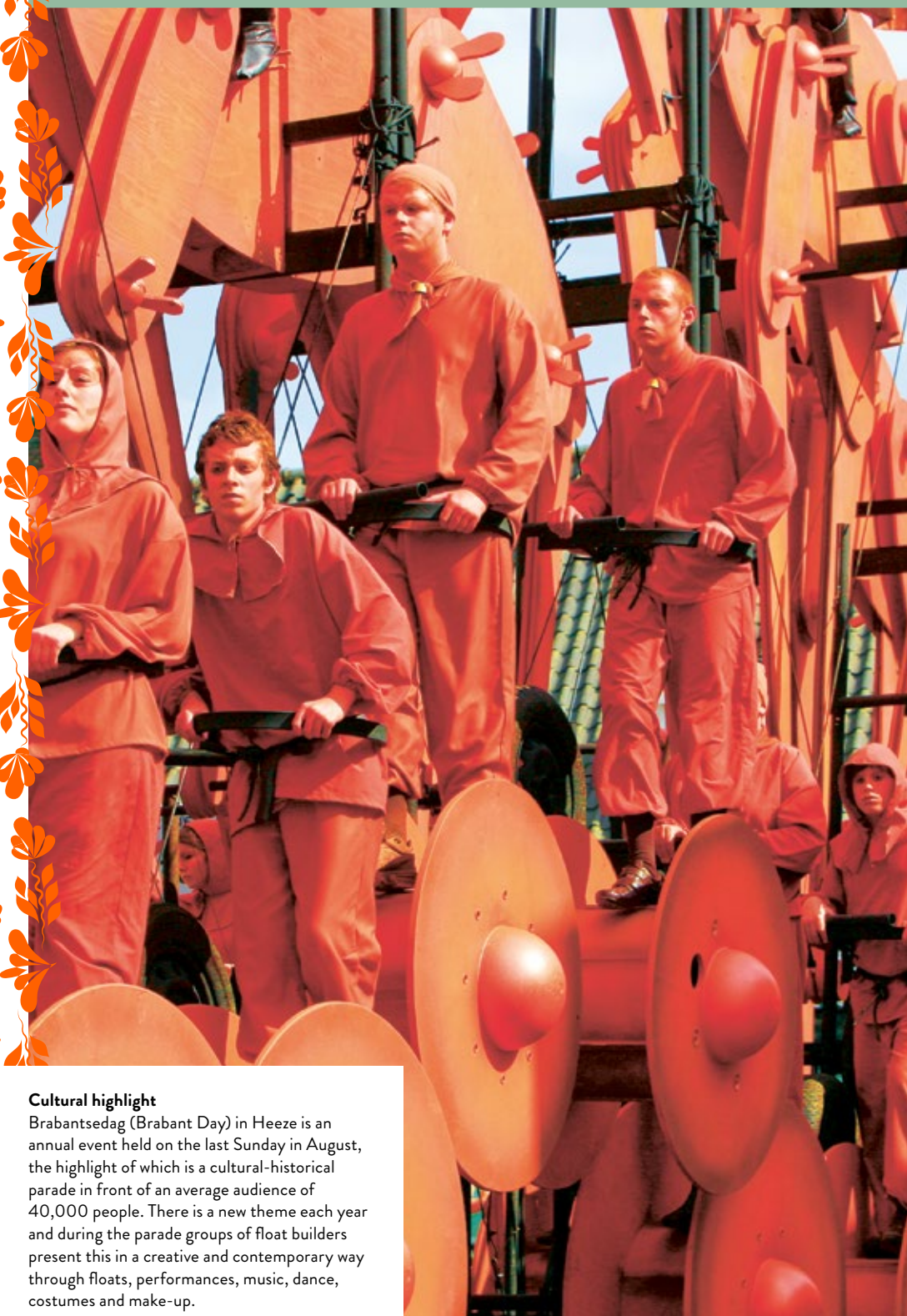
Intangible cultural heritage creates connections and is an excellent reflection of the cultural diversity within our society. Participants in the Rotterdam summer carnival, for example, are helping to shape a tradition that originated in the Caribbean and other tropical countries, while at the same time sharing it with countless visitors from all cultural backgrounds.

Young people participate just as well!

Young people are an important part of many forms of intangible cultural heritage. There are genuine 'young people's traditions', such as bonfire building in Scheveningen on New Year's Eve, the Metworst Races in Boxmeer, the Poaskearls (Easter Guys) in Ootmarsum and the Varsity students rowing regatta. Forms of youth culture, such as hip hop and graffiti, can also be regarded as examples of intangible cultural heritage.

Focus on crafts

The Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage, part of the Holland Open Air Museum is developing a Crafts Lab. The aim of the lab is to contribute to and collaborate on innovations linked to a particular craft through experimentation, by working together with craftspeople, social partners, educational institutions, artists and designers. To this end, over the next few years it will also be working in partnership with other museums that have a particular focus on traditional crafts.



Cultural highlight

Brabantsedag (Brabant Day) in Heeze is an annual event held on the last Sunday in August, the highlight of which is a cultural-historical parade in front of an average audience of 40,000 people. There is a new theme each year and during the parade groups of float builders present this in a creative and contemporary way through floats, performances, music, dance, costumes and make-up.

'IS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE CULTURE WITH A CAPITAL C?'

☐ yes ☐ no

Democratic culture

In most cultural centres, such as theatres and museums, programmers decide on the forms of culture that are of value to their particular audience. In the case of intangible cultural heritage it is the communities themselves who decide if something is valuable. In this sense intangible cultural heritage is an excellent example of democratic heritage, with its focus on cultural diversity and participation.

Meaning, inspiration, identity

Intangible cultural heritage connects people and gives them a feeling of continuity and identity. Inscription on the Inventory makes people and their heritage visible and helps them pass their tradition down to future generations.

René Renne, Chair of Zundert Flower Parade:
'Even the national newspapers now cover flower parades'

Wesley IJzendoorn, Scheveningen Bonfire:
'Tourists and the media come to Scheveningen from all corners of the globe'

Piet van Assendorp, Society for the Preservation of the Travellers' Culture in the Netherlands: 'We now have a Facebook group with almost ten thousand members'

José Reinholdt, Drenthe Carbide Shooting:
'It has acquired cult status amongst young people'



IN SHORT

Intangible cultural heritage contributes to:

- cultural and creative diversity
- sustainable solutions and nature conservation
- social cohesion
- innovation
- identity
- economic growth



**DUTCH
CENTRE FOR
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*The Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage
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