

Introduction:

Ever since the **UNESCO 2003 Convention** for the Safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage developed, **NGOs** have made efforts for contributing to its implementation.

NGOs accredited by UNESCO may provide **advisory services to the Intergovernmental Committee in the framework of the 2003 UNESCO Convention.**

This role though is foremost limited to advisory services for the **Evaluation Body advising on nomination files** thus far.

At its 12th Session in 2017 the Committee invited the Secretariat *'to reflect, in consultation with accredited NGOs, on the possible ways in which the participation of NGOs under the 2003 Convention could be further enhanced and how this would be reflected in the accreditation and renewal mechanisms of NGOs'*¹. Hence the launch of an exploration of different potential roles that could be taken up by NGOs to serve the goals of the Convention through a broadened range of activities.

However the current Operational Directives did not yet offer adequate tools to organize further functions and contributions by NGOs in past years, the NGOs themselves naturally engaged in developing a **wide series of practices contributing to the Convention's objectives and safeguarding ICH** ever since it started. Also NGOs began **coordinating** a range of these activities through a specially established **ICH NGO Forum** gathering accredited NGOs from 2010 onwards.

¹ Decision 12.COM 17

The **ICH NGO Forum itself is committed to function as an international platform for accredited ICH NGOs** (www.ichngoforum.org) and has been taking forward the international rollout of its mission and activities in communication, networking, exchange and cooperation among the numerous accredited NGOs active on the 2003 Convention and safeguarding ICH in the field.

Domains of special interest therein are the **sharing of safeguarding experiences**, fostering inspiring and instructive practices and methods, **building networks for exchange and cooperation**, setting up **working groups** to face actual and future challenges within the ICH safeguarding realm (e.g. NGOs and research, NGOs and ethics,...), elaborating **capacity building** in line with the Convention tailored to the NGOs, and involving different **stakeholders** in the Convention's safeguarding objectives: communities, NGOs, experts, civil society...

Special attention has also been drawn by the Forum -on a more generic level- to the importance of ICH NGOs taking up **roles of mediation, facilitation and cultural brokerage** with respect to cultivating local to global safeguarding processes in ICH. The mediation role of NGOs for ICH was highlighted already as well in the debates of the Intergovernmental Committee and the General Assembly as well as in the 2013 IOS Evaluation report on the Convention² and 'brokerage' is mentioned in the new 2016 OD chapter on sustainable development.

A way to organize and structure NGO activities around the goals of Convention is desirable, considering the **numerous NGOs** being accredited to the Convention (total of 176 in 2018), the **broad range of NGOs** with their respective **geographical distribution, different competences** and working throughout the **different ICH domains**. Differentiation within the range of

² <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/evaluations-audits-and-governance-00717>

capacities and roles available among the accredited NGOs indeed will enable to foster effective and targeted contributions to the overall implementation of the Convention's objectives.

Moreover, such need to differentiate, operationalize and focus the NGO activity and engagement has already been a shared experience as well in the midst of the ICH NGO Forum in past years. Several initiatives have been taken in this regard since its starting days, structuring the Forum's proceedings and performance (*see below for detailed elaboration*).

Welcoming with gratitude and enthusiasm the invitation of the Committee to deliver a collaborative reflection on future potential roles for NGOs in the Convention, the ICH NGO Forum hopes also from its side to contribute to a fruitful reflection and outcome.

Next to participating actively and productively in the consultation process, the Forum therefore from its side also takes initiatives and gives incentives to produce relevant and inspiring suggestions, proposals and/or lines of thought which **may be feeding the more general Reflection that is going on**.

In 2018 already three NGO meetings were especially devoted to the INTER ALIA process:

1. Open NGO meeting at 7.GA, 6th of June, 2018, Paris (France):

a general introduction and exchange on the meaning and motivation of accreditation to NGOs, expectations as well as contributions NGOs may offer relating to the Convention

2. working group session at 7.GA, 7th of June, 2018, Paris (France):

Brainstorm on possible working methods to address the INTER ALIA Reflection, followed by a first mapping of the possible roles of NGOs within the framework of the Convention

3. International Symposium of the ICH NGO Forum at 13.COM, 25th of November, 2018, Port Louis (Republic of Mauritius):

titled: "Role of accredited NGOs in the implementation of the UNESCO 2003 Convention"

Alongside these initiatives, the Forum was involved in **preliminary consultations** undertaken by the Secretariat with the steering committee of the ICH NGO Forum and representatives from the informal ad hoc working group on the organization of the consultation process.

- **a meeting between the steering committee of the ICH NGO Forum, the co-chairs of the informal ad hoc working group and the Secretariat** was organized on **5 June 2018**, in the margins of the seventh session of the General Assembly of States Parties, to exchange experiences on achievements and gaps in the participation of accredited NGOs in the implementation of the Convention, as well as initial ideas to shape their future role.

- **the Secretariat in August 2018 consulted the Forum for feedback in the preparation process for an electronic consultation** on the potential advisory functions to be fulfilled by accredited NGOs and possible ways forward for the accreditation system. This electronic consultation was sent in September 2018 to all 176 accredited NGOs and 178 States Parties and first results being discussed during the 13.COM.

> **The following working document presents an overview bringing together ideas and results from the different meetings, workshops, and information brought together throughout 2018 which may be feeding further the announced Reflection.**

1. UNESCO accreditation as a lever: recognition & international network committed to ICH safeguarding

During 7.GA, on 6th June, an **open NGO forum session** was set up aiming for a **general exploration on the motivation and meaning of accreditation with the many NGOs** present.

The objective of this workshop was to learn more from the participant NGOs about the following **3 questions**:

a/ what was their motivation to request accreditation back in time?

b/ what did they expect from being accredited (what does being accredited under the Convention bring to the NGO)?

c/ what did they consider their NGO could offer to the Convention?

NGOs generally stressed the **important value of recognition by the accreditation**.

Further, the dimension of networking and exchange opportunities by far outnumbered other factors as the most important aspect of accreditation. The majority of NGOs stressed that accreditation brought the opportunity to take part in the **international networking of fellow NGOs and other actors around the Convention**, and becoming part of this larger **international network/community on ICH safeguarding** and related **expertise and knowledge** to be shared, learned and developed collaboratively.

2. INTER ALIA? Mapping roles of NGOs

Also to the occasion of 7.GA, the ICH NGO Forum set up a Working Group session to conduct a **preliminary reflection on relevant and desirable roles to be outlined as possible future NGO roles** within the larger context of the Convention and its involved actors.

The meeting concluded on the following proposals for further elaboration:

1. Bring into **overview the mentions regarding NGOs in the framework of the 2003 Convention**: the Convention text, Operational Directives, Decisions of IGC and GA, Overall Results Framework, ethical principles.

2. Effectuate a reflection on eventual roles of NGOs to ‘provide **advisory services to the Intergovernmental Committee** ‘ through effectuating this exercise by **relating to the functions of the IGC as defined in Article 7 of the Convention**:
Map the possible contributions of NGOs to each of these functions (*see table below*).
3. **Map capacities of accredited NGOs in relation to the possible roles**, e.g. via online survey or database.
4. **Reinforce the role of the ICH NGO Forum as umbrella organization and focal point** regarding accredited NGOs under the 2003 Convention:
 - strengthen governance in transparency of the Forum
 - strengthen communication on the work of NGOs and the Forum implementing the Convention
 - strengthen capacity building processes for and with NGOs and outreaching to civil society
 - set up an ethics program with the NGO Forum responding to the ethical principles of the Convention
5. **Cherish and foster the precious position of** accredited NGOs being **non-governmental organizations**, entailing among other:
 - that NGOs represent the **capacity for multiple voices to be expressed** and for guarding **inclusive involvement of the communities, groups and individuals** concerned within the **shared 2003 Convention’s objectives**, as expressed among others in article 1 of the Convention, article 15, and the 12 ethical principles.
 - that NGOs –and other civil society actors- are in the ability of developing the objectives of the Convention beyond formal and institutional policy frameworks and instruments. NGOs may participate in the safeguarding of ICH in general, and of specific elements of ICH, whether or not inscribed. (ORF 21). NGOs can to monitor and undertake scientific, technical and artistic studies on ICH safeguarding programmes and measures etc (ORF 22). In short, NGOs may play significant roles for laboratory, research, development and innovative capacity towards the Convention and the safeguarding of ICH in general.

7.	ARTICLE 7 – FUNCTIONS of IGC	Possible contribution of NGOs
a	<p>promote the objectives of the Convention, and to encourage and monitor the implementation thereof;</p> <p><i>Convention - Article 1: The purposes of this Convention are: (a) to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage; (b) to ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned; (c) to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof; (d) to provide for international cooperation and assistance.</i></p>	<p>1. promote the objectives of the Convention</p> <p>2. encourage implementation of the (objectives of) the Convention</p> <p>3. monitor implementation of the (objectives of) the Convention</p> <p>which may include (cfr. article 1 Convention):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - safeguarding ICH - ensuring respect for CGIs - awareness raising of the importance of ICH, - ensuring mutual appreciation of ICH - providing cooperation and assistance in international framework - ...
b	<p>provide guidance on best practices and make recommendations on measures for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ provide guidance for good or best practices ✓ contribute to lighter ways of sharing safeguarding experiences ✓ make recommendations on safeguarding measures for ICH ...
c	<p>prepare and submit to the General Assembly for approval a draft plan for the use of the resources of the Fund, in accordance with Article 25;</p>	<p>_ <i>Not applicable</i></p>
d	<p>seek means of increasing its resources, and to take the necessary measures to this end, in accordance with Article 25;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ possible contribution of NGOs seeking means of increasing resources for the implementation of the convention, through e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - crowdfunding, friendsraising - raising funds through private sector and sponsorships - advocating for policies including resources and funding for ICH safeguarding - ...

e		prepare and submit to the General Assembly for approval operational directives for the implementation of this Convention;	✓ deliver and inspire proposals regarding operational directives to the IGC
f		examine, in accordance with Article 29, the reports submitted by States Parties, and to summarize them for the General Assembly;	✓ Complement the data gathered on the implementation of the Convention through Periodic Reports submitted by State Parties with information provided by NGOs. (> IOS report 2013 - Recommendation 23).
g		examine requests submitted by States Parties, and to decide thereon, in accordance with objective selection criteria to be established by the Committee and approved by the General Assembly for:	
	i	inscription on the lists and proposals mentioned under Articles 16, 17 and 18;	✓ NGO contribution in the Evaluation Body
	ii	the granting of international assistance in accordance with Article 22.	✓ NGO contribution in the Evaluation Body

3. Boundary Conditions and sensibilities

Next to abovementioned reflection on the possible roles of NGOs to provide advisory services, there also are **some areas of concern** and **boundary conditions** that are meaningful to take into account, considering the elaboration of future NGO accreditation and functions in the Convention.

These issues were either raised in previous sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee and General Assembly meetings of the Convention; either highlighted during the informal exchange and reflection with the co-chairs of the informal ad hoc working group of the Committee in 2018.

- Each of the following aspects can be developed both from the side of the Convention and its organs, and/or from the side of NGOs themselves. Depending on the question, one or the other approach may appear preferable to take the initiative:
 - To reduce the administrative burden for the Secretariat as an effect of the NGOs activity in the 2003 Convention.
 - To improve the governance structure, the institutional continuity as well as the visibility of the Forum as to be able to act as focal point and building connection with the states parties.
 - To elaborate incentives aiming to spur accreditation from within regions where NGO accreditation is relatively underrepresented (e.g. via networking, via capacity building initiatives...)
 - > *Incentives to elevate accreditation requests from underrepresented regions could be spurred by both states parties, the Section, as well as in the midst of the NGO networks.*
 - To set up a code of conduct for accredited NGOs taking part in the Convention and its bodies.
 - > *This should not necessarily be an initiative at the side of NGOs themselves, but could possibly from the side of the Convention be linked as a condition related to the request for accreditation?*

4. Thinking tracks for an enhanced model of accrediting NGOs and differentiated roles serving the 2003 Convention

Three preliminary ideas are relevant to take into account when reflecting on revising the accreditation model:

1. The high number of NGOs requesting accreditation naturally gives expression to the considerable (albeit geographically unbalanced) **initiatives, commitment and presence of NGOs active in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage “in the field” all over the globe.**

2. It is important that the UNESCO 2003 Convention is not about assessing the value of the intangible heritage on its range or reach, on its scale or scope, but displays heritage elements with parity of esteem to supranational phenomena of ICH. In the same sense the scope and scale of the work and expertise of NGOs should not be evaluated differently than the one of elements, or communities, if in the end it all revolves around appropriate ways leading to safeguarding equivalent intangible heritage in its diversity of contexts. The work and expertise of NGOs, whether they be local, national, regional or international in scope or scale, can be as relevant for the implementation of the Convention on its national and/or international level, as far as the elements of ICH brought into view also result from this rationale.

The same **principle of diversity and differentiation** can be followed regarding NGOs, which form in **fact a rich resource for the implementation of the Convention to its full potency.**

3. It is important to be aware that any form of accreditation also works as a form of recognition, and it should ultimately **serve in this respect: to strengthen NGO participation in the implementation at all levels.**

In a general sense accreditation of NGOs under **the UNESCO 2003 Convention** is supportive as such, considering the symbolic and moral value UNESCO bears important effects of recognition and empowerment, strengthening NGOs in their safeguarding activities at the national level, and linking them from their respective levels of work (be it local, national,...) to these international networks of safeguarding policies and practices related to the UNESCO 2003 Convention.

In the past years NGOs from their side have repeatedly indicated (via NGO Forum Statements, via IOS report in 2013, ...) how importantly a recognition of their commitment in the implementation of the Convention reinforces their activities both with the holders (Communities, groups and in some cases individuals) and with the State Parties, and helps NGOs in their own efforts for promoting the goals and means of the Convention.

Again, in the **electronic consultation processed in 2018** (ITH/18/13.COM/13) 82 per cent of the NGO respondents indicated that the **current accreditation system has supported their work.**

In 2018-2019, deliberation will be launched about potential scenarios for operationalization of an enhanced NGO involvement in the Convention, put in relation to the model and procedure of NGO accreditation.

Regarding the accreditation process and criteria **different models could be proposed** of course.

In past years, especially following the IOS report in 2013 and the initial evaluation phase of the first cycle of accredited NGOs to the occasion of 8.COM in Baku, several tracks of thought had been put on the table for consideration already. One idea at that time was that a mechanism could be developed to differentiate between NGOs specifically accredited to act in an advisory capacity **in the Consultative Body** (or the proposed Evaluation Body) to be treated by the Secretariat, and on the other hand all **NGOs** accredited to act in an advisory capacity **to the Committee** on national, regional or international levels, for which the procedure might be developed in lighter ways, regarding for example formulas of ‘associated partners of the ICH Convention’ⁱ, or other forms of correlation that exist already for the Clubs, Centres and Associations by UNESCOⁱⁱ.

WORKING PROPOSAL

DEVELOP FUTURE NGO ACCREDITATION along following 2 LINES:

1. Accreditation regarding advisory services to the Committee

= *For a limited number of NGOs + limited in time (sunset clause)*

+ *with a focus on advise on international/UNESCO level*

These advisory services would concern a limited set of services, specifically devoted to evaluation and reporting tasks on the international level

(e.g. evaluation of nomination files, drawing up reports for the IGC, ...)

> the 6 NGOs for Evaluation Body can be selected among these, but also other advisory services requested by the Committee or needed for the Secretariat’s work

The accreditation of this group could be:

- limited to a max. number per region (e.g. a ceiling of 10 per region)
- for a limited time (e.g. 4 or 6 years)
- this advisory accreditation could remain to be reviewed by the Secretariat (*see below for procedure to demotivate high number of requests in this category*) and then proposed to the IGC

2. Accreditation of (a much wider range of) NGOs contributing to the IMPLEMENTATION of the convention (national, regional, international):

The accreditation of these NGOs would be in line with the purpose to build a growing group of NGOs engaging in the dynamics on implementing and outreaching the Convention in society. To limit burden for the Convention's Secretariat, these NGOs accreditation could be advised through a procedure moderated via the ICH NGO Forum (e.g. a peer review model or an evaluation committee of NGOs and external experts/researchers) and thereafter being proposed for accreditation to the IGC.

cfr. decision [8.COM 14.b](#) & [12.COM 17](#))

> KEEP IT one integrated ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

This process should still preferably belong to one 'accreditation' system, but differentiating on the services delivered.

> NGOs could fill out the application for accreditation, and at a certain point in the file they tick a box whether they want to serve on the international level for evaluation and reporting services (accompanied of course with guidance what the content of this international work consists of).

If the NGO has ticked this box, they enter into the process of review of accreditation to be reviewed by the secretariat.

Note: To prevent that this would still bring an affluence of numerous NGOs to the accreditation (1) implying international advisory services to the IGC, there should be built in a system of moderation.

> Suggestion: Before effectively launching this newly adapted system of differentiated accreditation, a (questionnaire to make the) mapping of the fields of competence of the accredited ICH NGOs in relation

to the Convention / safeguarding of ICH would be helpful. Such questionnaire could be the file to apply for the next stage of accreditation OR we could launch it first in a pilot stage via consultation/database (e.g. through the NGO forum or a consultation stage) to obtain therein immediately also the overview on the number of NGOs that will choose specific fields of interest and expertise; and to be sure the challenge of numerous NGOs that tick the box for 'advisory services to the Committee' would be reduced (associated with stating clearly that this expects a high demand of English and French knowledge; experience with evaluating files; etc)

Read more? Selected Documents:

ICH NGO Forum:

2013:

- <https://www.slideserve.com/pomona/ich-ngo-forum-december-1-2013-jorijn-neyrinck>
- <http://www.ichngoforum.org/call-for-papers-ich-ngo-forum-symposium-8-com/>
- <http://www.ichngoforum.org/documents-and-texts-for-the-ich-ngo-forum-in-baku/>
- <http://www.ichngoforum.org/wp-content/uploads/8COM-Baku-NGO-STATEMENT-ENG.pdf>

2014: <http://www.ichngoforum.org/ich-ngo-forum-2014-symposium-world-cafe-report/>

2016: <http://www.ichngoforum.org/statement-ich-ngo-forum-declaration-du-forum-des-ong-pci-a-loccasion-de-6-ga/>

2018: **DOCUMENTS SYMPOSIUM**

UNESCO

- IOS - Evaluation of UNESCO's Standard-setting Work of the Culture Sector - Part I – 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/evaluations-audits-and-governance-00717>

- UNESCO 2011 **Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organizations,**

Online: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=33137&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Other:

- Blake, Janet 2006. *Commentary on the UNESCO 2003 Convention on the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage*, Leicester, Institute of Art and Law.

- Ubertzzi, Benedetta, 2013. Non-Governmental Organizations and the 2013 session of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee, in Italian Yearbook of International Law 2013, vol. XXIII, 299-324

- Towards Efficient Roles of NGOs for Safeguarding ICH in the Asia-Pacific Region
http://www.ichcap.org/eng/ek/sub8/pdf_file/07/2014_Conference_Report.pdf

- Special Issue: *Brokers, facilitators and mediation. Critical success (f)actors for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage* in *Volkskunde* 3 (2014)
<http://www.immaterieelergoed.be/Detail/thema/18>

- Marc Jacobs, Jorijn Neyrinck and Albert van der Zeijden, 'UNESCO, Brokers and Critical Success (F)Actors in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage'. (ENG-NL, pdf)

- Jorijn Neyrinck, 'Beyond the Conventional. How to Foster Co-production for Safeguarding ICH (pdf)

ⁱhttp://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/NGO/pdf/Official_partnership_brochure_Eng.pdf

Two categories of partnership may be established with NGOs: the consultative partnership, designed to enable UNESCO to establish and maintain flexible and dynamic partnerships with any organization of civil society that is active in UNESCO's fields of competence at whatever level, and the associate partnership, open to international or regional organizations having maintained a continuous and effective partnership with UNESCO for at least two years. The Director-General decides on the establishment of official partnership with UNESCO (consultative status). These requests for partnership may be submitted at any time by NGOs to the Director-General, together with complete documentation concerning the NGO. An application form is available on line. Requests are processed through an internal evaluation guided by a limited set of rigorous and transparent considerations.

ⁱⁱ <https://en.unesco.org/countries/associations-centres-and-clubs-unesco>

The Clubs, Centres and Associations are established under the aegis of the National Commissions for UNESCO, these Clubs, Centres and Associations are grouped into national, regional and international networks, for the purpose of acting in UNESCO's fields of competence at the grass root level.