Working group for more balanced geographical representation of NGOs
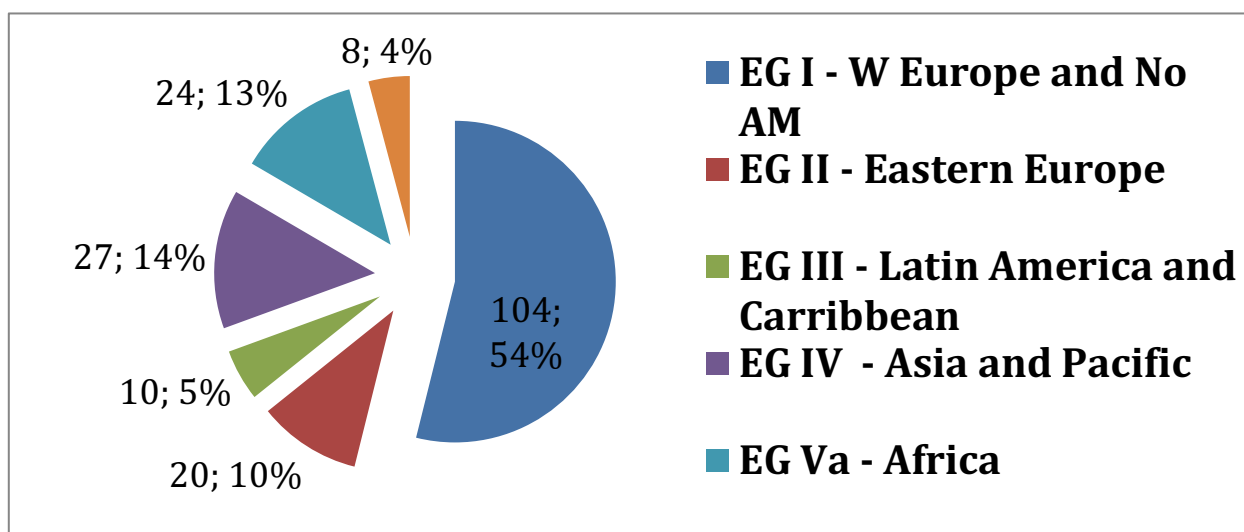
Mission Statement

Rationale

UNESCO has **six regional electoral groups** for geographical representation in elections (see the Basic Texts 2020, Appendix 2, I). **Today, as of 16.COM in 2021**, the 2003 Convention has been ratified by **180 State Parties** and **193 NGOs have been accredited** to perform advisory functions for the Committee. The geographical representation of accredited NGOs is as follows: Group I: 104; Group II: 20; Group III: 10; Group IV: 27; Group V(a): 24 and Group V(b): 8 *(for detailed information, please see the "ANGO unbalanced" doc below)*

The unbalanced geographical distribution of accredited NGOs was identified as one of the major concerns by the General Assembly, the Committee and the Secretariat when the reflection process on the advisory role of accredited NGOs started at 12.COM in 2017. The concern on the unbalanced geographical distribution has been pointed out in numerous working documents of the governing bodies. In the ICH NGO Forum Report of Pre-14.COM and 14.COM activities in 2019, the regional group discussions on Regional Capacity-Building Needs, Opportunities and Challenges came to an agreement that there is a need to find ways towards more balanced representation of ICH NGOs from six regions of the world. Furthermore, ICH NGO Report presented during 16.COM states: "The Forum is acutely aware that NGOs from developing countries remain underrepresented, despite the flexibility of the accreditation criteria. This is a challenge that the ICH NGO Forum is actively addressing through efforts to involve NGOs from geographically underrepresented regions in all of its activities, recruiting members from these regions in all of its working groups and developing plans for capacity-building programmes."

Working group for more balanced geographical representation of NGOs

Nature and Mission
Our working group is a community of NGOs from different geographical regions with an **aim to understand, address and overcome the issue of ongoing geographical imbalance of the NGO representation** in the ICH NGO Forum and the UNESCO 2003 Convention **by creating capacity building materials and practical information for the NGOs in the underrepresented countries**. The working group will focus on proactively involving and activating the potential of accredited NGOs in under-represented regions by supporting them as trainers and actors of WG's capacity building program in their regions and sub-regions. The working group will strive to adapt the capacity building materials to the needs and challenges of the under-represented regions. The working group also intends to reflect upon and discuss the different roles of the NGOs in different countries and regions on a regular basis to understand the nature of challenges faced by NGOs. The main communication tool for the working groups are the website of the ICH NGO Forum and the social media of the working group members.

The working group was established on December 19, 2020 during the 15th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The subsequent meetings of the working group have been held on April 27, June 18 and October 29 with presentations from different regions about the local and regional realities that accredited NGOs face.

Preparation work for the working group was made prior to the establishment, as background note was prepared *(for more information please see – http://www.ichngoforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Background-Note-on-the-Problem-of-Imbalance.pdf)* on the subject and carried out an online survey to give the working group a starting point of ideas to reflect upon.

Objectives
1. Develop an outreach strategy targeted at NGOs in under-represented regions with relevant competence working in the ICH sector to draw their attention to and raise their awareness about the accreditation system;
2. Distribute awareness raising information on accreditation to targeted NGOs with the potential for accreditation;
3. Identify thematic areas of interest for developing targeted capacity-building materials and practical information for NGOs in under-represented regions;
4. Distribute developed capacity building materials and practical information to and engage a wide range of NGOs in under-represented regions;
5. Generate and provide online meeting platform to understand and discuss challenges and issues for accreditation and local and regional realities that accredited NGOs face.