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Património Cultural Imaterial: 20 anos da Convenção para a Salvaguarda do PCI

Keeping the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage up to date

Evaluating the Dutch way of updating

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Keeping the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage up to date

Evaluating the Dutch way of updating

Mark Schep

Introduction

1 In 2003, when UNESCO's General Conference adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, we saw the birth of a new heritage concept, intangible cultural heritage (ICH). ICH encompasses a variety of cultural activities such as festivities, crafts, expressions, performing arts, rituals, and oral traditions. As David Myers (2016) argues, inventorying heritage within a specific (geographical) location is one of the key elements of managing cultural heritage. Article 12 of the 2003 Convention likewise stated that one of the main tasks is to make a national inventory: "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" (UNESCO, 2022, p. 10). A (still) growing number of countries have signed the convention, obliging the participating countries to adhere to the treaty and to establish a national inventory of ICH. Filomena Sousa (2018) identified the main objective of creating such an inventory as "the systemized registration and the organization of the knowledge produced on cultural expressions in the different domains and categories of the ICH" (p. 14). Myers (2016) further explained that for inventories to be effective tools, the information contained within them should be kept up to date; key information, for example, is where the heritage lies, whether it still exists or has changed significantly. The last part of Article 12 of the 2003 Convention concerns a requirement for states regarding their inventories: "These inventories shall be regularly updated" (UNESCO, 2022, p. 10). In this article, I focus on this specific element of inventorying, the process of updating. I

will do this by taking the Netherlands as a case study and comparing the Dutch procedures with nine other European countries.

2 Notably, it is the 20-year anniversary of the 2003 Convention and the 10-year anniversary of the convention in the Netherlands. These anniversaries formed the occasion to evaluate the inventorying procedures in the Netherlands. The main question in this article is: How do State Parties act upon the obligation to update the inventory? First, I will elaborate on the guidelines that UNESCO provides about inventorying and updating, and I will discuss the reflections of other scholars on this subject. Subsequently, I will describe how the Dutch Inventory is structured, followed by the methods and findings from the interviews with European colleagues and representatives of the communities that inscribed their heritage on the Dutch Inventory. Readers of this paper should note: In 2019, I became a researcher at the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage (KIEN), the body that implements the 2003 Convention in the Netherlands. As a researcher and employee of KIEN, I am, in the words of Chiara Bortolotto (2015), in an uncomfortable situation. I conduct scientific research in the field of intangible cultural heritage, but I am also an agent charged with implementing the 2003 Convention. I address the issue of power relationships in a latter section, but first I will describe the UNESCO guidelines on updating.

UNESCO on Updating

3 UNESCO did not give clear guidelines to State Parties on what updating should look like. However, one of the key concepts in the 2003 Convention (in contrast to the World Heritage Convention of 1972) is the participation of communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals (CGIs). Article 15 of the 2003 Convention states:

> Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management. (UNESCO, 2022, p. 12)

4 As Janet Blake (2006) notes in her in-depth analysis of the convention, UNESCO often uses non-prescriptive language, which allows the State Parties a lot of freedom. Despite the openness of the description, Blake (2020) observes that the paradigm of heritage protection and identification has been turned upside down in the 2003 Convention because of the focus on CGIs. In a 2006 meeting in Tokyo, 20 experts, including Blake, discussed what community involvement should mean. Communities were defined as "networks of people whose sense of identity or connectedness emerges from a shared historical relationship that is rooted in the practice and transmission of, or engagement with, their ICH" (ACCU-UNESCO, 2006, p. 9). In the years after, the concept of community participation in intangible heritage remains a heavily discussed topic and one of the most challenging aspects of the 2003 Convention, as will be discussed below. Indeed, a consequence of the lack of guidelines on participation and updating is that State Parties implement Article 12 and Article 15 in diverse ways. Marc Jacobs (2020) warns of this consequence in his paper on Article 15.

5 Over the last 20 years UNESCO has published a few documents that give State Parties some guidance regarding the inventorying process. A few years following the implementation of the Convention, UNESCO (2014) published an in-depth study on inventory-making. The findings were enclosed in a working document in preparation for the ninth session of the Intergovernmental Committee. Section H of the document

deals specifically with updating. Two short paragraphs give an overview on what State Parties have done since signing the convention. The frequency of updating ranges from six monthly evaluations to every five years. The focus can include monitoring the safeguarding plans, reporting on the status of the ICH element, or evaluating when changes occur, as reported by the bearers. The methods also vary. Meetings may be organized by the responsible body and occur amongst the bearers, communities, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. Meetings may also occur among experts or in a top-down fashion, for example, field trips of scientists (archaeologist, ethnographers, etc.) who check the status of the ICH. In some cases, regional bodies organize the process and report to a central body. UNESCO writes that it is a common view that the cultural community is seen as the primary source of information on the status of the elements. Last, UNESCO suggests that a computerized inventory allows for easy adaptions and revisions.

6 Seven years later UNESCO published an online Guidance Note on Inventorying (UNESCO, 2021). In this Guidance Note, the process of updating is one of the eight guiding principles for inventorying. Guiding Principle 6 focuses specifically on updating, but remarks about updating can be found in other guiding principles. For example, Guiding Principle 2 deals with community involvement, mentioning that a small number of State Party communities have direct access to a participatory online inventory and may also update the information about the ICH element. Paragraph 27 of Guiding Principle 4, *Substantial information*, suggests that the inventory should contain the date of the inscription of the ICH element as well as the date of the most recent update. Paragraph 28 advises to use a brief description of the information about the ICH on the inventory because it makes updating easier. Guiding Principle 5, *Purposes of inventorying*, indicates that when entries are updated, the information on the viability of the element should be checked and adapted when necessary.

7 Guiding Principle 6, on updating, contains two paragraphs. Paragraph 31 focuses on periodic updating, and Paragraph 32 focuses on community participation in updating. UNESCO writes that periodic updating is vital because ICH constantly evolves, and threats to its viability can emerge rapidly. State Parties may decide how to update, the frequency, and the modalities, but adding new elements to the inventory does not qualify as an update nor does changing the design of the inventory. For UNESCO, updating means periodically revising the inventory entries with involvement of the communities. Focus points include changes in the viability of the element, the composition of the community, and the effects of the safeguarding measures when described. UNESCO mentions that this also includes the replacing or adding of photos, audio-visual materials, and references to publications and links. UNESCO advises to update in a staggered fashion because it can be time consuming, adding that not all elements require the same frequency of updating. Paragraph 32 on community participation emphasizes the involvement of communities, which is related to the obligation to report every six years. Further, as mentioned in Guiding Principle 2, online inventories can make it easier for communities to update the information themselves.

8 From these instructions and guidelines, we can conclude that one of the main reasons for updating the inventory is to keep the ICH viable. The same conclusion is drawn by Sophie Elpers *et al.* (2021), who addressed updating in their paper on digital inventories and stated that the main reason for updating the elements on the inventory is to prevent processes of fossilization – a concern that was raised by several scholars in the

early years following the 2003 UNESCO Convention (Sears, 2002; Van Zanten, 2004). So far, the focus has been on UNESCO and its instructions on inventorying and updating. Over the last decades, the Convention has led to a fruitful field of research and reflections. I will briefly discuss the insights from other scholars that relate to the process of inventorying and updating.

Reflections on the Convention

9 As noted above, the concept of participation and communities are central elements of the 2003 Convention. Inventories should be drawn up with the widest possible participation of communities. Both participation and community are heavily discussed concepts. For example, in *Participation. The New Tyranny,* Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari (2001) emphasize that participation is not a tool for democratization but a more subtle way to maintain control. For in-depth analyses of participation and intangible heritage, see Marilena Alivizatou's *Intangible Heritage and Participation. Encounters with Safeguarding Practises* (2021) and Sousa's 2018 article. Sousa specifically reflected on what participation means in the context of the 2003 Convention and indicated that

> "participation" correlates to a process (for instance, consultation, counselling, debate, or intervention, which, for democratic and empowering purposes, will lead the CGIs to become involved in the planning and implementation of actions with a specific aim, in this case, the safeguarding of ICH (Sousa, 2018, p. 10).

10 Cécile Duvelle (2014), the former Director of the Intangible Heritage Sector of UNESCO, writes in her reflections on the implementation of the Convention that community participation is at the heart of the Convention, but acknowledges that community involvement is also one of its most challenging aspects. For example, it is not always clear whether communities really have a role in the nomination of their heritage, often it is government led.

11 In the context of heritage, community and participation cannot be separated from power dynamics. Laurajane Smith's landmark work in critical heritage studies, *Uses of Heritage* (2006), should be mentioned. Smith introduced the concept of the Authorized Heritage Discourse to analyze power relationships in the context of heritage making processes. In this process, inequality and exclusion are always at play. Closely related to this, Valerie Higgins and Diane Douglas (2021) noted that "small communities are vulnerable in the face of pressure from outside agencies or larger organizations. They find it difficult to defend their own interests and often lack the resources to influence decisions or even get their opinions heard" (p. 1). For example, most State Parties have Review Committees that evaluate the applications of the CGIs. These committees serve as a tool for quality control and evaluation. Dynamics that are inherent to the convention (Kuutma, 2019). Among others, Robert Baron (2016) wrote about these power relationships that exist between the CGIs and the heritage professionals. He also wrote about the many roles that scholars often embrace, as researchers, policy makers, and heritage advisors. Although Duvelle indicated that experts and researchers no longer hold absolute power over what heritage is and what should be done with it, a communal opinion is that the 2003 Convention cannot function without experts. Moreover, participation is not always desired. For example, Bortolotto *et al.* (2020) explained that Greek communities do not want to engage in filling in the nomination forms; they see this as the responsibility of the experts. As Sousa (2020) explains, experts are a necessity to decode the Convention for the CGIs. In line with this, Jorijn Neyrinck (2014) pleaded for close cooperation between the professionals and the CGIs.

This could benefit the heritage practitioners but could also strengthen their dependency on experts.

12 Looking closer at how the convention is implemented, specifically in the Netherlands, I will use the insights from Peter Margry (2014) as a starting point. As a former member of the Dutch Review Committee, Margry used his insider's perspective to write a critical paper two years after the implementation of the convention in the Netherlands. In this paper, Margry described some unwanted consequences and contradictions regarding commercialization, ethics, and ownership. He argued that it is difficult to pinpoint the ownership of the ICH in practice; however, in the system of a National Inventory, the ICH needs to be connected to a CGI. Kristin Kuutma's (2019) reflections on community participation are in line with Margry's arguments. She explains that, although communities are not homogeneous, the inventory system favors clearly bounded groups, who more easily fit into the bureaucratic system. Ambiguities regarding communities and their boundaries do not really fit UNESCO's definition set in 2006 nor the working mechanisms of the 2003 Convention.

13 Many scholars, such as Valdimar Tr. Hafstein and Kuutma, have criticized the Convention for its bureaucracy and politization – a concern that is shared by Margry. Focusing on the obligations of the applicants in the Netherlands, Margry warned of a bureaucratic maze for the CGIs as they try to get on the National Inventory. CGIs are obliged to write a safeguarding plan to ensure the ICH is not lost. Margry suggested that adding such a protection is irrelevant in the Netherlands because most cultural practices are maintained naturally. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) agreed and argued, ten years earlier, that things that have vitality need less safeguarding. Hafstein wrote several critical publications on the 2003 Convention and collected these in his book, *Making Intangible Heritage* (2018). Hafstein warned (among other things) of the consequences of listing processes, such as (unwanted) transformation and the appropriation of the ICH (2018). In line with this, Kuutma (2019) noted that inventorying transforms intangible heritage into political assets and inevitably leads to the "codification of cultural expressions and practices into manageable symbols of representation and argumentation" (p. 159). Margry further observed the difficulty to develop a list of ICH that is both representative and diverse. He indicates that the bottom-up approach leads to an Inventory that is more or less a random collection of ICH. Meaning that the success of the endeavor is very much dependent on the people who find their way to KIEN and are willing to play along in the system. Ellen Hertz (2015) shared a similar observation in her ironic reflection on how the principle of a bottom-up approach works in practice in her home country Switzerland. She concludes that working in a bottom-up fashion can be more exclusive rather than inclusive. The shared critique posited by these scholars is that the developed procedures are often created to work for the manager of the system and not for the people who are engaged in their intangible heritage. Next, I will take a closer look on how this process of inventorying and updating works in the Netherlands.

The Dutch Context

14 After the Netherlands ratified the UNESCO 2003 Convention in 2012, KIEN was commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science to implement the 2003 Convention. KIEN originated from the Dutch Centre for Folk Culture (VIE). In the first years of the implementation, KIEN had a small team consisting of a director, a

researcher, and two heritage advisors. Currently, KIEN has 15 employees: five researchers, a communications officer, an office manager, a director, a team leader, two international cooperation advisors, and four heritage advisors, who manage the inventorying process. Since 2016, KIEN is part of the Dutch Open Air Museum but has its own mission and vision.

15 In 2012, KIEN was tasked to set up a plan for a national inventory, which could serve as a gateway for international nominations. Three crucial points were emphasized. First, the inventory should be developed with a bottom-up approach, the heritage bearers should assume a leading role. Second, the inventory should be comprehensive, easily accessible, contain lots of information, and focus on methods of safeguarding this heritage. And third, the inventory should show a rich diversity of cultural expressions. From the start, the inventory was intended to result in an interactive publicly accessible online database, to which submissions could be sent, information could be obtained, and new methods of safeguarding could be explored.

16 With these guidelines and the Convention in mind, KIEN developed a procedure that is very much in line with UNESCO's own. After five years, KIEN adjusted the inventorying system. I will describe how KIEN worked in the first few years and what changes were made. KIEN's definition of ICH is a direct translation of the UNESCO definition and KIEN uses the same domains as UNESCO to organize the ICH: social practices, rituals, and festive events; oral traditions and expressions; performing arts; traditional craftmanship; and knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe. The criteria that are set by KIEN also broadly follow the UNESCO criteria for international nominations. In contrast to UNESCO's lists, languages or dialects can be nominated for the inventory in the Netherlands.

17 In the early years, most CGIs that found their way to the National Inventory already had ties with VIE. The procedure for writing a safeguarding plan, which was called a heritage care plan at the start, began with an information meeting. At these meetings, several CGIs were informed about the 2003 Convention and the content of the heritage care plan. Afterwards, the community representatives could indicate whether they wanted to add their heritage to the Inventory; if so, they received a blank heritage care plan via email. Subsequently, representatives could answer the questions at their own pace. After sending the initial answers, advisers from the KIEN would contact the communities to discuss these answers. After the discussion, the communities could continue writing their heritage care plan – a process that could repeat itself several times until the advisor determined that the plan could be submitted to the independent Review Committee. In some cases, this process took over a year. From the start of the Inventory, a periodic evaluation of the safeguarding plans was introduced to update the plans. Initially, this evaluation occurred after two years, but later this period was extended to three years.

18 The inventorying system was changed in 2017 because KIEN gradually discovered that all kinds of communities were not being reached or did not need or want to write a safeguarding plan. An Intangible Heritage Network was set up alongside the Inventory. In this Network, practitioners could register their ICH, without the obligation to write a safeguarding plan. Also in 2017, a Register of Inspiring Examples of Safeguarding was added, which makes inspiring safeguarding methodologies visible. Besides the Network and the Register, the Inventory (to which the preparation of a safeguarding plan remained linked) continued under a new name: Inventory of Intangible Heritage Netherlands. The road to this Inventory changed slightly. First, CGIs must establish an

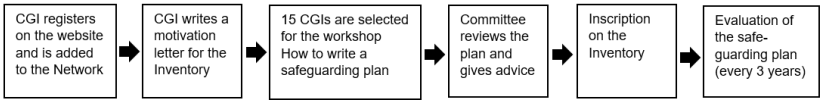
inscription on the Network, which can be achieved by opening an account on the KIEN website,[1] filling in the online questionnaire, and creating a name. Second, the CGIs are asked whether their registration fits the definition of ICH. If so, they must check off five boxes that relate to the definition of ICH. For example, *is the heritage dynamic and may it change with the times*? After the definition is established, the CGIs must describe their ICH using 100 to 500 words as per the guidelines. Third, three more boxes must be checked off. These boxes relate to human and animal rights, whether the CGIs are familiar with the definition of ICH (and if they will comply with this definition), and to endorse UNESCO's ethical principles for protecting intangible heritage. Finally, practitioners need to give their contact information, upload a photo, and indicate in which domain(s) their ICH falls.

19 Each application is checked by the heritage advisors. When everything fits the definition and the procedures that are set, the ICH and the description will be made visible online. Otherwise, the heritage advisors will reach out to the person who made the registration to support the process. Every three years, the CGIs are asked whether they want to maintain their page and to update the information. This is a mandatory action because the legal retention period of personal data in the Netherlands is three years.

20 CGIs that are in the Network can send a motivation letter to KIEN when they wish to be added to the Inventory. Each year, the heritage advisors select and invite 15 CGIs to follow the track to be added to the Inventory. Both the procedure and the forms used for the safeguarding plan and evaluations have been adapted step-by-step over the years, guided by the experience gained. For instance, the original information meeting was replaced by a training course consisting of three meetings. Typically, groups of three to four representatives of CGIs receive intensive guidance from KIEN's heritage advisers in drawing up their safeguarding plan in addition to receiving the basic information about the 2003 Convention. After submitting the application, the Review Committee compares the safeguarding plan against the criteria of the ICH and makes a preliminary decision on its inclusion in the Inventory. The advice is accompanied by praise for what the CGIs did well and some recommendations for improvement (*tips and tops*).

21 As mentioned above, after the ICH is inscribed, the CGIs are obliged to engage in an evaluation conversation with a KIEN heritage advisor every three years. The representative is asked to fill in the online evaluation form in advance, but this is not always done because they have lost their password or had difficulties with the questions, for example. In these conversations, the past safeguarding actions are evaluated and new actions are discussed. Since Covid-19, most of these conversations are conducted via Microsoft Teams video calls and take 60–90 minutes. The heritage advisors share their screen and review and discuss the form with the representative. These conversations used to occur year-round, but since 2022, KIEN tries to organize all evaluation conversations within two 2-week periods, in spring and in fall. After the conversations, the new safeguarding actions are made visible on the ICH's webpage on the KIEN website.[2] This full procedure is an obligation for CGIs who want to be on the Inventory. Without this evaluation conversation, and after repeated warnings, KIEN can decide to move the ICH from the Inventory to the Network.

Figure 1. Dutch procedure for the Inventory



22 Both the Network and the Inventory grew rapidly. Currently, the Network consists of almost 200 elements of ICH, and the Inventory has over 200. This growth is one of the motivations for this research because with these rapidly increasing numbers, the current procedure is not sustainable for KIEN. These practical considerations, as well as the critical notes from scholars about bureaucratization, encouraged the members of KIEN to rethink their procedures. In the next section, I will briefly describe the research methods. Next, I elaborate on the views of European colleagues and the representatives of the CGIs.

Methods

23 The data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with European colleagues and representatives of the CGIs who have their ICH on the Inventory. First, two researchers of KIEN engaged in conversations with two heritage advisors of KIEN who coordinate the inventorying. Based on these conversations, a protocol was compiled to interview European colleagues who engage in the inventory processes in their respective countries. The interviews focused on the inventorying process, the involvement of CGIs, the use of safeguarding plans, and if and how inventories are updated. The interviewees were also asked to reflect on the procedure of KIEN. The interviews were conducted by three researchers who are not directly involved in the updating process. The interviews took place between January 2022 and January 2024. See Table 1 for an overview of the participants.

Table 1. Interviewees

Name	Country	Institute
Cristina Biasetto	Austria	Austrian UNESCO-Commission
Jorijn Neyrinck et al.	Belgium	Werkplaats Immaterieel Erfgoed
Leena Marsio	Finland	Finnish Heritage Agency
Marlen Meissner	Germany	German UNESCO-Commission
Gita Lancere	Latvia	Latvian Centre for Culture
Marta Sanches da Costa	Portugal	Património Cultural – Instituto Público
Anja Jerin	Slovenia	Slovene Ethnographic Museum
Sara González Cambeiro	Spain	Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España
Annika Nordström	Sweden	Institute for Language and Folklore

24 Between October and November 2023, 15 CGIs had their 3-yearly evaluation conversations with KIEN heritage advisors. Afterwards, they were asked to answer three questions: 1) How do you experience the evaluation procedure? 2) What do you think is important in the evaluation process? 3) How do you prefer to engage with us in

an evaluation process? In some cases, the representatives answered the questions by e-mail.

Results

25 To shed light on the process of updating the national inventories, I will focus on three main topics. First, I will briefly describe how the national inventories are made. Second, I will focus on the main question of the article: How do State Parties act upon the obligation to update the inventory? And third, I will evaluate the Dutch way of working based on the reflections of the European heritage advisors and CGIs.

The National Inventories

26 There are several ways in which the State Parties draw up an inventory. In some cases, the regions within the country play a key role, which is the case in Spain and Germany. Particularly in Germany, this regional system is a challenge because all the federal states have their own cultural policy. Another example is Belgium, where separate inventories exist for Flanders and Wallonia. Most State Parties have one or two inventories that are drawn up by one central organization, either a governmental or non-governmental agency. In Slovenia a museum coordinates the implementation. When State Parties draw up more lists, one is often more low-key – see the Wiki-Inventory in Finland and The Great Collection (De Grote Verzameling) in Flanders. [3] Most of the time, a registration on these lists is necessary to get on the National Inventory. Finland's main goal for inventorying, as explained by Leena Mario, is to raise awareness for the ICH and to highlight diversity. The low-key list, such as the Wiki-inventory, fit this purpose.

27 In all State Parties, the CGIs play a role in the inventorying process, and participation of the CGIs remains a focus point for most countries. For instance, in some cases in Latvia, local governments are responsible for the application of a craft, but the craftsperson barely knows about it. Mostly, the CGIs either register the ICH themselves or give consent to experts. In Slovenia, they offer both routes and there are nationwide practiced elements of ICH that are registered without each specific bearer.[4] The procedures to get on the Inventory can be very intensive, just like in the Netherlands. In most State Parties, CGIs can register their ICH via an online platform. Mostly this is an ongoing process, but in some cases, registrations cannot be done each year. For example, registrations in Sweden were not possible in the year of the Periodic Report. In Slovenia, you can propose an initiative to the Coordinator at three moments out the year, and in Belgium, you can apply for the Inventory two times a year. In Finland, ICH can move from the Wiki-Inventory to the National Inventory every three years. This is because most State Parties have time-consuming procedures for inscriptions and only have limited staff. In most cases, the (online) registration is followed by a feedback process, in which CGIs receive (online) suggestions for adjustments or requests for additional information. The texts about the ICH are often written by the CGIs, but in some cases, experts review the text or make a public-oriented summary of the CGI text. There are differences among the information and the illustrative material that the CGIs must deliver. Photos (and in some cases videos) are mandatory in each State Party. In Austria, CGIs also must deliver two evaluations by experts in the field of the ICH.

28 Most State Parties follow the guidelines of the Convention and ask for a brief description of the ICH, the history of the ICH, and to indicate some safeguarding actions. In some cases (e.g., the Netherlands and Slovenia), the CGIs are asked to make a safeguarding plan for their ICH. The inscriptions on the National Inventories are always formalized via either a Review (Expert) Committee or by sending the applications to the responsible Ministry. For example, the procedure in Austria resembles the international system of UNESCO, but the application form is simplified and shortened. After the application, there is a feedback process with a commission, followed by a verdict given by an advisory panel consisting of a maximum of 24 experts and civil servants of ministries and regional cultural departments. There are three possible outcomes: accepted, rejected, or referral (e.g., due to lack of information). The community then receives feedback and can decide to take further steps.

29 Like in other countries, when the application is accepted in the Netherlands, a meeting is organized to give a certificate to the communities. Another benefit in many countries is that CGIs can use a symbol of the National Inventory on their website, or even receive a flag with the symbol. For CGIs, this ceremony can be a moment of pride and visibility, for example, when the mayor is invited or a (local) newspaper writes an article about the acquired heritage status. Often there are misunderstandings, for example, newspapers may misreport about the World Heritage status or whether a particular heritage is indeed legally protected.

The process of updating

30 As discussed in the opening paragraphs of this article, there are no clear obligations for updating – besides the obligation to update the National Inventory. Of the interviewed State Parties, only Germany (interviewed in 2022) had not yet started with their updating procedure. But, by 2024, an evaluation of the method of implementation was offered to the political actors involved in the implementation. The name of the procedures differs. Most State Parties use the term *update* for this procedure, exemptions include the Netherlands (evaluation), Belgium (rapportage), and Portugal (review). For all State Parties in this research, the main reasons for updating are to keep the contact information and the description about the ICH up to date and to see whether the heritage is viable. And for some the focus is on the evaluation of the safeguarding actions. The updates can also help to get insights on the needs of the CGIs and can be used for the Periodic Report for UNESCO. The interviewees indicated that the update could be an incentive for the CGIs to work on the safeguarding and could be a confirmation from experts that the CGIs are doing decent work to safeguard their ICH.

31 For most State Parties, updating is an ongoing process. CGIs can submit changes to the description of their ICH or contact information can be updated year-round via an online platform, by emailing, or by making a telephone call. In some cases, experts of the ICH play a role by indicating that there were important changes. For most of the State Parties, this is the only action taken to keep the inventory up to date; however, in some cases, it is combined with a x-yearly (online) questionnaire for the CGIs. In Portugal, the full nomination file is updated every 10 years, but as Marta Sanches da Costa explained, "the technical team has found it necessary to promote more direct follow-up and monitoring of safeguarding plans on a more regular basis (every 3 years)". Because Portugal ratified the convention in 2011, only three elements have

been updated so far. The 10-year period enables Portuguese officials to analyze the impact of the safeguarding measures, a downside is that the representatives might have changed and did not follow up on the safeguarding plan made by their predecessors. After the Portuguese review procedure, the public body that oversees the management of the National Inventory decides whether to maintain the element in the inventory.

32 In Slovenia, the status of the bearer can change from active to non-active. The bearer stays on the list under the so-called *documentary protection*. In Latvia, it is an obligation to evaluate the safeguarding plan at least every five years, while updating the content information happens annually. The bearers are encouraged to organize a community meeting to discuss what safeguarding actions worked and what actions did not. In Finland, the main goal is to get up-to-date information about the bearers and the heritage. Leena Marsio explains how she tries to motivate the communities to engage in this updating: "The system is that after 3 years we send a friendly email and ask them to update. But also, to provide them information. For example, we say that 100 000 people visited the website and so many countries, media and schools go there. So, you should be up to date". Every two years, the CGIs in Belgium are asked whether something has changed, accompanied by questions about the safeguarding. Some CGIs take this very seriously and hand over several pages of reflections, others just answer briefly. The rapportage of the CGIs is sent to the expert committee, however, during the interview in 2022, Jorijn Neyrinck explained that not much was done with the reflections of the CGIs because of a lack of time. This changed in 2023. The Expert Committee analyzed the reports and individual feedback was given to all the heritage communities. The goal is even to do more with the rapportagein the near future. Most State Parties show the updates directly on their website. In some cases, additional actions are taken. For example, in Slovenia, via a weekly e-newsletter, CGIs and experts are kept informed about updates in the Inventory.

Evaluation of Dutch Way of Updating

33 The interviewees have mixed feelings about the Dutch procedures. Most interviewees state that the use of the term *evaluation conversation* is not appropriate because it indicates a hierarchy. It feels like a top-down procedure and that the CGIs are being judged, which is not in line with the Convention. As explained by Anja Jerin, "*evaluating* has a different connotation, more in the sense that you have somebody who sets the 'set of rules' by which the bearers must act". A renaming of the procedure could help, for example, *self-evaluation* or *safeguarding conversation*. Some of the interviewees remarked that the period between the conversations is too short and that such conversations might put too much pressure on CGIs. "They might get the idea that they should have done something in this period", Sara González Cambeiro indicated. Besides the critical notes, the interviewees remarked that the actual conversations could provide in-depth information, both for the CGI's as the heritage advisors. Most State Parties do not offer such a procedure because they lack funding and human resources.

34 Fifteen representatives of the CGIs gave feedback on the evaluation procedure. A general trend is the positive assessment about the personal contact with the heritage advisors. In the words of one of the representatives, "Just filling in the evaluative questions would be a fill-in exercise, the conversations make it worth the investment". Some people indicated that the online video call was very convenient, while others

mentioned they would have liked a face-to-face meeting with the heritage advisors to show their ICH, for instance. Some representatives indicated that the whole procedure also gives more “recognition” and therefore status to their intangible heritage, "When you have national recognition it is also your responsibility to reflect on it now and then". Some of the interviewees apologized for not filling in the forms and that the next time they would do their “homework” in order the make the procedure more fluent. Some interviewees also considered the "valuable time it takes of the heritage advisors". Others mentioned that the intermediary role of the heritage advisors was necessary to fully grasp all the questions, "A little more explanation beforehand about the process would be more helpful [because] it really is a lot of information to go through".

35 Besides these positive and mixed evaluations, there were also some unintended negative effects mentioned by the participants. After the conversation, one participant asked, "Do you think we can keep our intangible heritage status?". He further explained that he invested a lot of time in filling out the form. At the start of the conversation, he also indicated that he was not sure he had answered the questions in the right way. This is a sign of what one of the European colleagues mentioned about putting (too much) pressure on the communities as they engage in this procedure.

36 Most feedback to improve the procedure focused on the length of the evaluation form. Participants indicated that the form felt a bit repetitive, some questions are double, and not all questions are relevant. One of the interviewees critically expressed that in some cases he felt the questions were more relevant to KIEN than for his own organization because his organization would take the necessary measures to safeguard the ICH regardless of conversations with KIEN. However, there was no consensus on this. For example, someone indicated that it should not feel as a formality: "It really should focus on the heritage conservation". There were also questions about the frequency of the conversations. A suggestion was made to adjust the frequency to the characteristics of the intangible heritage. For example, an event that takes place every seven years should have a conversation in the year following the event. Short phone calls in the interval between the evaluation could also save time during the big procedure. It could also be organized in a customized fashion; for example, a phone call could be conducted every three years to check whether the whole procedure is relevant or can wait. There was also a remark about what the conversations should focus on, "Looking more at heritage itself. What elements belong to it and has anything changed in that area in recent years".

Concluding thoughts

37 The starting point of this research project was to gain insights into the ways Article 12 of the 2003 UNESCO Convention is implemented by European State Parties and how CGIs in the Netherlands evaluate the updating procedure of KIEN. The underlying goal is to develop a procedure that is geared to the wishes and needs of the CGIs, but that is also amenable to KIEN’s heritage advisors.

38 In this section, I will draw some general conclusions and make some suggestions for an adjusted procedure. First, I will briefly reflect on the data collection. A critical note is that CGIs were asked to give feedback on the evaluation process just after they engaged in a conversation with their heritage advisor. This could have influenced the responses they gave. We decided to collect the data in this way because it was practical, and over

the years we have observed some fatigue with participants responding to online questionnaires. More important, in earlier conversations with CGIs, we observed that they can take critical stances towards KIEN, regardless of the (sometimes) asymmetrical power relationship.

39 Both the European heritage advisors and the CGIs evaluated the procedure as an in-depth evaluation that could give relevant information about the status of the ICH and stimulate the safeguarding of the heritage. The personal contact was evaluated very positively. For almost all interviewees, the frequency of the conversations was too great, which could possibly lead to unwanted side effects, such as putting too much pressure on the CGIs. The name of the procedure, *evaluation conversation*, also implies a hierarchy and gives participants the feeling of being evaluated. Some representatives even showed fear of being removed from the National Inventory. This is illustrative of what other scholars have described as the risk of asymmetrical power relationships between the heritage professionals and the CGIs (Baron, 2016; Kuutma, 2019). The critical notes in the literature about the bureaucratization (Bortolotto *et al.*, 2020; Hafstein, 2018) were partly confirmed by the reflections of the CGIs, who indicated that the forms are repetitive and, in some cases, unnecessary. One representative even remarked that the safeguarding plan is only relevant for KIEN, which fits Kirshenblatt-Gimblets' (2004) observation that not all heritage needs safeguarding. Hafstein (2018) used a humorous metaphor to illustrate intangible cultural heritage as a diagnosis and safeguarding as the treatment. For some CGIs, it feels as though they must jump through hoops to be (and stay) on the National Inventory, but others feel a sense of pride because of the extensive (evaluation) "treatment".

40 This study, internal conversations within KIEN, and other scholars' reflections on the 2003 Convention has led KIEN to decide to use 2024 as a year of reflection regarding inventorying. In 2024, there will be no new additions to the National Inventory and no evaluation conversations, but the Network will remain open for applications. The results of this study clearly indicate that the procedures regarding inventorying and specifically updating the inventory should be adjusted in a way that it is more tailor-made to the needs of the CGIs. A one-size-fits-all model is not sustainable. For some CGIs, a conversation about safeguarding can be helpful every three years. For others, an update of the (contact) information is sufficient. The main goal should be that the information about the intangible heritage is up to date and that the procedures fit the needs of the CGIs. For example, just as in Finland, a friendly reminder can be sent, explaining the importance of up-to-date information, and can motivate the CGIs in a more natural way to keep their webpages up to date and to prevent processes of fossilization. KIEN works with an online Inventory, so CGIs can easily adjust the information themselves. For CGIs that wish to do so, they should have the option to have more regularly reflective conversations with a heritage advisor. The diversity of the CGIs that engage in ICH should also be reflected in the diverse ways that participation and safeguarding can take place.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Via https://www.immaterieelerfgoed.nl/en/procedure, you can see how the procedures are explained to the CGIs.

2. The website www.immaterieelerfgoed.nl/immaterieelerfgoed shows all the ICH on the National Inventory and Network.

3. The Wiki-inventory is accessible via https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/en/sopimus-suomessa/wikiluettelo. The Great Collection via https://immaterieelerfgoed.be/nl/erfgoederen.

4. For example, preparing potica (all 'housewives' in Slovenia prepare potica for different festive occasions, so all Slovene 'housewives' are the actual bearers of this element).

ABSTRACT

The Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage is responsible for implementing the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Netherlands. This paper focuses on one specific part of Article 12 of the 2003 Convention:

inventories should be updated regularly. I use the Netherlands as a case study, by comparing the Dutch procedures with nine other European countries and using the reflections of the communities, groups, and individuals that are on the National Inventory. Compared to most other countries, the Netherlands has the most in-depth procedure: a 3-yearly evaluation conversation about the safeguarding plan and the option to continuously update the content and contact information online. The latter is most common for the other State Parties and, in some cases, is combined with x-yearly questionnaires. Although the Dutch procedure is evaluated as being very insightful, it is also criticized because it can put too much pressure on the communities and is not relevant for all. Considering the reflections of scholars and outcomes of this study, a procedure that is more tailor-made and that fits the individual needs of the communities is advised in order to prevent bureaucratization and pressure on the communities.

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Keywords: national inventory, update, intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO, participation

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