



Flanders
State of
the Art

Safeguarding intangible heritage in Flanders

DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURE, YOUTH & MEDIA

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Preface

Intangible heritage forms part of the cultural policy of the Flemish Government. Consider, for instance, the support provided by a widespread network of professionals through the Cultural Heritage Decree, the platform *immaterieelerfgoed.be* or the grants for the transmission of craftsmanship. Intangible heritage is everywhere and is for everyone. This intangible heritage permeates our society: it affects how we celebrate, our foodways, traditions and rituals, but also the knowledge and skills of craftspeople who make things. It is both past and present, evolving through time and along with our society. So, there are plenty of opportunities to stay current and relevant.

In 2006, Belgium ratified the *UNESCO Convention of 2003 for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Flanders then began to develop a corresponding policy. In 2010, the Flemish Government presented its policy vision for the first time. This vision paper has been an important reference text for more than a decade. With various developments both in Flanders and internationally, however, it was due for an update. With this in mind, in 2021-2022 the Department of Culture, Youth and Media organised an update process during which various stakeholders were interviewed. This resulted in an updated policy vision, which I launched in May 2022 at the event “Long Live Intangible Heritage!”

In parallel, the process of periodic reporting for UNESCO on the implementation of the 2003 Convention in our country also ran through 2021. The Department of Culture, Youth and Media and Workshop Intangible Heritage, the organisation for intangible heritage in Flanders, worked throughout the year 2021 on Flanders’ input for this UNESCO report. With input from many stakeholders, a comprehensive picture of where we are was formed through an extensive series of consultations with heritage communities, organisations, academics, and so on.

Reporting for UNESCO provided plenty of raw material for the policy vision. UNESCO’s Global Results Framework with 26-indicators provides the structure for reporting, sets out long-term goals and provides starting points for addressing challenges. The updated policy vision sets out Flanders’ response: the policy vision provides a framework to fully commit to safeguarding intangible heritage in Flanders in the coming years. As such, we also specifically incorporate the challenges identified in the Flemish UNESCO report.

In this publication, you will find both the text of the Policy Vision 2022 and a summary of the Flemish sub-report for the UNESCO Report 2021. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the policy vision or report. Workshop Intangible Heritage deserves an extra thank you; they made an important contribution to both documents with their commitment to and expertise in the UNESCO Convention and safeguarding intangible heritage in Flanders.

Over the next decade, Flanders and many other partners are aiming to take new leaps in relation to intangible heritage. You will read all about it in this publication. I wish you much reading pleasure and inspiration.

Jan Jambon

Minister for Culture



I. THE FLEMISH POLICY FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE HERITAGE



1. Introduction

Intangible heritage is for everyone, and for all times. This living heritage permeates our entire society: the way we celebrate, our foodways, traditions and rituals, dance and music, or the knowledge and skills of craftspeople making things. You find it everywhere in Flanders, in the cities and suburbs, from the shores of the sea to deep in the countryside. Intangible heritage is both part of the past and of today, it lives and evolves through time and along with our society.

In 2006, Belgium ratified the *UNESCO Convention of 2003 for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. From that moment, Flanders set about developing a policy within the cultural region of Flanders in Belgium. In 2010, the Government of Flanders presented its first vision paper "[A policy for Intangible Cultural Heritage in Flanders](#)". The vision paper set out the broad outline for an innovating policy, based on the 2003 UNESCO Convention.

The 2010 vision paper has been, for more than a decade, an important reference text for developing the policy instruments and the activities in the field. But with **many evolutions** in Flanders and internationally, in the heritage sector, among heritage communities and in the wider society, after more than 10 years, the vision paper is ripe for an update. In 2021-2022, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media organised an update trajectory, whereby a large number of stakeholders were interviewed. In 2021, in parallel, a process was started for the periodic reporting for UNESCO about the implementation of the 2003 Convention in our country. The input from both processes forms the basis for the **updated policy vision** that we present in this vision paper.

First, we provide some history and context and we map the developments that have taken place in the past decade. Next, we delve somewhat deeper into a number of important concepts related to intangible heritage. Then we sketch the contours of the policy via the various roles played in it by the Government of Flanders. Each time, we indicate how we translate that policy into instruments, and we offer an analysis of what is going well and what we can do better. Finally, based on that analysis, we frame a number of **challenges**, on the basis of which we will further develop the policy in the years ahead, together with many committed partners in this field.



2. Context and history

2.1. 2003 Unesco Convention

Around the turn of the century, awareness for intangible heritage began to grow worldwide. One of the reasons was the accelerating speed by which our lifestyles globalised. Diverse social contexts, cultures and economies increasingly shift towards each other. In the process of globalisation, variation got lost and cultures worldwide began to look more and more alike. That also meant that the continued existence of quite a lot of intangible heritage came under pressure. Yet an ever more connected world also offered opportunities. After all, new challenges demanded new solutions and instruments. **Cross-border cooperation** became essential.

In 2003, the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* was adopted in response to these evolutions. This convention considered the importance of the intangible cultural heritage as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development in the world. The convention also meant to form an important complement to the older *UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* ('World heritage') (from 1972).

The 2003 Convention defines **various domains** in which intangible heritage is manifested:

1. oral traditions and expressions;
2. performing arts;
3. social practices, rituals and festive events;
4. knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
5. traditional craftsmanship.

This is, however, not a finite list and may be considered rather as an open summary of possible specific forms or types in which you can find this living heritage. Also, intangible heritage can and will often be related to various domains at the same time, e.g. the construction of musical instruments, which is linked to the 'performing arts', but is also a craft.

In the convention, UNESCO proposes instruments and methods to increase the awareness for intangible heritage and to safeguard this heritage. The convention is best known thanks to the **lists of intangible heritage**. Annually, the Convention's Intergovernmental Committee adds new elements to the lists, following their nomination by the member states. The best known is the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. Its aim is to make the **worldwide diversity of intangible heritage** visible, to help demonstrate the diversity of this heritage and raise awareness about its importance. The list shows living heritage that people consider important and gives them a feeling of identity and continuity. Think for example of the shrimp fishing on horseback in Oostduinkerke and the beer culture in Belgium, or the Finnish sauna culture and the Congolese rumba.

Another instrument is the *Register of Good Safeguarding Practices*. That is, in itself, also a list, but in contrast to the Representative List, it does not show the intangible heritage as such, but it is a collection of good **safeguarding practices**: projects, programmes and activities that can act as an example or inspiration for others when safeguarding intangible heritage. Flanders has the 'Safeguarding the Carillon Culture' and 'The programme of ludodiversity: safeguarding traditional games in Flanders' listed on the Register. Alongside the Representative List and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, there is also the *List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding*. Flanders does not have any elements on that list.

The new items added annually often receive considerable media attention and the lists are thus an important instrument to make intangible heritage and its safeguarding visible. Yet it is important to emphasise that the 2003 Convention is about much more than that. Considerable support is made available via the UNESCO fund for countries that request assistance. The Secretariat of the convention also focuses on worldwide capacity building in the field of living heritage and sustainable development, on education, on intangible heritage in emergencies, and so on.

Today there are no fewer than **180 member states** from all corners of the world that have ratified the 2003 Convention. UNESCO expects the member states to pursue a policy that implements this convention and values the intangible heritage.

2.2. Flanders and Belgium

In 2006, Belgium ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention. In our country, the '**communities**' in Belgium - the Flemish Community, the French-speaking Community and the German-speaking Community - are responsible for the cultural policy in their own language region. Thus, three distinguished cultural policies are in place, with their own policy initiatives and processes. In addition, more recently the **Brussels-Capital Region**, as a result of the sixth state reform in Belgium in 2014, also exercises competences around the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in its territorial jurisdiction.¹

For the work within the organs of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, this means that Flanders always collaborates and coordinates with the other two communities and with the Brussels-Capital Region to jointly represent the country of Belgium. The four parties search for **consensus** on the main issues but sometimes also on very specific files. This is the case, for example, for the approval of new proposals and amendments to the operational directives for the convention, but also for the nomination of elements or safeguarding practices of Belgium for the lists. During the international meetings of the general assembly of the convention and the intergovernmental committee, the communities and the Brussels-Capital Region speak with one voice. Positions are verified and agreed in advance.

2.3. Development of the policy in Flanders

With the ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention by our country in 2006, Flanders got off to a strong start. From the very beginning, we assumed an **international pioneer's role**. Flanders did not have to start from scratch. There was a policy for popular culture that paid attention to traditions, customs, knowledge and skills that were passed down from generation to generation.

In 2008, the Government of Flanders started the *Inventory for intangible cultural heritage*, one of the obligations as member state to the convention. At the same time, a start was made with sketching out a **policy customised to the Flemish context**. In 2010, the Government of Flanders presented for the first time a policy vision on intangible cultural heritage, with the presentation of the Policy Paper on Intangible Cultural Heritage. The policy paper laid down the outlines for an innovating policy, based on the 2003 UNESCO Convention. The focus was on the heritage communities and offering support for a dynamic and future-oriented heritage care and safeguarding of intangible heritage.

¹ In the context of the sixth state reform of 2014, Brussels-Capital Region developed an [ordinance concerning the tangible and intangible cultural heritage](#). This was announced on 25-04-2019 by the Brussels Government and it was published on 17 May 2019 in the Belgian Official Gazette. The ordinance sets the frame within which the Region can intervene in these new competences and identifies the resources and the procedures that make the intervention possible in these new competences.

After the announcement of the policy in 2010 and the launch of the digital platform www.immaterieelerfgoed.be in 2012, important steps have been taken in the cultural heritage field in Flanders to specify the framework that creates the Flemish policy. We offer a brief summary of the most important developments:

Following an agreement with the Government of Flanders, the tapis plein centre of expertise took a leading role from 2012 onwards to initiate and stimulate the development of the intangible cultural heritage network and to coordinate within the cultural heritage sector. This task included the moderation of the digital platform www.immaterieelerfgoed.be. In this way, the expansion of the intangible heritage operation was shaped step by step in the cultural heritage field in Flanders. An important point in this was the development from 2013 of an **expertise and mediation network** in Flanders, overreaching the various domains of intangible heritage. Together with tapis plein and FARO, the Flemish interface for cultural heritage, other thematic centres of expertise² deployed this specific expertise to tackle the global needs around intangible heritage in Flanders and to activate the platform www.immaterieelerfgoed.be for this. Complementary work was also undertaken with the network of cultural heritage cells and Heemkunde Vlaanderen [Local Heritage in Flanders] was also involved as organisation for popular culture with a wide network of local heritage associations.

Internationally, Flanders played a noted and active role in the context of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, partly due to the deployment of tapis plein and the expertise of FARO. Flanders also drew attention in the area of commitment of civil society to the convention, with participation of [NGOs](#) and the steadily growing European and worldwide partnerships.

In 2016, the concept paper '*Towards a sustainable cultural heritage operation in Flanders. A long-term vision for cultural heritage and cultural heritage work in Flanders*', which had been developed with broad input from the field, listed a number of challenges. The concept paper emphasised the safeguarding of a **varied presence of cultural heritage**, with attention 'for heritage in all its manifestations and from all social layers, with commitment to representing the diversity of society.' From that moment, the Government of Flanders has consequently pursued broadening and deepening in the mapping of intangible heritage. In the period 2018-2019, this led to the updating of the inventory of intangible heritage and to amendments to the regulation of the Inventory Flanders and to the platform www.immaterieelerfgoed.be.

The concept paper also emphasised an **integrated approach for tangible and intangible heritage**. At that moment, it was largely the expertise network and the cultural heritage cells that were actively promoting intangible heritage, but there was still insufficient integration of intangible heritage in the entire cultural heritage sector. The concept paper also framed for the first time the concept of subsidies for 'roles', which were intended to replace the various types of support providing organisations from the preceding decree (centres of expertise, partnerships). These elements were subsequently anchored in the Cultural Heritage Decree of 2017. The former functions of heritage work were rethought, so that working on tangible and intangible heritage would become better integrated in the future for all (types of) cultural heritage organisations that are active in the heritage sector.

2
Centrum Agrarische Geschiedenis (Centre for Agrarian History CAG), ETWIE (Centre of expertise for technical, scientific and industrial heritage), CRKC (Centre for Religious Art and Culture, from 2020 onwards PARCUM, the museum and centre of expertise for religious art and culture), LECA (until 2019 the centre of expertise for everyday culture, in 2019, LECA merged with Heemkunde Vlaanderen and Familiekunde Vlaanderen [Family history Flanders] to form Histories ngo), Het Firmament (until 2019 the centre of expertise for the cultural heritage of the performing arts in Flanders) and Resonant (until 2019 the centre of expertise for musical heritage). (In 2019, Firmament and Resonant merged to form CEMPER, the centre for music and performing arts heritage in Flanders.)

Moreover, the new Cultural Heritage Decree opted to provide a separate subsidy for an organisation for intangible cultural heritage in Flanders. Since 2019, **Workshop intangible heritage**, an organisation that sprouted from predecessor NGO tapis plein, has been subsidised as the dedicated organisation regarding the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Flanders. The organisation focuses strongly on consultation and builds further on the coordination and expansion of a fine-meshed network of organisations that are working on intangible heritage. There are - alongside the general focal point Workshop intangible heritage and FARO as Flemish Interface for Cultural Heritage - also service-providing organisations with a thematic focus,³ the cultural heritage cells that are responsible for the local support, and finally a number of organisations that manage collections which, due to their specific theme or expertise, act as the point of contact for a specific intangible heritage

Simultaneously with the developments in the cultural heritage field, the Government of Flanders was further expanding its **instruments** relating to intangible heritage. In 2019, for example, a new regulation concerning Inventory Flanders saw the light, with a view to more accessibility for heritage communities and for ethical principles. Analogous with the UNESCO Register, a Flemish register for good practices was set up. Another important development since 2018 is the subsidy line that awards grants for transmitting craftsmanship. With this, the government invests for the first time directly in the practitioners and bearers of intangible heritage. The Government of Flanders also further develops the online platform for intangible heritage -immaterieelerfgoed.be, in partnership with Workshop intangible heritage, which manages the platform.

2.4. Updating policy vision

The evolutions sketched above indicate that since the publication of the very first vision memorandum about intangible heritage in 2010, there have been quite a few **developments**, both in the cultural heritage field and in the policy. In recent years, a lot has also taken place internationally. Since 2003, the convention developed strongly by way of the 'operational guidelines' which are constantly under development. For example, work was undertaken in recent years on a new chapter about sustainable development, a reflection started about intangible heritage in contexts of conflicts and emergencies, and a set of ethical principles for the safeguarding of intangible heritage was elaborated. The greatest new development is, however, undoubtedly the drawing up of an *Overall Results Framework* (ORF), that helps to monitor internationally the implementation and evolution of the 2003 Convention. This Framework has a big impact on how the states parties shape and monitor the implementation of the UNESCO Convention in their countries.

The vision paper of 2010 still remains a reference text. But after twelve years, it is, considering the many evolutions, due for an **update**. The 2003 UNESCO Convention continues to be the framework for this. We do not, however, implement the convention in an isolated way, but also connect the Flemish policy with other frameworks and strategies, for example in the area of European policy or policies on sustainable development. Also, we ensure complementarity with other vision texts on cultural heritage in Flanders, such as the Cultural Heritage Strategic Vision Paper.

³ Centrum Agrarische Geschiedenis (*Centre for Agrarian History CAG*), ETWIE (Centre of expertise for technical, scientific and industrial heritage), PARCUM (the museum and centre of expertise for religious art and culture), Histories, CEMPER (the centre for music and performing arts heritage in Flanders) and Bokrijk IVakmanschap en Erfgoed (*Bokrijk/Craftsmanship and Heritage*).

In the period 2021-2022, a **participation trajectory** for the updating of the policy vision was held, whereby the Department of Culture, Youth and Media entered into conversation with a large number of stakeholders: actors from the cultural heritage field, heritage communities, related policy areas and international experts. At the same time, in 2021, the process took place for the **periodic reporting for UNESCO** about the implementation of the 2003 Convention in Flanders. A state party to the convention is expected to draw up a report every six years about the implementation in that country. This reporting process took place in 2021, for the first time using the *Overall Results Framework*, whereby we assessed the impact of the convention against 26 indicators. We reported on where we are at in Flanders, but also expressed ambitions for the future. The input from both of these processes together forms the basis for the updated policy vision which we present in this vision text.



3. Some concepts in the spotlight

Intangible heritage is a fairly young branch in the heritage field and is in full evolution. In the last twenty years, a set of **terms and concepts** has arisen, both at UNESCO and in Flanders. Because this is a specific jargon, we introduce briefly a number of important terms and concepts below.

3.1. What is heritage and intangible heritage?

3.1.1 What is heritage?

'Heritage' covers the cultural manifestations that groups and (heritage) communities still find valuable today and want to pass on to the following generation. That means that these manifestations had a significance in the past, that they also have significance today, and that people consider those manifestations valuable to pass on to future generations. These are often exceptional or characteristic buildings, art objects or traditions, which we call heritage.

Identifying something as heritage arises from a **collective process**. We call a group or community that gathers around a heritage element a 'heritage community'.

3.1.2 A definition of intangible heritage

Intangible heritage cannot be touched. It is the habits, customs, knowledge and practices that achieve common significance and values within an actual reference framework and which heritage communities transmit over generations. Intangible heritage is dynamic; through evolution over time and through interaction with the environment it gains new significance and its use or functions can change.

In other words: intangible (cultural) heritage is the **customs, knowledge, skills and practices** of today which people have inherited and want to pass on for the future. Intangible heritage adapts with time, it changes and evolves along with the people.

Intangible heritage is also called 'living heritage' or 'embodied heritage' because it is about knowledge, know-how and practices that people actively practise and embody, and which they also transmit in that form as heritage. UNESCO itself makes increasing use of the term living heritage. In this spirit, the UNESCO section of the Secretariat dealing with the 2003 Convention also rebranded itself as the *Living Heritage Entity*. In Flanders the use of this term faces some obstacles though, for the term 'living heritage' is also known as the heritage of 'old region-bound breeds of animals or old plants and tree species'.

Since the 2010 vision paper, debate has grown around what people in the Flemish cultural heritage sector and the cultural heritage policy understand - or want to understand - under intangible heritage. That the definition sometimes gives rise to debate is connected to the funding context on the Cultural Heritage Decree. The debate mainly revolves around the question: what to do with the whole spectrum of 'non-material (or 'intangible') dimensions of heritage which either do not fit or struggle to fit within the definition of intangible cultural heritage as such, such as personal testimony, stories linked to places, forms of collective memory and identity. There are also the traces of vanished heritage, such as films of parades and processions that no longer take place today. Internationally as well, the field of immovable heritage and collection-oriented activities has seen the emergence of a broader interpretation of 'intangible heritage'. This goes hand in hand with a spectrum of non-material dimensions (such as significance and valuation, storytelling, memory, emotion, etc.) that are becoming an increasingly important part of contemporary integral heritage work.

It continues to be important to use a **shared definition** in the context of this policy vision, not least because it serves as a basis for definitions used in the international context and for the implementation of the UNESCO Convention in Flanders. Intangible heritage should not become a container term. By broadening the definition to all intangible forms of heritage, we would run the risk that the UNESCO Convention be no longer understood in Flanders and it would give rise to confusion. That is something we seek to avoid. This is why it is important that we continue to draw the contours as set in the international definition and, in the spirit of the UNESCO Convention, put the active practice of the heritage and the link with a living heritage community in first place. To ensure that other valuable activities are not neglected, we must, from the cultural heritage policy, offer at the same time sufficient room and frameworks for different non-material dimensions of heritage action, irrespective of the definition of intangible heritage as such. The Cultural Heritage Decree, that supports organisations for the cultural heritage work and aims for an integrated approach to cultural heritage, offers a suitable framework for this in Flanders.

3.1.3 What is the relationship between movable, immovable and intangible heritage?

Heritage consists of both **tangible and intangible manifestations**. Often the three-in-one or trinity division is used: 'immovable heritage' (monuments, landscapes and archaeological sites), 'movable heritage' (such as works of art and utensils) and 'intangible heritage' (such as customs, knowledge and skills).

Often the three types of heritage are linked together and reinforce each other. Where there is a connection, they can, or are, placed together in one larger story. An example is that of the Holy Blood Procession in Bruges, the city of Bruges and the reliquary of the Holy Blood. Both the city and the procession are on a UNESCO list, whereas the reliquary is an Object of Exceptional Importance ('Topstuk' or 'Masterpiece') in Flanders. The procession cannot exist without the city of Bruges, the reliquary loses part of its value without the procession.

The links between the various types of heritage are also made in the 2003 UNESCO Convention. The preamble to the convention mentions the link: "*Considering the deep-seated interdependence between the intangible cultural heritage and the tangible cultural and natural heritage.*"

Although those links exist, we must, in order to perform policy, make use of clearly defined and delineated terms. The Flemish intangible heritage policy thus focuses first and foremost **on the living heritage of customs, knowledge and skills**. Thus, the intangible heritage of the giant culture is in first instance about the carrying of giants, the techniques and knowledge for making giants, the customs associated with this, and so on. The intangible heritage of making lace is about the techniques and usage and thus about bobbin lace, making patterns, and so on.

Notwithstanding the need to focus on the policy itself, it is important to document and name the **movable and immovable heritage that is connected with the intangible heritage** and the link with it. Care for movable and immovable heritage also contributes to keeping intangible heritage alive. In order to pass on, say, the procession tradition to the next generations, it is important to retain and manage objects connected to it in a responsible way. This sometimes gives rise to tension: if they are used in a procession, objects such as reliquaries or garments - sometimes Flemish 'masterpieces' - can be damaged by weather conditions or be subject to wear and tear. At the same time, such objects often derive their relevance from their use in a living tradition. Dialogue between all those involved is thereby essential. Many traditions also have a close link with immovable heritage. As an illustration: processions are often linked with chapels or a grotto, which have to be maintained or restored if we want to continue to experience the traditions.

It is exactly for this reason that the policy measures for the protection of the movable and immovable heritage and for the safeguarding of the intangible heritage must be **coordinated** with each other. Ten years later, we can state that the policy aspires for coordination between movable and intangible heritage. The so-called 'functions' in the Cultural Heritage Decree of 2017 provided for the first time an integrated framework applicable to all types of cultural heritage work.

As far as the coordination between the cultural heritage (movable and intangible) and the immovable heritage, we would like to point to the **division of competences** in Flanders. Immovable heritage falls under the jurisdiction of the regions, while cultural heritage (movable and intangible) falls under the competences of the 'communities'. That means in practice that two different administrations monitor the policy field of immovable heritage and that of cultural heritage, and often two different ministers are competent for them. With an eye to sufficient coordination, there has, for many years, been a collaboration both for policy and for specific files and policy instruments.

In addition, suggestions are being made to explore in the future the boundaries and interpretations of definitions in the respective decrees, and rather to proceed towards one inclusive and integral heritage definition. That could then cover the whole range of manifestations of cultural heritage, instead of retaining the double field of tension 'intangible versus tangible', and 'cultural versus immovable' heritage.

3.2. Safeguarding intangible heritage

Taking conscious action to give the intangible heritage a viable future is what we call 'safeguarding'. By ensuring that people learn to know and are able to practise the intangible heritage, new generations also get a taste for joining in. They can then, with sufficient know-how, continue the practice and ensure the future of that intangible heritage. Such **care for intangible heritage** may entail various activities of safeguarding, for example

- practising the heritage;
- documenting the heritage thoroughly and archiving it carefully;
- communicating about the heritage to a broader public;
- setting up educative actions for young people.

The emphasis is not so much on the 'what' but more on the 'how': the process of passing on intangible heritage and keeping it alive.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention uses the English term *safeguarding* and the French term *savegarder* for this. When drawing up that convention, a deliberate choice was made to opt for a different term than *protection*, the term that was used in the conventions on the protection of moveable (1954 and 1970) and immovable heritage (1954 and 1972). For intangible heritage, the use of the term 'protection' can lead to misunderstandings, and that is why we do not make use of the term in the intangible heritage policy. The idea could arise that the intangible heritage may not change any more, must be frozen, or should revert to a more 'authentic' or 'older' form. Intangible heritage is, however, as the definition suggests, dynamic, evolving through time.

Giving opportunities for or stimulating that intangible heritage is passed on is often a **balancing act**. Let us think, for example, about dealing with intangible heritage that disappears. The choice between 'letting it disappear' and 'keeping it alive' is not obvious. It can never be the intention to keep habits, customs, traditions or knowledge alive just for the sake of it or to try to resurrect them. In fact, the choice is not with the government but with the heritage community: the group or community that cherishes the intangible heritage and wants to pass it on. Whether to set up safeguarding actions or not is in response to a request from and by that heritage community. The heritage community initiates, the government facilitates.

3.3. Heritage communities

As described above, the Flemish intangible heritage policy assigns a crucial role to '**heritage communities**', a term that was launched by the [European Convention of Faro](#).⁴ The term is, however, also used in other fields. Thus, for example, the Cultural Heritage Decree introduced the term more broadly in the cultural heritage sector, and it is also used in immovable heritage.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention gives a central role to the people who practise a form of intangible heritage or are closely involved with it. They alone can keep the intangible heritage living and contemporary and pass on their love, knowledge and skills to the next generations. In the Flemish intangible heritage policy, we use the term 'heritage communities' for such people. It is about a group - or groups - of people, or sometimes even an individual, organised around a certain form of intangible heritage and willing to commit themselves to it. The heritage community is formed by the people and organisations who are involved with the intangible heritage and eagerly (want to) pass it on and give it a future. They do that by bringing the heritage into practice, or by supporting it. Those involved can be practitioners, participants, spectators, public, volunteers, heritage organisations, and so on. They are the people who sympathise to the heritage practice, who participate in it, or who support it from the side-lines. They collectively make every effort to pass it on, because they consider this living heritage being fine or important.

A heritage community is not a closed or seemingly unchangeable entity but is dynamic and always evolving, just as intangible heritage. In an urbanised and strongly connected society you see heritage communities cropping up in all sorts of forms of networks, rather than being clearly demarcated communities or groups. In urban contexts, these are often groups of people in neighbourhoods or districts and a wide variety of associations and individuals who, in one way or another, collaborate and network, such as the dynamic around [De Reuskens of Borgerhout](#).

⁴ Faro Framework Convention on the value of cultural heritage to society, a convention of the Council of Europe from 2005

3.4. Intangible heritage in Flanders

The Government of Flanders exercises a policy for all customs, traditions, knowledge and skills that are present in Flanders and for which heritage communities take initiative to pass them on to future generations. This reflects the spirit of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, which suggests that member states implement a policy for the intangible heritage *present in its territory*.⁵ That is why we consciously speak in the intangible heritage policy of 'intangible cultural heritage in Flanders'.

⁵ Article 11 (a) in the Operational Guidelines of the 2003 UNESCO Convention



4. The roles of the government of Flanders within the policy on intangible heritage

The intangible heritage policy of the Government of Flanders is shaped via a number of roles.

The Government of Flanders

- facilitates the safeguarding of intangible heritage;
- stimulates international policy making and cooperation;
- ensures the quality.

4.1. The Government of Flanders facilitates the safeguarding of intangible heritage

Heritage communities are central in the policy. Taking into account the definition of intangible heritage, the policy focuses on 'bottom-up' and on 'development' approaches.

Groups and communities that cherish the intangible heritage and want to pass it on, are themselves the ones who must first recognize it as heritage and pass it on. In the policy, **instruments** must be put forward through which the intangible heritage can develop further. The Government of Flanders safeguards intangible heritage by giving heritage communities the opportunities to pass on the intangible heritage.

The Government of Flanders considers it important that groups and communities, and sometimes even individuals, can recognise, identify and pass on intangible heritage. For this, the Government of Flanders deploys various instruments, which we explain and analyse below.

4.1.1 The Cultural Heritage Decree

The Government of Flanders subsidises, via the Cultural Heritage Decree, several **organisations that play an active role** in supporting and assisting heritage communities and in safeguarding intangible heritage. In this way, a **network** of organisations in the cultural heritage sector grew in the past decade consisting of service providers with thematic efforts⁶ and regional/supra local service providers ([the 'cultural heritage cells'](#)), the Flemish Interface for Cultural Heritage (FARO), and Workshop intangible heritage. Also an increasing number of organisations holding collections (museums, archives and heritage libraries) are gradually engaging with (the safeguarding of) intangible heritage. In addition to operating subsidies, recognised cultural heritage organisations can also apply for project funding.

⁶ ETWIE (Centre of Expertise for technical, scientific and industrial heritage), CAG (Centre for Agrarian History), CEMPER (Centre for music and performing arts heritage), PARCUM (Museum and centre of expertise for religious art and culture), Histories and Bokrijk | Craftsmanship and Heritage

The Cultural Heritage Decree since 2017 supports as well a separate organisation that assumes the cultural heritage work for intangible heritage in Flanders: **Workshop intangible heritage**. With its coordinating role, it is a pivotal figure in encouraging and assisting the policy practice around intangible heritage. Moreover, it is of fundamental importance for the implementation of the policy in Flanders, both in the cultural heritage sector and in wider society. Additionally, FARO and Workshop Intangible Heritage work well together for the support of the professional cultural heritage sector, with much attention for complementary and reinforcing activities.

This multi-branched model of thematic and geographic expertise, which is strongly being networked, is quite special within the international landscape. Flanders is praised abroad for this **fertile eco-system**, that, incidentally, does not exist in the other regions of Belgium. The strength of the model is related to Flanders' scale and density, which enables that customised work can be done and that a wide variety of support requests can be answered. Another strength is the mutual (readiness for) cooperation and the openness among the partners. In the past few years, the network has been strongly in flux, through a number of mergers⁷ and a new role of service providing.⁸ Recently, the network has, however, become more stable and is ready to continue the support of the living heritage field in the coming years.

4.1.2 Instruments for heritage communities

Since Flanders started with the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, the Government of Flanders has developed a number of **specific policy instruments** for intangible heritage. In contrast to the Cultural Heritage Decree, which aims to support professional cultural heritage organisations, these instruments primarily address 'heritage communities' and practitioners of the intangible heritage. They are generally encapsulated in separate regulations, and not in a decree,

In the period 2018-2019, a number of instruments were thoroughly reformed, such as the regulations concerning the 'Inventory Flanders' and the online platform immaterieelerfgoed.be.

4.1.2.1 Platform for intangible heritage

The platform www.immaterieelerfgoed.be has existed since 2012. It has a central place in the work of the intangible heritage network of organisations and heritage communities in Flanders, and in policy. In 2018-2019, the platform was rethought and renewed, partly to make the platform more visually amenable and user-friendly. The Government of Flanders is owner, the daily operation is in the hands of Workshop Intangible Heritage, the organisation that receives subsidies via the Cultural Heritage Decree as organisation that assumes the cultural heritage work for the intangible heritage in Flanders. The management and the moderation of the platform are provided for in the decree. Moreover, the government itself administers a number of modules on the platform, in the framework of its intangible heritage policy. The task agreements and conditions of the collaboration are regulated in a partnership agreement. From its operation as organisation for intangible heritage, the Workshop has been expanding the platform steadily as work instrument for the broad heritage field. They added new components to it, such as in-depth thematic files, frequently asked questions or the possibility of sharing content on other sites.

The renewal of the platform immaterieelerfgoed.be in 2018-2019 reflected the determination to broaden the work on intangible heritage. After ten years of Inventory Flanders, the awareness of heritage policy makers and the sector had grown that cultural heritage in all its apparitions and from all social layers must be given (more) attention, and thus reflect the **diversity in society**.

7 CEMPER (merger of Resonant and the Firmament) and Histories (merger of Heemkunde Vlaanderen [Local Heritage in Flanders], Familiekunde Vlaanderen [Flanders Family History] and LECA)

8 Bokrijk | Craftsmanship and Heritage

During the first ten years, numerous applications were made for similar heritage elements to be inscribed in the Inventory Flanders. These were primarily social practices (parades, processions, etc.), whereby the diversity of society (thematic, ethnic-cultural, age or gender linked, etc.) was insufficiently reflected. Furthermore, the realisation also grew that Inventory Flanders needs to be supplemented with other instruments. An official recognition is, after all, not the most suitable answer for every heritage element or every initiative around the safeguarding of intangible heritage.

The broadening led to a policy with **three 'entrances'**:

1. Heritage communities or individual practitioners can identify and register their heritage simply on [immaterieelerfgoed.be](https://www.immaterieelerfgoed.be), thus making it visible for everyone; this step does not imply any further commitment.
2. Heritage communities can have their heritage included in the official Inventory Flanders, meaning they want to take care of it through action and want to pass it on to future generation (in other words, safeguard the heritage), implying a greater commitment than mere online registration .
3. Heritage communities and organisations can learn from each other how they can safeguard the intangible heritage via the Register of inspirational examples of safeguarding.

All three lines run through [immaterieelerfgoed.be](https://www.immaterieelerfgoed.be). Monitoring of the first line is conducted by Workshop intangible heritage. The Government of Flanders is responsible for the monitoring of Inventory Flanders and the Register of inspirational examples.

In recent years, Workshop intangible heritage, in partnership with the network in the sector, has placed a strong emphasis on **broadening the scope of inventorying**, partly via theme campaigns (around performing arts, foodways, crafts, etc.). With success, for there are currently around 300 elements that have been registered on the platform. We often do not realise that quite a few customs and traditions may be intangible heritage, such as the tradition of reading new year's letters aloud, the craft coöperage or celebrating Chinese New Year in Antwerp. The broadening has started in recent years via the online registrations. For several heritage communities, that means the start of a process that later leads to the Inventory Flanders.

Workshop intangible heritage focuses further on online communication and optimisation of online search engines. This has resulted in steadily increasing visitor numbers since 2019.

4.1.2.2 Inventory Flanders

Since 2008, the Government of Flanders keeps an *Inventory of the intangible cultural heritage in Flanders*. In 2022 the [Inventory](#) counts **67 elements**. The Inventory is a mandatory tool: UNESCO expects states parties to the 2003 Convention to maintain an inventory of the intangible heritage within their territory. Heritage communities can apply to have their heritage included in the Inventory Flanders twice a year via [immaterieelerfgoed.be](#). In this way, they commit to sustainable heritage care and take action to transmit the heritage to future generations. A committee of experts gives advice to the minister, who decides whether or not the heritage be included. No subsidies accompany inscription on the Inventory Flanders; the Inventory purely provides **recognition**. Any heritage element that wants to be nominated for the *UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Heritage* must first be on the *Inventory Flanders*.

In 2019, the regulations were reworked. To make it more easily accessible for heritage communities, the assessment criteria and the reporting were simplified, and the previously required support by an organisation from the cultural heritage sector was no longer required. An exit procedure was also provided, for removing heritage or withdrawing it. The ‘statement of ethical principles’, part of the application, gave increased attention to ethics (for example, human rights, animal welfare, etc.).

Since the revision of the regulations, 14 new elements have been included, although the COVID 19 crisis undoubtedly had a restraining effect. The Government of Flanders always communicates about new elements on the Inventory Flanders, and generally the **media** quickly pick them up.

The heritage communities also focus on **umbrella recognitions**, such as the fanfare culture, stimulated in this by the cultural heritage field. In that way, different groups can come into contact with and learn from each other.

Although no subsidies are attached, an inscription in the Inventory Flanders has a great **symbolic value** for heritage communities. It leads to greater awareness around intangible heritage within the heritage community, it often ensures that various parties will cooperate within one application and it results in safeguarding actions for the heritage.

On the other hand, the Inventory Flanders is not yet widely known, or it happens to be confused with the UNESCO lists. There is also an incorrect perception that intangible heritage on the Inventory Flanders may no longer change, which frightens off some people; or it is seen as an end point, even though it is not. On the contrary, it often signifies the start of more consciously passing heritage on to future generations.

The renewals in the Inventory Flanders since 2019 also mean increased attention for **ethical principles**. Intangible heritage is dynamic, it evolves with the times and with society, and it sometimes becomes a subject of conflict and debate. Just think of the differing voices and opinions around the Jewish caricatures at the Aalst Carnival, or discussions about the (black) Pete companion of Saint Nicholas, but also about animal welfare in traditions with animals, about public health for traditions around eating and drinking, about smoking culture, and so on.

The ‘Statement of Ethical Principles’ is part of the application procedure for the Inventory Flanders. With this, Flanders complies with the ethical principles that **UNESCO** has developed within the 2003 Convention since 2015. The statement, to which heritage communities subscribe, is above all an awareness-raising tool, a commitment to do their best. On the one hand, heritage communities, their well-being and their informed consent are given the central position. On the other hand, it is important for heritage communities also to be aware that others may experience heritage differently or raise objections to it, and that the policy expects a willingness to engage in dialogue.

4.1.2.3 Register of Inspiring examples of safeguarding

Since 2019, the Government of Flanders has maintained a *Register of inspiring examples for the safeguarding of intangible heritage*. The register is embedded in the regulation about the Inventory Flanders. It highlights methodologies and good practices and aims to provide inspiration on how to care for intangible heritage. In addition to the official recognition of heritage through the Inventory, the Government of Flanders also wants to focus on **development of safeguarding practices and the sharing of experience**. The objectives of the Flemish register are related to those of the international UNESCO *Register of Good Safeguarding Practices*, although the latter more strongly emphasises the effectiveness and international exchangeability of safeguarding practices.

For the register, the Government of Flanders works with nominations by third parties. The positive consequence of this is that often surprising practices and a broad range of nominations surface. An annual **public campaign** with a broad call supports the nomination process. A committee of experts gives advice to the minister who decides which practices become included for a period of three years. Through collaboration with partners in the field, the Government of Flanders actively focuses on communication about these practices, via the platform immaterieelerfgoed.be.

This young instrument offers considerable potential and is still underused today. The regulation could be further adjusted on a number of aspects, such as the criteria and the periodicity. By means of a more effective communication, **and an active monitoring of the practices adopted, the register can, in the years ahead**, develop further and grow into a strong instrument for capacity building around the safeguarding of intangible heritage. With the strong focus on 'safeguarding' and 'methodology' it hands tools to a larger group of actors for focusing on safeguarding. Think, for example, of organisations managing collections, and primarily those actors who do not recognise themselves as much in other instruments such as the Inventory Flanders. The register offers many more opportunities for the proposed 'broadening' of intangible heritage: it brings practices into picture of groups in society who identify their initiatives less quickly as intangible heritage.

4.1.2.4 Grants to transmit craftsmanship

Flanders is famed throughout the world for its **cutting-edge craftsmanship**. That craftsmanship is part of the intangible heritage. This is, after all, knowledge and skills that live in the heads and hands of people and sprouts from traditions. In 2018, the Government of Flanders initiated an **experimental subsidy line** for the transmission of craftsmanship. With that experimental regulation, Flanders has worked on a so-called Living Human Treasures programme. The Living Human Treasures programme was launched by UNESCO in 1993, and promotes the recognition of craftsmanship, support of individual talents and the transfer of craftsmanship-related knowledge and skills. Several countries set to work on this in the past years and developed programmes customised to their country or region. With the craftsmanship grants, Flanders implemented a policy recommendation of the *Virtuosos Vlaanderen (Virtuoso Flanders)* project, that ran in the period 2012-2014, coordinated by tapis plein in collaboration with partners from the cultural heritage sector.

The grants for transmitting craftsmanship in so-called 'master-apprentice trajectories' give craftspeople space for a number of months up to two years to concentrate intensively on passing on or acquiring craftsmanship. Both the 'master' and the 'apprentice(s)' in the learning pathway receive part of the grant, the trajectory assumes commitment from both parties. Craftsmanship is also seen in a **very broad** way. In recent years, projects were started around virtually all areas in which intangible heritage manifests itself, so alongside 'classic' crafts such as forging or weaving, there is also craftsmanship related to performing arts, making or playing musical instruments, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the landscape, eating and drinking, and so on. Craftsmanship for maintaining the movable and immovable heritage also forms an important pillar: restoring old manuscripts or glass windows, timber framing, and so on.

This subsidy instrument has enjoyed **much interest** since its start in 2018, each time with a large number of submitted files. The quality of the applications also increases year by year, partly also thanks to the cultural heritage organisations who assist the applicants and have acquired an increased knowledge regarding the apprenticeships. Alongside the partners from the intangible heritage domain network,⁹ also the regional heritage cells increasingly focus on the craftsmanship grants, largely by raising awareness of the target group and through communication. Museums with collections around crafts or old techniques also see opportunities to safeguard the knowledge about the collection via master-apprentice trajectories. In this way, this instrument has become increasingly embedded in recent years in the cultural heritage sector.

An important partner for the craftsmanship grants is Cultuurloket. That organisation advises applicants and grant recipients on **corporate and entrepreneurial aspects** such as taxation, social legislation and labour law. For this organisation, the target group of heritage practitioners was initially unknown territory. Thanks to the grants, Cultuurloket could start acquiring expertise around this target group.

The strength of this subsidy line is also in the many **links with other sectors and themes**. Old practices lead to innovation and contemporary creation. Some masters or apprentices become (partly) independent after the learning pathway and try to earn a living with the knowledge they have acquired. In this way, the grants stimulate entrepreneurship. The attention for old(er) techniques and handwork also often go together with a striving for sustainability. It is also fine that with this instrument the government invests directly in the practitioners of intangible heritage: it gives oxygen to people who want to concentrate on passing on and safeguarding intangible heritage. It is also, against the backdrop of care for a diverse landscape, a highly valued and necessary supplement to the funding of professional heritage organisations, for there is no intangible heritage without its practitioners.

It is therefore clear that Flanders shall not relinquish its support of craftsmanship and its practitioners and it needs to be examined how the Government of Flanders can make this system **sustainable** in its policy after these initial years. Where the support in the initial years was very broad in both themes and target groups, we can, for example, opt to focus in the future on deepening and on more specific needs. The business framework around the status of applicants, the taxation and earning models must also be clarified in partnership with Cultuurloket. The funds are on the **cusp** of cultural heritage and other sectors, such as arts, or other policy areas such as innovation and entrepreneurship, employment, education and immovable heritage. Today the Department of Culture, Youth and Media already work together with a number of them for the communication, for reaching the target groups and for the assessment of the applications. Opportunities can be found in a more intensive intersectoral collaboration and coordination.

9
The thematically oriented network of organisations subsidised by the Government of Flanders who take on an active commitment in safeguarding intangible heritage: Bokrijk | Craftsmanship and Heritage • CAG – Centre for Agrarian History • CEMPER – the Centre for Music and Performing Arts Heritage • ETWIE – Expertise cell for technical, scientific and industrial heritage Histories • PARCUM – the museum and centre of expertise for religious art and culture • Sportimonium • Faro, Flemish Interface for Cultural Heritage • Workshop intangible heritage. - the organisation for intangible heritage in Flanders

4.2. The Government of Flanders stimulates international policy-making and cooperation

Since Belgium ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention in 2006, Flanders has been very **active** within the convention. The role is in both the policy and operational areas. An important partner in the implementation of the convention is the [Flemish Commission for UNESCO in Belgium \(VUC\)](#).¹⁰ In both the policy and the operational areas, the Government of Flanders coordinates with the VUC and collaborates with it for certain initiatives.

4.2.1 In terms of policy

In terms of policy, the Government of Flanders played an important role right from the genesis of the convention, which it continued to fulfil in the following years, partly through its inputs within the elaboration of the operational guidelines that concretize the Convention for its implementation. For this, Flemish expertise was contributed considerably. In the periods 2006-2008 and 2012-2016, our country was part of the intergovernmental committee of the convention. The committee decides which intangible heritage and which safeguarding programmes are to be placed on the lists, how resources are deployed and which proposals are made about the rules for these processes, which then can be confirmed by the general assembly. Due to this, Flanders was able for several years to **weigh strongly in the decision making process and the development of the convention**. When our country does not have a seat on the committee, it also follows the convention closely via the biennial general assembly, as observer at the annual committee, or via working groups, always in a concerted effort between administration and external experts. Attending the statutory meetings is a must, because decisions are taken there about the further implementation of the convention and the room for interpretation around the convention is filled. For this, Flanders always coordinates with the French Community, the German-speaking Community and the Brussels-Capital Region for the benefit of collective Belgian positions.

4.2.2 Operational

4.2.2.1 Lists

At the operational level, the Government of Flanders has a role in nominating intangible heritage for the UNESCO lists. There are **three lists** within the 2003 UNESCO Convention: there is the *Representative List of the intangible heritage of humanity*, the *Register of programmes, projects and activities that best reflect the principles and objectives of the convention* and the *List of intangible heritage in need of urgent safeguarding*. Flanders developed policy around the first two of these. The difference is largely in a different focus: the Representative List places the focus on the intangible heritage itself, while the Register of good safeguarding practices primarily gives pride of place to a methodology that can inspire other heritage communities.

A state party to the convention can submit **national and multinational nominations** for one of the lists. A national nomination is from the member state itself, a multinational nomination is from several member states that submit a candidacy together.

¹⁰ The Flemish Commission for UNESCO in Belgium (VUC) was founded in 2003 by the Government of Flanders to promote the link between the Flemish Community and UNESCO, with specific information and advice tasks. The commission also offers support to various UNESCO networks, committees and recognitions in Flanders and acts as formal contact point for UNESCO.

Until now, a state party can submit a **national nomination** every two years. In Belgium, there is a rota for this, whereby the Flemish Community, the French Community, the German-speaking Community and the Brussels-Capital Region each take turns in submitting a nomination. That means that Flanders always has to be patient for quite a few years waiting to submit a nomination, unless one of the Communities or the Brussels-Region skips its turn or the Communities and the Brussels-Region send in together one Belgian nomination, such as with the beer culture (2016) and safeguarding the carillon culture (2014).

The restrictions of UNESCO are in contrast to the great expectations of heritage communities: a place on one of the UNESCO lists has a great symbolic value and a strong appeal, whereby the tourism potential and the economic added value also play a role. In order to fill in the extremely limited opportunities for Flanders in as qualitative and transparent way as possible, the Government of Flanders developed a procedure in 2021. Interested heritage communities can, after a **call by the government**, submit their candidacy and the minister of Culture decides, after an advice from a committee of experts. In 2021, the safeguarding practice around the foster care heritage in the city of Geel was selected as nomination for the Register.

Flanders is also active in **multinational nominations**. For these, several countries work together around a shared intangible heritage or a shared safeguarding practice. One country acts as leader and submits the nomination on behalf of the partner countries. Falconry and musical art of horn players are examples of the multinational nominations of which Flanders were a part. In the meantime, our country submitted other candidacies from Flanders in recent years about which UNESCO must still decide, and heritage communities are now working on new nominations, assisted in this by cultural heritage organizations and the Government of Flanders.

Multinational nominations are, it is true, very **intensive processes** due to much international consultation, but on the other hand that also offers great opportunities to international exchange and networking. To determine on which multinational candidacies Flanders wants to focus, the Government of Flanders developed a procedure in 2021: a committee of experts assesses the candidacies and, based on the advice, a decision is taken by the competent minister of Flanders on whether or not to join a multinational nomination.

Today, Flanders has **nine elements** on the Representative List: Processional giants and dragons in Belgium and France (in Mechelen, Dendermonde and Brussels), Procession of the Holy Blood in Bruges, Houtem Jaarmarkt - annual winter fair and livestock market at Sint-Lievens-Houtem, Krakelingen and Tonnekensbrand (End-of-winter bread and fire Feast) at Geraadsbergen, the Jaartallenleven van Leuven (Leuven age set ritual repertoire), shrimp fishing on horseback in Oostduinkerke, beer culture in Belgium, falconry and musical art of horn players. The last two are multinational nominations. Aalst Carnival was removed from the list by UNESCO in 2019 because, according to the intergovernmental committee, it no longer met the criteria of the 2003 Convention. The removal came after worldwide complaints about the carnival edition of 2019, in which Jewish caricatures played a role.

There are **two practices** from Flanders on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices: safeguarding the carillon culture and safeguarding traditional games in Flanders ('Programme of cultivating ludodiversity'). Those elements and practices today focus first and foremost on safeguarding actions around their heritage, about which they report to UNESCO every six years, within the report that Belgium submits as state party to the convention. Flanders has not until now developed any policy around the *Urgent Safeguarding List*.

4.2.2.2 International debate on ‘the lists’

In recent years, increasing debate has grown within the 2003 Convention about the lists. Although the convention is still rather young, 180 countries have, in the past twenty years, adopted or ratified the convention. The lists are also very popular with the states parties, which submit many nominations. The convention is therefore becoming victim to its own success: submitted files are no longer processed, with waiting-lists and frustrations among heritage communities as a consequence. In recent years, the number of multinational nominations have also risen strongly, which increases the **pressure on the lists**. The Representative List is by far the most requested list, while the Register of good safeguarding practices still remains very underused.

The demands for a UNESCO nomination, both in the administrative area and in developing the substantive content of the file, are very high. Many stakeholders have been asking UNESCO to **simplify** the working method involved for the lists. Moreover, a number of procedures needed be optimised, such as transfers between lists, the monitoring of the intangible heritage after it has been included on a list, and an exit procedure for heritage that UNESCO wishes to remove from the lists, or which member states want to have removed from the lists. In 2019 Aalst Carnival was the very first element to be removed from the Representative List, without there being elaborated rules within the convention for this.

The Government of Flanders considers the debate around the lists very important and is trying, via working groups and the expertise of experts, to put weight into the debate.

4.2.2.3 Programmes

The pressure on the lists creates tension for UNESCO itself: an enormous amount of time and resources go into the listing mechanisms, while the 2003 Convention is about a lot more and contains a lot of **other projects and programmes** that the states parties can use to further their policies around intangible heritage. In recent years, UNESCO has set up interesting initiatives and programmes around intangible heritage in emergency situations, intangible heritage and ethical principles, intangible heritage in the context of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations, the relationship between intangible heritage and education, and so on.

For the future, there is considerable potential in the development of activities around the **periodic reporting**. In 2018, UNESCO approved a brand-new framework, the *Overall Results Framework*, (ORF), that measures the impact of the convention using a series of indicators. In 2021, Belgium submitted for the first time a report based on the ORF. As new instrument of the 2003 Convention, its effectiveness shall strongly depend on what UNESCO develops further around it: unlocking data, a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data, and setting up programmes to assist stakeholders throughout the world to advance the implementation of the convention. In the area of knowledge acquisition and distribution, Flanders argues for the so-called *capacity building programmes*, worldwide knowledge building, whereby stakeholders join forces (governments, NGOs, universities, communities) to raise the awareness around intangible heritage and the implementation of the convention.

4.2.2.4 Flemish expertise

The Government of Flanders stimulates organisations from the cultural heritage sector to make their knowledge and expertise available on international fora and to exchange it. Over the years, a number of Flemish organisations have also received a **UNESCO accreditation** in the context of the [2003 Convention](#). With the accreditations, organisations are given the function of providing advisory services concerning the convention. At the time of writing, eight Flemish organisations hold such an accreditation, which means they can actively contribute to the convention and they network internationally.

Workshop intangible heritage has played a pivotal role in the development of the international *ICH NGO Forum* of accredited NGOs, which the coordinator of the Workshop (at the time, tapis plein) was chairing in the period 2021-2018. In 2019, Workshop intangible heritage was elected to the *Evaluation Body*, which means that a Flemish organisation is currently committed to advising the worldwide UNESCO nominations. FARO also took an active role from the start. The network of Flemish experts and organisations is known for its active engagement in international cooperation. Our **Flemish experts** are much in demand, both at UNESCO and in the worldwide networks and partnerships.

With a view to Flemish organisations and experts being able to deploy their expertise and knowledge for international projects and partnerships and on international fora, the Government of Flanders provides a **budget for travel and subsistence expenses**.

4.2.2.5 Flemish resources within the UNESCO Convention

The 2003 UNESCO Convention imposes on Belgium the duty to finance the *Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. One percent of the annual contribution to UNESCO goes to that fund. For Flanders, this means an **annual contribution** of around 15,000 euro. The expenditure from the fund is regulated by the general assembly. The decisions are implemented by the secretariat of UNESCO in Paris.

Flanders has also its **'own' fund** with UNESCO, with which heritage projects can be subsidised. The decisions are taken in consultation with the Government of Flanders, but implemented by the secretariat of UNESCO in Paris. Between 2010 and 2020, various projects in southern Africa for capacity building around intangible cultural heritage were supported with the Flanders UNESCO Trust Fund to a total of 1.2 million USD. A result of these projects is that seven English-speaking countries in Africa (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe) now work closely together in a collective platform (www.saich.so.zw). It ensured an increase of more international assistance requests and more UNESCO nominations from the region and a strengthened regional collaboration and exchange.

4.3. The Government of Flanders monitors quality

The Government of Flanders monitors the quality of the intangible heritage policy in **three ways**.

4.3.1 Via the Cultural Heritage Decree

With the **assessment moments** provided for in the Cultural Heritage Decree, the Government of Flanders monitors the quality of the operation of the network of service providing organisations (national and regional service providing roles), FARO, and Workshop intangible heritage, as well as the organisations holding collections which work via functions around intangible heritage.

4.3.2 Via the reporting for Inventory Flanders

Heritage communities with an element on the Inventory Flanders **report biennially** about their safeguarding actions. In 2019, the Government of Flanders simplified that reporting process by reducing the number of questions, and by better clarifying them, and through providing an accessible module on the platform *immaterieelerfgoed.be*. Although the reports are brief and concise, they show a wide range of safeguarding actions and highlight the opportunities and the threats that heritage communities experience. Today, these reports are mainly an administrative process, but they contain much potential for monitoring the safeguarding of the intangible heritage in Flanders, for developing actions around them and for setting up exchange among heritage communities.

4.3.3 Via the six-yearly UNESCO reporting

Each six years the states parties to the 2003 UNESCO Convention draw up a **report** for UNESCO about the **implementation of the convention** in their country. In this way, countries assess their own policy, the existing legislation and the operation of heritage organisations and heritage communities around the safeguarding of intangible heritage. Since 2020, the periodic reporting happens according to the Overall Results Framework (ORF), a framework that measures the impact of the policy via eight thematic areas,¹¹ by means of 26 indicators. After an assessment of the current policy, member states also indicate their targets and ambitions for the coming six years.

Belgium submitted such a report for the first time in 2021. The ORF, for which UNESCO also called in Flemish experts, is complex and comprehensive, and presents a real challenge for countries to set to work with it. On the other hand, it also offers a lot of valuable information for the further development of a policy vision about intangible heritage. That is why Flanders considered it important to make an in-depth assessment for UNESCO, and also to allow the process to run parallel to the updating of the policy vision about **intangible heritage**.

For the input from Flanders in 2021, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media worked with the NGO Workshop intangible heritage, which performed, at the request of the department, the largest part of the assessment. The **Flemish sub-report**, which was ultimately integrated in the Belgian report, shows that Flanders prospers well in quite a few areas. On the other hand, themes emerged on which Flanders can focus more strongly on the coming reporting period (2022-2027). Aspects that stood out most strongly are

1. intangible heritage education and the extent to which intangible heritage and its safeguarding are integrated into primary, secondary and higher education;
2. strengthening of intangible heritage in policy frameworks, both within culture and within education and other policy areas;
3. raising awareness of intangible heritage with the general public.

In addition, we can focus more strongly on a broad participation by the various stakeholders and by particular groups, communities and individuals who practise intangible heritage.

The themes stated above are included in the eight challenges that are framed in chapter 4.

For the reporting in 2021, it appeared that not much data about intangible heritage was available. If we want to have more data available for the following UNESCO reporting in 2027 and want to monitor the implementation of the policy vision, we must, in the years ahead, focus on **data collection and monitoring**.

¹¹ The eight themes are: 1) institutional and human capacities, 2) transmission and education, 3) inventorying and research, 4) policies and legal or administrative measures, 5) role of ICH and its safeguarding in society, 6) awareness raising, 7) engagement of groups, communities and individuals, and stakeholders and 8) international engagement.



5. The challenges for the intangible heritage policy

Within the contours of the intangible heritage policy and the roles that the Government of Flanders takes therein, **eight priority challenges** for the coming year present themselves:

1. **enhance heritage communities and intangible heritage practices;**
2. **raise visibility and awareness of intangible heritage in society;**
3. **inventory, document and research broader and more diverse intangible heritage;**
4. **develop an intangible heritage field that includes different viewpoints;**
5. **explore intangible heritage in sustainable development;**
6. **sustainably expand and deepen the commitment for safeguarding intangible heritage in the cultural heritage sector;**
7. **develop policies enhancing intangible heritage within broader cultural policy, and in other policy areas and policy levels;**
8. **further develop and differentiate the international policy on intangible heritage.**

5.1. Enhance heritage communities and intangible heritage practices

In the intangible heritage policy, a central place is given to **heritage communities**: communities, groups and individuals that cherish heritage and pass it on to following generations. Within the ethical principles for the 2003 Convention, heritage communities assume a central place for the safeguarding of intangible heritage.

Since Flanders started to implement the 2003 UNESCO Convention, the Government of Flanders developed a number of policy instruments directed at these heritage communities and the practitioners of the intangible heritage: the Inventory Flanders, the Register of inspiring examples, the platform immaterieelerfgoed.be and the Grants for transmitting craftsmanship. These instruments are not included in a decree, but in separate regulations, sometimes even with a temporary character.

The analysis of the current policy instruments in the previous chapter shows that these instruments achieve their goal, but that there is **room for strengthening** them. The Government of Flanders wants to develop a stronger operation around the Inventory Flanders: making inclusion on the Inventory more visible, with more attention for recognisability, for example by means of the logo, more possibilities for meeting and exchange between the various communities, whereby they learn from each other, and a better monitoring of the safeguarding actions after inclusion in the Inventory. The Government of Flanders also wants to optimise the Register of inspiring examples after a number of years of experimentation, so that it can play a central role in the sharing of inspiring examples around the safeguarding of intangible heritage. The craftsmanship grants have grown in recent years to an important instrument in the intangible heritage policy. For a number of years, a temporary experimental regulation has been applicable for the grants, but the transmission of knowledge and skills as intangible heritage is gradually due for a sustainable place in the policy.

Interesting links have grown between the policy instruments themselves in recent years. A number of apprenticeship trajectories via the grants for craftsmanship have subsequently grown into an inspiring example becoming included on the register, craftspeople register their craftsmanship as intangible heritage on the platform immaterieelerfgoed.be, and the platform itself fulfils a central role within the various instruments that are provided for heritage communities. Those links show the added value of an integrated set of instruments, whereby the various policy instruments are coordinated with and strengthen each other.

The current policy instruments do not, however, cover all needs so far. Heritage communities and heritage practitioners often fall **through the gaps**: they often do not find appropriate funding channels within the existing frameworks. Moreover, the withdrawal of cultural powers from the provincial administrations in 2018 has caused a void in funding for many heritage communities, which threatens the safeguarding of the intangible heritage.

The Government of Flanders has taken steps, such as updating the Cultural Heritage Decree, to eliminate the identified voids. But further initiatives are necessary for an intangible heritage policy that properly values heritage communities.

That is a **shared responsibility** of the Government of Flanders and the cities and municipalities, as an extension of the existing agreement frameworks. A support policy should primarily focus on specific safeguarding actions and projects, not so much on the practising of the intangible heritage element itself. The Government of Flanders may put emphasis just there, such as a focus on education and passing on knowledge and skills, or on deploying intangible heritage in the context of sustainable development. Such initiatives may, within the Register of inspiring examples, grow into the inspiring examples of tomorrow.

In addition, it is important to **strengthen communities in their operation**: both around logistics and sometimes very practical aspects, such as closing the digital gap with courses in ICT or audio-visual media, but sometimes also around complex administrative matters such as copyrights and the GDPR legislation, and around the ethical principles for the safeguarding of intangible heritage. The digital association support centre (verenigingsloket) of the Government of Flanders also offers opportunities for heritage communities.

5.2. Raise visibility and awareness of intangible heritage in society

Ten years ago, only a handful of organisations in Flanders from the professional cultural heritage sector were actively occupied with raising awareness around intangible heritage, in addition to a limited number of heritage communities that recognised themselves in the concept. Since then, the number of actors has increased considerably: quite a few heritage organisations set up **all sorts of initiatives**, such as exhibitions, lectures or demonstrations. But awareness has also risen among a broader group of cultural actors, such as Circuscentrum, Danspunt, or the civil society and the broad society, such as Natuurpunt or the Family Bond (Gezinsbond). Private actors, for example from the beer world or the fairground culture, are also raising awareness for intangible heritage.

A central instrument in making intangible heritage visible is, of course, the online **platform immaterieelerfgoed.be**, as a hub for intangible heritage and intangible heritage practices in Flanders, with the associated operation, communication channels (newsletters, social media) and communication actions that are developed by Workshop intangible heritage, often in partnership with other organizations. The platform **brings together many aspects**: collecting and registering intangible heritage, sharing good examples, providing guidance, and linking to content on other websites. It also brings together initiatives from the policy and from the sector. This integrated approach is a strength, but reaching a variety of target groups and objectives, and a collective management by the government and an organisation from the sector also demand permanent attention for a clear communication related to the platform and a clear demarcation of everybody's role. If the platform wants to continue in the years ahead to fulfil its role within the policy for intangible heritage and thereby be able to focus efficiently on (new) needs, there is a need for sufficient funding for this.

Following from this, the **Inventory Flanders and the inscriptions** generate considerable communication and visibility and these instruments remain important levers in building social visibility and awareness. The website and communication of FARO and of other heritage organisations also give increasing attention to intangible heritage. In the coming years, we will develop the **virtual 'Museum of Flanders'**. That museum wants to connect movable, immovable and intangible heritage in digital storytelling about Flanders and offers many opportunities for making intangible heritage visible for a broad public.

Further, intangible heritage is also increasingly visible in the media, with regional and local media taking the lead, but also thanks to radio and television programmes such as *Iedereen Beroemd (Everyone Famous)*. That matches the interests of the public, which is receptive for human interest subjects and proximity.

We see that, when reporting about the UNESCO lists, the media often like to reach for terms as 'world heritage', making reference to the better known World Heritage Convention of 1972, where monuments, sites and landscapes are central. In this way, however, they indirectly feed the perception that traditions may not change any more. For heritage communities, that often brings confusion. Continuing to raise awareness for the use of the newer and less established terminology frameworks around intangible heritage and for the spirit of the intangible heritage policy is a **permanent point of attention** over which we, in governmental communications, must constantly guard. The Flemish UNESCO Commission will also bear this in mind.

The media report primarily about the traditions and the practices themselves. The societal awareness of what intangible heritage is and what its importance is with regard to cultural diversity and sustainable development, forms another **challenge for the future**. Events such as *Leve Immaterieel Erfgoed! [Long live intangible heritage!]*, which is organised by Workshop intangible heritage and to which the department also collaborates, can contribute to this. Such an event can continue to grow into an annual network moment that turns the spotlight on heritage communities and practices and mobilises and connects many stakeholders around intangible heritage. The Ultimas, the Culture Prizes of the Government of Flanders, for which intangible heritage is also eligible, also contribute to this.

In the communication about intangible heritage, the conceptual framework proves a challenge. The Flemish policy is based on the 2003 UNESCO Convention and due to this the Government of Flanders sometimes uses terms with which the heritage communities and the broad public, but also the cultural heritage sector itself, are often (not yet) familiar. That forms a paradox: intangible heritage is heritage close to and in the midst of people, but at the same time is captured in abstract term frameworks and 'convention language'. For this reason, the communication must always be carefully attuned to the target groups and **terms and concepts must be given a customised translation**, true, of course, to the spirit of the convention but with a certain pragmatism and an eye for enthusing language usage.

5.3. Inventory, document and research broader and more diverse intangible heritage

Since 2008, when Flanders started with the Inventory Flanders, its focus has been on a bottom-up approach: heritage communities determine themselves what they see as intangible heritage and have that proposed for the Inventory at their own initiative. Despite the participatory approach, the Inventory does not, after fifteen years, automatically reflect the diversity of cultural traditions and practices in our society. Today, the Inventory Flanders primarily contains a lot of similar intangible heritage elements, largely social practices such as parades and processions. At the same time, the more recent module on the platform *immaterieelerfgoed.be*, where communities can register their intangible heritage in a very simple way, clearly shows that a **broadening** has taken a start. The online registered practices are highly diverse, in many respects: the domains of intangible heritage, gender, ethnic-cultural backgrounds, geographical distribution, and so on.

That everybody can recognise themselves in intangible heritage is important and offers an added value for our society: it contributes to greater involvement, integration and mutual understanding. Currently we find ourselves at a **turning point** and the registrations on the platform unmistakably show the way forward. And yet additional efforts are necessary. Communities do not always see directly that what they do might be intangible heritage - just think of Gregorian chanting, selling beach flowers or celebrating the Norouz spring festival. Approaching and assisting those groups and individuals proactively is of vital importance and these are always intensive processes. Organisations in the cultural heritage sector must be sufficiently equipped to assume this role.

At the same time it is desirable that the Inventory Flanders also obtains a **broader and more diverse influx**. To reach new target groups, the Government of Flanders can make the Inventory Flanders more broadly known through collaboration with other sectors such as (amateur) arts and youth, or other policy areas such as civic integration or education. The matrix tool that Workshop intangible heritage has developed, can be deployed further to map and monitor the diversity of intangible heritage.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention also pays attention to threatened intangible heritage that urgently requires safeguarding. Up to date, there is no policy for urgent safeguarding in Flanders, although we also observe traditions or practices that only have a few remaining practitioners or are threatened in some other way. To map intangible heritage in a broader sense, we must also get a picture of **threatened traditions and practices**.

If we want to inventory intangible heritage, we must also pay attention to **research and documentation**. Today, Flanders has a small but dedicated group of people who are occupied with research and studies around safeguarding intangible heritage. In the heritage field, those functions could be further developed and expanded. Recently, there are also promising developments in the academic world and higher education. In addition, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media can as well, via its own research agenda, set up policy relevant research around intangible heritage, in coordination with relevant sector actors such as FARO and Workshop intangible heritage. The UNESCO periodic reporting of 2021 showed that not much data about intangible heritage is being collected so far. Therefore, we also want to include intangible heritage in the current processes around data monitoring.

5.4. Develop an intangible heritage field that includes different viewpoints

In the cultural heritage sector, there is increasing attention for a plurality of viewpoints: allow different viewpoints to be heard and take into account divergent perspectives and interpretations. The same heritage can, through different eyes, have divergent significance. It is an important challenge to **further facilitate this plurality of viewpoints**. A delicate balance must be sought between the autonomy of heritage communities versus influence or intervention from wider society or government. Important point for attention is also that heritage communities generally consist of several organisations and individuals, and thus do not form a monolithic block, but on the contrary sometimes have internally different positions and visions. An example of this is the tradition around St Nicholas, where there are different opinions within the heritage community about the figure of (black) Pete.

In 2015, UNESCO adopted, within the 2003 Convention, a series of [ethical principles](#). This offers a framework for deliberation between on the one hand the autonomy of heritage communities that are involved in intangible heritage and on the other hand possible interventions from outside that could intervene on this (for example, government, private sector or tourism).

One of the ethical principles states, for example, that the communities, groups and individuals should assess the value of their own intangible cultural heritage, and that this heritage should not be subject to external judgments of value or worth. With that ethical principle in mind, the Government of Flanders gives a central role in its policy to heritage communities when **allocating value and significance** to their heritage. At the same time, a different ethical principle emphasises the importance of mutual respect in all interactions around intangible heritage, and there is as well an ethical principle that touches on respect for cultural diversity.

In recent years, considerable social debate grew in our society around anti-racism, gender activism, ecology, animal welfare, and so on. Heated public debates around **highly sensitive aspects of traditions** are increasingly coming to the foreground. Just think of the discussions about Black Pete, stereotyping such as the Jewish caricatures at the Aalst Carnival in 2019, about the use of animals in traditions or about cultural appropriation, whereby members of one culture adopt elements from another culture or identity, such as music, hairstyles or recipes. In those discussions, heritage becomes a symbol of collective identity and an instrument to place larger issues about social fairness and inequality of power on the agenda.

The Government of Flanders aims first and foremost to offer the framework and encourage awareness and reflection. The 'statement of ethical principles', which heritage communities endorse in the context of the Inventory Flanders, is still a young instrument around which we would like to work more. The statement should not be seen purely as a formality, but must develop itself further into an instrument for creating more **ethical awareness and a reflex around the plurality of viewpoints**. The heritage sector could develop actions aimed at setting out an interpretation frame around this, such as debate evenings, study days or training. In addition, work behind the scenes is also important, whereby the service providers and other players set up mediation and dialogue with heritage communities and other parties. Exchanging experiences with other countries about how they tackle difficult themes can prove inspirational. Research can further help clarify themes and offer context, which can lead to a better mutual understanding.

The ethical set of instruments in the context of safeguarding intangible heritage should ideally be **expanded further**. After all, the ethical principles of UNESCO are in the first place intended to indemnify heritage communities and intangible heritage from inappropriate interventions from outside. The statement of ethical principles at the Inventory Flanders, on the other hand, is now primarily an instrument in the context of the ethical actions of the heritage community itself. They do not, however, protect the heritage and the communities involved in a wider context, such as from over-commercial use. In the coming years, we can work on this together with the sector.

In conflicts, the Government of Flanders does not generally take a standpoint and only intervenes in exceptional cases. Mediation is best done by the cultural heritage organisations that are close to the heritage communities concerned. It is important that their role is recognised in this and that there is attention for competence development for employees. This is, after all, about **invisible processes**, which, of course, assume specific skills and knowledge and are labour intensive.

5.5. Explore intangible heritage in sustainable development

Intangible heritage and sustainable development are **inextricably connected**. After all, sustainable development means giving a viable future. And finding sustainable ways to pass on or to safeguard cultural practices, knowledge and skills to the next generation, that is what intangible heritage is all about. At the same time, intangible heritage can itself be a resource for sustainable development. Just think of deep-rooted knowledge about our natural environment, such as traditional irrigation techniques, social practices such as parades or fairground culture, that give identity and stimulate diversity and meeting, or crafts that can be an engine for sustainable local economies.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention considered intangible heritage from the outset as a lever **for sustainable development**. Since then, the attention for the connection between intangible heritage and sustainable development has only increased. The primary regulatory framework for sustainable development worldwide is the UN Agenda 2030. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs, which make up the agenda, are currently being promoted throughout the world and translated into practice. Think of challenges around growing inequality, the rights of women and girls, peace and security and climate change. The focus of the Agenda 2030 is not in seeing sustainable development as a top-down initiative, but in its adoption by wide society. That is the only way to achieve those goals. Collaboration is key. Currently, the SDGs crop up everywhere: from cities and municipalities to shopping chains, employer organisations and youth work. They are also being increasingly adopted in the heritage sector. In the 2003 UNESCO Convention, the SDG agenda was translated in 2016 with a new chapter, namely the operational directives around intangible heritage and sustainable development.¹²

The challenge for the coming years is to set to work concretely with these **sustainability goals** in the intangible heritage policy. There are already reference points within the current policy. There are already processes around passing on craftsmanship, attention for sustainable materials, handmade processes and reuse and knowledge about nature. Sustainable development also has a place in the nominations that Flanders propose to UNESCO. The foster care-model in the city of Geel focuses on well-being and mental health, and the candidacy of traditional irrigation contributes to a sustainable use of natural resources.

In the coming years, we are going to **explore** further the link between intangible heritage and sustainable development. Collaboration with other policy areas is important in this, for example around sustainable tourism, inclusive economies and quality education. More synergy with the UNESCO 2005 Convention for cultural diversity is also possible. From the field we look at initiatives and projects that set to work with sustainability themes, and also the Pulse Transition Network of Culture, Youth and Media¹³ can play a role in this.

¹² Chapter VI of the [Operational Directives](#).

¹³ The Pulse Transition Culture Youth and Media unites around 1000 individuals and organisations from the culture, youth and media sector, who are experimenting with sustainable alternatives for our current society model. www.pulsenetwerk.be

5.6. Sustainably expand and deepen the commitment for safeguarding intangible heritage in the cultural heritage sector

The network of organisations that work actively in Flanders around intangible heritage has grown steadily in the past ten years: from Workshop intangible heritage and FARO, via the service providing heritage organisations, to the organisations managing collections.

Permanent investments are needed to allow that eco-system to blossom further. Important in this model is the driving power of an actor who assumes a coordinating role, who inspires and supports. Internationally speaking, that model is special and Flanders can showcase it even more as good practice and place it internationally in the spotlight.

For the UNESCO domains, there is a solid support model today in the so-called 'domain network intangible heritage'¹⁴ The network ensures support for all themes and domains of intangible heritage. In the field, people have, in recent years, openly dealt with the **approach of the UNESCO domains**. In the UNESCO Convention there are, for example, no separate domains named around sport and games, religious and ideological heritage or foodways, but these themes are very much present in Flanders. They have gradually been brought into the picture as possible alternative or complementary thematic domains, for example since 2018 in the context of immaterieelerfgoed.be and since 2019 for the Inventory Flanders. Further, the UNESCO domain craftsmanship is often associated with crafts, with handwork, which means that heritage communities that work around industrial techniques do not feel addressed. In addition, **new phenomena** arise with increasing frequency that fall outside the provided UNESCO domains, such as cyber culture. For this reason, we shall continue to deal pragmatically and openly with the UNESCO domains, so that as many practitioners and communities as possible can recognise themselves in intangible heritage.

In the **arts**, there are still interesting links with intangible heritage to explore, with design, plastic arts or humanities alongside music and performing arts.

Finally, the domain around **language variation and oral traditions** is still very much virgin territory in Flanders today. We should cherish our rich language variation, with, among other things, our dialects and storytelling culture as a form of living heritage. In Flanders, we can develop interesting practices and operation around it.

Service providers can be involved with the broadening of intangible heritage who are not active today in the domain network of intangible heritage.

There is also, alongside the thematic service provision on the Flemish level, a **strong service provision** via the cultural heritage cells on the supra local level. They translate the intangible heritage policy into the local and regional practice. A number among them have helped shape the policy from the start, others have started more recently. The intangible heritage domain network and the cultural heritage cells both are important and complementary partners in the support of heritage communities. In the future they can collaborate even more and exchange experience and expertise and thus help the more recent cultural heritage cells move forward.

¹⁴ The thematically oriented network of organisations subsidised by the Government of Flanders who take on an active task in intangible heritage operation: Bokrijk | Craftsmanship and Heritage • CAG – Centre for Agrarian History • CEMPER – the Centre for Music and Stage Heritage • ETWIE – Expertise cell for technical, scientific and industrial heritage • Histories • PARCUM – the museum and centre of expertise for religious art and culture • Sportimonium • Faro, Flemish Interface for Cultural Heritage • Workshop intangible heritage. – the organisation for intangible heritage in Flanders

The close-knit range of service providers in Flanders' cultural heritage sector offers many opportunities for heritage communities, cultural heritage organisations and other actors in society. Nonetheless, this multi-branched offer of services, all the more in the recently strongly evolving heritage sector, is not always clear for everyone. Hence, the importance of proclaiming a **general contact point** in Workshop intangible heritage, with the platform immaterieelerfgoed.be as hub and guide. To point heritage communities and other interested parties to the most suitable service provider, expertise or possible partner organisation, we must continue to communicate clearly about what is on offer. The Workshop can assume a role in further this clear communication via the online platform immaterieelerfgoed.be and other communication actions.

In recent years we have, with the cultural heritage sector, travelled far in the area of safeguarding intangible heritage. If we are to operate on the same wave length, it is important to find a '**shared language**' and transcend the jargon. There has been a debate about the definition of intangible heritage (see chapter 2). A lot of organisations are concerned about this, particularly about the intangible aspects of their operation that do not fit into the ICH definition. As indicated, it is important however that we, in the spirit of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, put the active practice of the heritage and the link with a living heritage community in first place. Therefore, the interpretation of what we understand under intangible heritage will not change on that point. In order to give other intangible aspects a fully-fledged place in the cultural heritage operation, steps are being made through the Cultural Heritage Decree. It is largely in that context that we must see in the years ahead how we can fill in existing voids and can solve bottlenecks.

Organisations managing collections are also focusing increasingly on intangible heritage. Although the Cultural Heritage Decree offers a framework for an integrated cultural heritage operation, the coordination of collection operation with intangible heritage operation is not always evident to be put into practice. The **further interpretation of the functions of heritage operation** to different aspects of heritage care or safeguarding of intangible heritage (for example in the area of digital registration) forms an important lever for this. This remains a growth process which demands development of knowledge and practical experience.

Organisations managing collections assume in first instance a responsibility for intangible heritage by documenting it and conserving the connected tangible, movable heritage. They often also document traditions that no longer exist today, such as certain processions from the past. Attention must also be given in this to the link between these 'extinct' forms of intangible heritage and the existant practices.

Further, collection managers do increasingly assume an active role in keeping intangible heritage alive, for example by applying and displaying old techniques and practices. There are many fine examples of collection managers who collaborate with communities to safeguard the heritage, even if this is not easy in all contexts. Certain archive institutions, for example, point out that they wish to adopt a neutral or academic positioning towards the heritage communities, while an active role in safeguarding often also demands participation (and implicit approval). Yet the archive sector has also come up with quite a few inspiring practices in recent years.

For the **heritage libraries**, the exploration of what intangible heritage can mean in their operation is still in a very early stage. They manage sources of the knowledge about intangible heritage, such as devotion booklets, cookery books or books of jokes. In that sense, they fulfil an important task in the documenting of the heritage. Whether and in what way they could assume a more active role must be studied further (we are thinking, for example, of the intangible heritage around book production, bibliophily and the library sector itself).

Workshop intangible heritage can further tackle these developments together with the heritage sector and also monitor those operations in view of coordination in the entire heritage field.

In the context of the further expansion of working around intangible heritage within the broad cultural heritage sector, **technical questions** also emerge. A standardised registration of intangible heritage forms a challenge. It is recommended to unlock the relevant data in a quality way and OSLO compliant.¹⁵ In the intangible heritage policy, the platform immaterieelerfgoed.be acts as a hub for heritage communities and intangible heritage practices in Flanders. In the coming years, the platform can develop further as digital knowledge and network environment. For that, a sustainable digital data management is important, with attention for digital risks and the ownership of heritage communities.

Today, digital transformation in the entire cultural heritage sector is at issue and further developments around managing and accessibility of collections and data are emerging. It is thus also important to follow, both from the intangible heritage policy in general and the platform in particular, the **digital and technological developments** and to integrate them where useful or possible in the digital cultural eco-system of the cultural sector. In this we must aim for maximum uniformity and integration and putting the users at the centre.

For the progressive expansion of an integrated cultural heritage policy and the further practice development and professionalisation in the intangible heritage sector, the reinforcing and complementary support of FARO as interface centre is always important.

Having more cultural heritage organisations involve themselves to the intangible heritage network contributes to having the policy implemented in a powerful way. It is important therein to know which organisation is doing what. That is why all cultural heritage actors must continue to make efforts around **coordination of and communicating about their service provision**.

Finally, there is sometimes a perception among the cultural heritage actors that focusing on intangible heritage is an obligation for all organisations in order to receive subsidies. That is not the case. The Government of Flanders wants to facilitate and stimulate those efforts for intangible heritage, but it is always up to the organisations to decide whether and how this fits in with their operation and priorities. The specificity of **individual organisations** is an important principle for the cultural heritage policy, and that naturally also applies to the further expansion of the intangible heritage policy in the cultural heritage field. Some organisations are already working on intangible heritage, while other organisations are still searching and for others again it will remain less relevant to do so.

¹⁵ OSLO stands for *Open Standaarden voor Linkende Organisaties* [Open Standards for Linking Organisations]. The Government of Flanders is committed to having an unambiguous standard for the exchange of information. The intention is to achieve greater consistency and findability of data, so that it will be easier for everyone to use it. [More info](#).

5.7. Develop policies enhancing intangible heritage within broader cultural policies, other policy areas and policy levels

Intangible heritage manifests itself in the whole of society and in all societal areas. Bringing about an **optimum interaction** between intangible heritage and other policy areas is essential to give the policy around intangible heritage more potency. The links are numerous. Taking steps forward is a long-term process, whereby the Flemish policy opts to first prioritise more interaction with the immovable heritage policy, the tourism policy and the education policy. Existing partnerships and consultancy structures can produce *quick wins* here.

Exchange and mutually keeping the finger on the pulse are often a first, important step. The annual consultation with the department on Animal welfare about the traditions with animals -such as the falconry or dog swimming- and changing regulations related to these is a good practice in this regard. The heritage sector can also assume a role in raising awareness for intangible heritage in other policy areas and organize exchange and meeting. The translation of the SDGs to intangible heritage offers many reference points and interesting connections for setting to work in an intersectoral way.

5.7.1 Culture wide

The **arts sector** regularly sets to work with intangible heritage: by interpreting, updating, questioning or dealing with it in some other critical way. This often brings different traditions into face-to-face contact with each other. Many arts are often in themselves forms of intangible heritage (dancing, theatre traditions, etc.). The process of actualising the practices is often the common denominator. Master-apprentice trajectories for transmitting craftsmanship reveal how new artistic applications can make 'old' craftsmanship relevant today. Scientific/academic research and the archiving processes such as through the TRACKS initiative¹⁶ contribute to the safeguarding of the intangible heritage in the arts.

Meeting and community-building often go in one breath with experiencing and sharing and passing on traditional practices, knowledge and rituals, which is where intangible heritage meets **socio-cultural work**. Similarly, in youth work there are many traditions in youth movements, there are music traditions in the amateur arts, such as the brass band culture, Flemish Sign Language is recognised as intangible heritage and the Circusentrum focuses on the heritage of the nomadic circuses. The awareness of intangible heritage is also increasing in the socio-cultural area, with initiatives from organisations such as the Gezinsbond or Natuurpunt. In addition, transversal topics in the culture policy offer links to intangible heritage policies. Thus, for example the master-apprentice trajectories are a fine case of 'lifelong learning' within culture education, and they are often on the cusp of culture and economy.

Participation of groups and individuals is at the heart of the intangible heritage policy. Quite a few intangible heritage practices manifest themselves in specific regions, and across the borders of municipalities, such as folk sports or culinary traditions, which makes the supra local cultural policy relevant.

In the coming years, we, in the Department of Culture, Youth and Media, want to get intangible heritage as much as possible into focus and coordinate to the maximum policy and regulatory initiatives with other sectors and policy levels.

¹⁶ TRACKS stands for Toolbox & Richtlijnen voor Archief-en Collectiezorg in de Kunstensector [Toolbox & Directors for Archive and Collection Care in the Arts Sector] – www.projecttracks.be

5.7.2 Immovable heritage

Quite a lot of intangible heritage is linked with the **physical environment**: religious traditions often take place in or around chapels and churches, carillon practitioners perform their skills in belfries, and the natural landscape is decisive for practices such as witting (traditional irrigation) or the culture around the Brabant draught horse. The maintenance of immovable heritage often comes into the picture in master-apprentice trajectories for transmitting craftsmanship. Furthermore, many actors and communities do not make a distinction between intangible, cultural and immovable heritage. At European level, but also often at local level, an integrated heritage policy is pursued. Together with the Flemish agency responsible for immovable heritage, we are looking for joint answers to shared challenges.

5.7.3 Tourism

Today, **crowd pullers** such as parades and processions or the shrimp fishery on horseback are already on the radar of the tourism policy. With 'Travel to Tomorrow', VISITFLANDERS wants to concentrate more emphatically on sustainable tourism with inspirational places and strong collaboration with local communities and actors. That strongly reflects also the principles of sustainably safeguarding intangible heritage. Via the structural dialogue that is already taking place today, the collaboration and interaction between intangible heritage and tourism can appear more on the agenda.

5.7.4 Education

For intangible heritage, passing on from generation to generation is central. The 2003 UNESCO Convention considers formal and non-formal learning as an important measure to safeguard intangible heritage and encourage states parties to deploy intangible heritage in the classroom. Alongside widely spread traditions such as carnival and St Nicholas, crafts or, say, May celebrations contain a **didactic wealth**, which is moreover also frequently linked to the local (school) environment. The UNESCO report of 2021 shows that we can make progress there. Attainment targets in the education policies in Flanders are consciously openly formulated, which places opportunities and **considerable freedom with the teachers**. International pilot projects show how teachers can introduce intangible heritage into school subjects, or cross-subject, in history and civics, but also in technical subjects or even in mathematics.

From the heritage field, FARO, the Flemish Interface for Cultural Heritage, and Workshop intangible heritage can, with their expertise, bring added value and offer inspiration to develop that step-by-step in Flanders and thereby also **build bridges** to the heritage communities and local partners such as museums or libraries. Initiatives for which the policy areas Culture and Education already collaborate today, such as Day of the Culture Education, the digital platform cultuurkuur.be or Klascement, offer opportunities for intangible heritage. The apprenticeship trajectories for transmitting craftsmanship also offer opportunities for more **collaboration with education**, for example through [professional qualifications](#), attention for traditional craftsmanship in adult education (such as in Syntra courses) and through the joining of forces in order to reach target groups.

5.7.5 Other policy areas

In addition, intangible heritage has connections with many other policy areas of the Government of Flanders:

- From the **Agriculture and Fisheries** policy area, the Government of Flanders supports regional products, whereby knowledge and skills to make these products are part of the intangible heritage policy.
- Within **Sport** we see on the one hand the traditional sports, often with very active associations such as shooting associations or curling ball associations, and on the other sports such as cycling and soccer whereby large communities are involved, with traditions that still remain partly virgin territory.
- Passing on heritage to children and young people also effects the **youth policy**.
- The apprenticeships in craftsmanship offer bridges to the **employment policy**, and also from the perspective of combining tradition and renewal, and stimulating entrepreneurship, to the policy around innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Within **integration and civic integration**, intangible heritage can initiate an inter-cultural dialogue and respect for each other's traditions, with an eye for what connects us, for example birth rituals or festivals.
- During the COVID19-crisis it emerged how fiercely the miss of being able to share and experience traditions and rituals weighed on the mental and emotional **well-being** of many people. That shows how strongly intangible heritage and well-being of people are intertwined in our lives.
- There are also links in the traditional knowledge and practices around nature and natural resources (such as traditional irrigation or bee keeping) with the **policy around the living environment**, particularly in the rural regions. That offers largely opportunities when translating the SDGs into intangible heritage. So could 'man and universe' be more frequently addressed in landscape biographies¹⁷ and the convention around biodiversity and the Nagoya Protocol, which is monitored by Agency for Nature and Forests, offer frameworks for [valorising](#) traditional knowledge of local communities.

5.7.6 Other policy levels

In addition to other policy areas there are also other policy levels relevant for the intangible heritage policy. For example, **local administrations** are often involved in the organisation or support of intangible heritage practices such as parades and processions, and sometimes in the coordination of an application for the Inventory Flanders. At the same time, the Flemish intangible heritage policy is not always well known by cities and municipalities and there is often the incorrect perception that intangible heritage must remain unchanged or 'authentic'.

To ensure that the policy is even better embedded locally and regionally, **additional efforts** - alongside what the cultural heritage cells are already doing today - can be made by local administrations, certainly there where no cultural heritage cells are active. There, the Government of Flanders, together with the heritage sector and partners such as the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities and the centre of expertise for supra-local cultural Op/Til can assume a role. Local administrations often pursue an integrated heritage policy. Initiatives such as the brochure of the Dutch Centre for intangible heritage about the integration of intangible heritage in the [local environmental policy](#), are in that sense inspirational.

¹⁷ A landscape biography describes in an integrated way the past and present of an area, reveals cultural-historical and landscape-ecological characteristics and values, offers opportunities for participation, is a basis for policy and management, and inspires, across sectors. It is an instrument for the area analysis that candidate Landscape Parks and [National Parks Flanders](#) have to draw up (or have drawn up), as a basis for their master plan.

Finally, a number of federal competences also have repercussions on intangible heritage. If, for example, the support of craftsmanship is to be sustainably embedded, the **socio-economic position** of practitioners of 'heritage professions' is an important challenge, in particular their **tax position**. The **privacy legislation and intellectual property rights** also raise specific challenges for intangible heritage, which can help the heritage communities in the safeguarding or which can better protect them against, for example, commercial use of data without their permission. Where sensible and possible, the Government of Flanders can, within the inter-ministerial Culture conference, enter into dialogue about possibilities to realize greater collaboration.

5.8. Further develop and differentiate the international policy on intangible heritage

The policy on intangible heritage is based on an international treaty, more specifically the 2003 UNESCO Convention. **International policy development and international cooperation** logically form an important aspect within the policy.

Inter-Belgian collaboration with the French and German-speaking communities and the Brussels-Capital Region is an important aspect within that international policy. The four parties look for consensus, about the main lines but sometimes also in very specific files. During the international meetings of the general assembly of the convention and the intergovernmental committee, the various parties speak with one voice. Positions are verified and agreed in advance. In addition, there is informal interaction between the administrations. Contacts are also maintained with the cultural heritage field. The UNESCO report that was drawn up together in 2021, shows that the diversity of intangible heritage and the different approaches and instruments on either side of the language border can give substance for more interaction and mutual inspiration.

Although many countries acknowledge the **pioneering role of Flanders** on the international forum, that international operation is often less known among heritage communities in Flanders, but also in the cultural heritage sector. It is a challenge to communicate more proactively and clearer about this, each time customised to the target group.

In Flanders there is much valued expertise around intangible heritage, both in the cultural heritage sector and in the academic world. In the meantime, also the **expertise around intangible heritage** in the broad cultural heritage sector has increased considerably in recent years. More actors also have international ambitions and networks. The challenge for the coming years is to make use of the strong eco-system in Flanders and to broaden the international expertise and make it sustainable.

Worldwide there are a number of **international centres of expertise and mediation** around intangible heritage, the so-called '[UNESCO category II centres for the 2003 Convention](#)'. Such a centre develops international projects and programmes about intangible heritage and promotes the convention in a global region. Participating in or setting up such a regional centre within the region of electoral group 1 is a route that may be investigated. Establishing such a centre implies an important financial investment, which can also demand collaboration with the other federated states or with other countries. To weigh the costs and benefits against each other, advice shall be requested from the Flemish UNESCO Commission.

The Government of Flanders further, by means of **travel and accommodation expenses**, allows experts and representatives of professional heritage organisations to participate at international fora. Heritage communities, as non-professional heritage players, generally remain with empty hands under the current regulations that cover the costs for travel and accommodation expenses. We will therefore investigate how the Government of Flanders can better support them in their international operation.

Our country has twice held a seat on the UNESCO committee and in this way Flanders was able to develop its pioneering role. Flanders has much to offer with its intangible heritage policy and the available expertise. A candidacy in the years ahead offers chances to take the wheel for a number of years - certainly in a challenging period of necessary reforms of the convention - and to build or reinforce sustainable links with other states parties.

During the drafting of the UNESCO report in the period 2020-2021, **contacts** arose between the European countries within the convention. There is also the will to interact more in the future with countries that know many common challenges. Such a European network offers opportunities for Flanders. Also, in the collaboration with the Netherlands, Flanders will build further on the existing tradition of interaction and collaboration. Intangible heritage can be a focus in collaboration with the priority areas in the international culture policy.

As a small region, Flanders already has, in an international perspective, a lot of heritage on the UNESCO lists, with nine elements on the Representative List and two on the Register of good safeguarding practices. A lot of energy goes into drafting nominations, but once they are inscribed on the lists, there seems to be little monitoring and collaboration. The contact with the Government of Flanders is also, after inscription on the UNESCO list, rather limited. **Exchange and networking between the bearers of the inscribed UNESCO elements**, however, offer interesting opportunities. The administration is, together with the Flemish UNESCO Commission, looking at how this can be set up in the future. Flanders can raise more attention to the practices on the UNESCO Register, which are intended to encourage international knowledge sharing, so that their inclusion in the register can be fulfilled to the full.

UNESCO, as a large multilateral institution, creates considerable dynamism and is a strongly mobilising force. The 2003 UNESCO Convention is guiding for Flanders and has been decisive for the development of its intangible heritage policy, and that will remain so. Over the years, however, other frameworks and networks have developed as well. If Flanders is to continue to play an international pioneering role, we must, in the years ahead, link other frameworks with the policy and fill in the **international role** more diversely. International thematic networks offer cultural heritage actors opportunities to internationalise and to gain inspiration, and also vice versa, to expound Flemish initiatives abroad, such as those concerning industrial or religious intangible heritage, or about foodways, and so on.

The Government of Flanders can also, in the coming years, scout the **European policy** more and thereby use the symbolic capital of Europe. In 2019, the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation and resolution around intangible [heritage](#). Those texts build a bridge between the wide European heritage policy (both Council of Europe and European Union) and the intangible heritage policy of UNESCO, which also has many points of contact with the Flemish policy vision. In the coming years, we shall strive to implement the recommendation and resolution. The Faro convention¹⁸ also has interesting contact points for intangible heritage, with a broader understanding of heritage and the relationship it has with communities and society, and a new vision on heritage in the heart of sustainable development. We can better mobilise that potential as a policy instrument. Further, there are opportunities in European programmes such as [Horizon](#), via the cluster for cultural and creative sectors, and [CHARTER](#),¹⁹ a project under the Erasmus+ programme, which, among other things, wants to support a sustainable community and economy via cultural heritage skills. Cross-cutting issues such as social cohesion, sustainability and knowledge and skills can be investigated as an entrance, in collaboration with Flanders' Agency for Immobile Heritage.

18 [Faro Framework Convention](#) on the value of cultural heritage to society, a convention of the Council of Europe from 2005
19 Cultural Heritage Actions to Refine Training, Education and Roles



6. Conclusion

Intangible heritage is everywhere. In the coming years, the Flemish policy wants to introduce its deployed broadening of safeguarding living heritage further into the whole of society and allow intangible heritage to flourish in many forms, like thousands of flowers in a field. **Intangible heritage belongs to all people** and connects people: we all have, from various backgrounds, intangible heritage that we cherish. But we may not ignore the fact that heritage can sometimes rub and divide. Dialogue is the answer to this.

It is vitally important to **make new generations enthusiastic** for intangible heritage and to allow new forms to emerge. Safeguarding intangible heritage is, after all, caring for tomorrow.

The intangible heritage policy is still a relatively young branch on the heritage tree and has its own identity. **Separate care and attention** from the policy is also necessary, with as background a holistic vision on heritage whereby intangible, movable and immovable heritage are inextricably linked with each other.

A **multi-branched support model** has grown in Flanders in the past decade, whereby a network supports heritage communities in the safeguarding of their heritage and diverse practices are being developed. An increasing number of heritage organisations are boarding the train and pay attention to intangible heritage in their operation. We must **feed** the fertile eco-system we have today and **make it sustainable**. Workshop intangible heritage fulfils an important coordinating role and engine function within that network. In addition, we want, in the future, to give more impulses to the heritage communities themselves. Intangible heritage can, after all, only be relevant and remain alive when communities, groups, and sometimes individuals commit to it with their knowhow and drive.

The policy instruments for intangible heritage today are actually rather limited, however, certainly in comparison with the movable and immovable heritage, where a richer set of instruments has already been developed. The Government of Flanders is aware of the strongly grown dynamism in the field of intangible heritage and we also want to give intangible heritage communities the necessary oxygen. That is why, in the coming years, it wants to allow its set of **instruments** around intangible heritage to **grow** accordingly. That can take on the form of an integrated framework for intangible heritage specifically, or it can seek connection with existing policy instruments in the heritage and culture policy or with those under development.

In 2027, we will again be drawing up a report for the 2003 UNESCO Convention, for the period 2022-2027. We also want to **track the policy vision** by means of the monitoring which we shall be setting up. It is also clear that the challenges, as framed in this policy vision, go beyond the reporting period for UNESCO and are long-term work. The challenges also demand action from and collaboration between various actors, both within the government and the heritage sector. It is also important **to join forces** as much as possible and to seek **synergies** in the broader cultural policy and with other policy areas.

In addition to the roles that the Government of Flanders assumes currently in the intangible heritage policy, also a fourth role emerges: 'the Government of Flanders connects'. Ten years ago, Flanders played, in an international perspective, a pioneering role in the development of a policy around intangible heritage. Now, new developments and challenges are presenting themselves at an accelerating rate. We want to make new leaps forward in the coming decade. The updated policy vision, as proposed in this memorandum, offers a framework for this.



II. REPORT TO UNESCO

Safeguarding intangible
heritage in Flanders

Flanders, UNESCO and safeguarding intangible heritage

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

... is everywhere!

It can be, for instance, traditions, knowledge and expressions of

- oral traditions and the use of language;
- performing arts;
- rituals, celebrations and social customs;
- traditional sports and games;
- nature and agrarian practices;
- foodways;
- crafts and technics;
- ...

Along with all stakeholders, Flanders is identifying and inventorying intangible heritage

300

practices at
www.immaterieelergoed.be



THE PEOPLE!

Heritage communities!

Many hundreds of thousands are involved in carrying out and experiencing intangible heritage practices in Flanders



67

elements on the Flanders Inventory of Intangible Heritage

POLICY

Flemish Government – Department of Culture, Youth and Media



NETWORK

- Workshop intangible heritage: organisation for intangible heritage in Flanders
- network of professional heritage organisations



SAFEGUARDING

= giving a future

16

practices in the Register of Inspiring Examples



IMMATERIEELERGOED.BE

Online platform for intangible heritage in Flanders



150.000

unique page visits per year

UNESCO CHAIR

Flemish UNESCO Chair focuses on intangible heritage



UNESCO EVALUATION BODY

A member from Flanders serving this **international advisory body** 2019-2023



UNESCO RECOGNITIONS

2

safeguarding practices on the **Register of Good Safeguarding Practices**



UNESCO-CONVENTIE 2003

2003 UNESCO Convention for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage

unesco

9

elements on the **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**

180

member states, including Belgium

2 UNESCO FACILITATORS

2

UNESCO-trained **facilitators** from Flanders are active in the Capacity-Building Programme of the 2003 UNESCO Convention



IN THE MEDIA

10 x

more 'intangible heritage' on Google News from Belgium in a period of 10 years

2012 to 2014: 48 x

2015 to 2017: 97 x

2018 to 2020: 466 x



8 UNESCO-ACCREDITED NGOS

Non-governmental organisations from Flanders with UNESCO accreditation to provide expertise within the framework of the 2003 Convention



ULTIMA

Cultural awards for intangible heritage since 2014:

- Borgerhout giant procession in 2021
- Fanfare culture in 2020
- Réveil in 2018
- Foster care in the city of Geel in 2016
- Giants in Flanders in 2014



SDGs

The commitment to safeguarding intangible heritage goes hand in hand with the commitment to a sustainable world and the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**



I. Report to UNESCO. About the work in Flanders on intangible heritage

The states parties that ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage by 2021 were altogether 180 countries. In doing so, they committed to care for intangible heritage in their territories and in international collaboration.

So did Belgium, which joined the Convention early (2006) and where the various regions have since developed policies. Flanders jumped on the bandwagon from the outset and got new initiatives going: the digital platform immaterieelerfgoed.be, Flanders Inventory of Intangible Heritage, a network of passionate intangible heritage actors, grants to support apprenticeships for transmitting craftsmanship, and so on. A field full of dynamism is unfolding and growing with the times.

UNESCO is asking all states parties to make a periodic report every 6 years. The purpose of UNESCO as a worldwide organisation is to use these to measure progress, as well as to strengthen, adjust and remedy where needed.

In late 2021, Belgium submitted its report to UNESCO: it took stock of the country, as of 2021, concerning the commitment to intangible heritage in all parts of Belgium: Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels and the German-speaking Community. And it also looks ahead: what do we want to work on and move forward with in the next 6 years? For example, in view of perception and communication about intangible heritage or in policy and regulations, regarding the place of intangible heritage in our education programmes, or in actions for sustainable development that go hand in hand with intangible heritage.

The Department of Culture, Youth and Media (DCJM) of the Flemish government, and Workshop intangible heritage as the organisation for intangible heritage in Flanders, worked throughout the year 2021 on this **Flemish sub-report for UNESCO**. With inputs from many stakeholders, a comprehensive picture of where we are was formed through an extensive series of focus groups, round-tables, surveys, interviews and other initiatives with heritage communities, organisations, academics, volunteers, policy officers, and so on.

The report itself runs to several hundred pages and can be viewed on the [UNESCO website](#).

In the pages below, we would like to briefly provide the **bigger picture and findings**, in a smoothly readable overview. A brief summary of where we are, and a looking ahead to the challenges for the next few years.

1.1. Overall Results Framework for the 2003 UNESCO Convention: a barometer for safeguarding intangible heritage

UNESCO launched an [Overall Results Framework \(ORF\)](#) in 2018 as a common framework for monitoring the evolution and impact of the 2003 Convention globally. It is a new reference framework for strategic planning around safeguarding intangible heritage by states parties and organisations.

The results framework also guides the states' multiannual reporting on the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention in their countries. A [digital template](#) was compiled for this purpose with eight major themes (see diagram below). For each theme, 26 indicators and sets of questions are used to measure progress.

This makes it a kind of barometer for measuring the degree of safeguarding of intangible heritage in a particular country, the regions, and worldwide. A country can use it to take targeted stock of the situation and evaluate where it stands on each part of the policy: where much progress has been made or where things are still lacking. At the same time, it provides a basis for situating, sharing and comparing evolutions in one country alongside the work of other countries or regions, or also learning from one another and working together in a larger framework.

1.2. UNESCO Overall Results Framework (ORF).

Impacts	Intangible cultural heritage is safeguarded by communities, groups and individuals who exercise active and ongoing stewardship over it, thereby contributing to sustainable development for human well-being, dignity and creativity in peaceful and inclusive societies.							
Long-term Outcomes	Continued practice and transmission of intangible cultural heritage ensured.	Diversity of intangible cultural heritage respected.	Recognition and awareness of the importance of intangible cultural heritage and its safeguarding ensured.	Engagement and international cooperation for safeguarding enhanced among all stakeholders at all levels.				
Mid-term Outcomes	Effective relationships built among a diversity of communities, groups and individuals and other stakeholders for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Dynamic development and implementation of safeguarding measures or plans specific elements of intangible cultural heritage led by a diversity of communities, groups and individuals.							
Short-term Outcomes	Improved capacities to support the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in general. Improved capacities to implement safeguarding measures or plans for specific elements of intangible cultural heritage.							
Thematic Areas	Institutional and human capacities	Transmission and education	Inventorying and research	Policies as well as legal and administrative measures	Role of intangible cultural heritage and its safeguarding in society	Awareness raising	Engagement of communities, groups and individuals as well as other stakeholders	International engagement

1.3. Europe and global reporting

Along with Flanders and the other regions in Belgium, other [European countries](#) also made a similar report in 2001 for the 2003 UNESCO Convention. Between 2020 and 2024, reporting in different regions of the world will happen sequentially. In 2025, UNESCO will then introduce a global reflection for evaluating this very first global reporting cycle.

1.4. Raw material for updating the Flanders policy vision for intangible heritage

The **Vision Paper for Flanders' Intangible Heritage Policy** from **2010** is getting an update after a decade of operation.

The 2021 **Flemish report for UNESCO** provides plenty of food for thought and evaluation for this. It marks where we are in 2021 with the commitment around safeguarding intangible heritage in Flanders. The report carefully identifies **the path taken**, the **strengths** as well as **challenges** and **concerns** of the intangible heritage policy implemented.

The strengths and challenges are discussed in the following pages

At the same time, the **UNESCO overall results framework** also provides **orientation**, puts **long-term goals** in sight and offers starting points for **addressing challenges**.

With the **renewed policy vision**, Flanders is responding accordingly:

The policy vision provides a framework for setting the course for safeguarding intangible heritage in Flanders in the coming years, while also specifically incorporating the challenges we identified in the Flanders UNESCO report.

For the updated Flanders policy vision for safeguarding intangible heritage (2022): see part one of this publication.

II. A barometer for intangible heritage in eight themes

In this chapter, we provide a brief overview of the Flanders UNESCO report, using the 8 themes and corresponding 26 indicators from the **UNESCO Overall Results Framework** as a barometer to **assess where we stand**.

For all eight themes, we reflect upon the **building blocks** of the Flemish policy and highlight the **milestones** achieved in safeguarding intangible heritage in Flanders to date. Finally, we also look to the future and, for each theme, bridge the gap with the **challenges** formulated for the next decade in the new 2022 policy vision paper 'The Flemish policy for the safeguarding of the intangible heritage'.

1. **Organisation, resources and people**
2. **Transmission and Education**
3. **Inventorizing and Research**
4. **Policy and Regulation**
5. **In society**
6. **Awareness and Visibility**
7. **Involvement and Engagement**
8. **International collaboration**



1. Organisation, resources and people

What frameworks have been developed for intangible heritage?

1.1. Flemish government focal point

The **Department of Culture, Youth and Media** (Flemish government) is the contact point for the Flemish policy on intangible heritage, and is responsible for the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention in Flanders.

1.2. Network model: support and mediation

Since 2012, a **professional network that actively supports and mediates the safeguarding of intangible heritage has been gradually developed in Flanders**. By 2021, this has grown into a **broad intangible heritage network**, with **wide and diverse participation from heritage communities** and a **range of collaborative processes** across the heritage sector in Flanders.

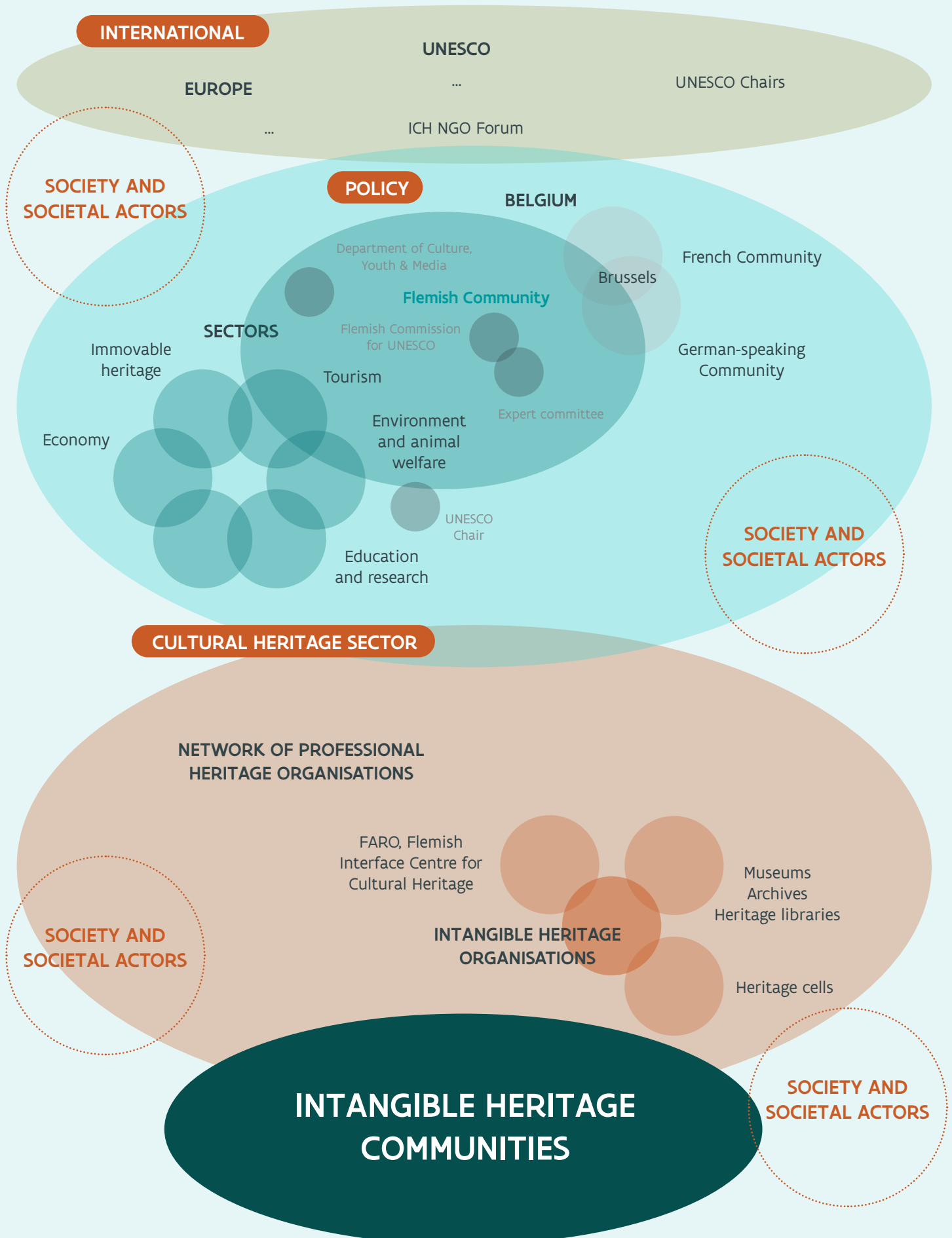
A **key factor is actively facilitating and coordinating that network**. To this end, an 'organisation for intangible heritage' has been embedded in the Flemish Cultural Heritage Decree since 2017. Thus, from 2019 onwards **Workshop intangible heritage** has been working as the **organisation for intangible heritage in Flanders**, in an actively developed and well-functioning network dedicated to collaboration around safeguarding intangible heritage with all stakeholders.

Government and heritage organisations in the field are joining forces to develop and implement intangible heritage policies. The network of heritage workers connects, bridges and translates policy into practice, and vice versa.

In recent years, **more and more heritage organisations have become active** on living heritage: **museums, archives, heritage service providers, and so on**.

The shared **platform** www.immaterieelerfgoed.be is the online **hub** for all these different players actively involved in intangible heritage. The platform is a digital pivot where various Flemish and international documentation, contacts, news, tools and studies on intangible heritage and safeguarding it in Flanders come together.

A network for safeguarding intangible heritage in Flanders



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND MEDIA

is the contact point for the [Flemish intangible heritage policy](#), whereby it is implementing the 2003 UNESCO Convention in Flanders

FLEMISH COMMISSION FOR UNESCO IN BELGIUM (VUC)

promotes the link between the Flemish Community and UNESCO. VUC serves as a formal contact point for UNESCO, provides information and advice, and offers support to UNESCO networks, committees and recognitions in Flanders, including on safeguarding intangible heritage.

WORKSHOP INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

... is the organisation for [intangible heritage](#) in Flanders

HERITAGE SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR FLANDERS

... provide expertise and services to heritage communities in various thematic areas, including on intangible heritage

[Histories](#)

[CEMPER](#)

[CAG](#)

[BOKRIJK I Vakmanschap en Erfgoed](#)

[ETWIE](#)

[PARCUM](#)

[Sportimonium](#)

[Erfgoeddienstverleners](#)

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE EXPERT COMMITTEE

provides advice on Flemish intangible heritage policy, application files and monitoring reports as part of the Flanders Inventory of Intangible Heritage. The committee includes members with a range of profiles and competencies.

HERITAGE CELLS

27 [Heritage Cells](#) in Flanders support the intangible heritage communities involved, in a local or regional context.

ORGANISATIONS WITH A COLLECTION: MUSEUMS, ARCHIVES, ...

More and more museums and archives are also committed to safeguarding intangible heritage that has a link to their collection and work

FARO

... is the [Flemish Interface](#) for cultural – movable and intangible – heritage, supporting the professional sector

1.3. Training in safeguarding and management

The intangible heritage network in Flanders offers a **rich range of training** in safeguarding and managing intangible heritage. The offering ranges from training at the **entry level** and **basic level**, to more **hands-on training**, to in-depth training through **labs, theory and master-classes**.



Policy vision 2022: challenges 1 & 6

1. Enhance heritage communities and intangible heritage practices
6. Sustainably expand and deepen the commitment for safeguarding intangible heritage in the cultural heritage sector



2. Transmission and Education

Where does Flanders stand with learning and passing on intangible heritage in and beyond the classroom?

Building **bridges between education and intangible cultural heritage** is high on the agenda for the 2003 UNESCO Convention. Over time, people pass on traditions, knowledge and customs. The intangible heritage that people carry with them, practise and experience is thus continuously embedded in **learning processes** throughout our lives. This is living heritage that we **teach, do and transmit once more**.

The very first paragraphs of the text of the convention (Article 2.3) cite the importance of “transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education”. The importance of education is stowed even further through the *Overall Results Framework*, with a focus on transmission and education within the eight major thematic areas. It is obvious that the commitment to connecting intangible heritage with education and teaching will only grow in the coming years.

In Flanders, intangible heritage education is still **in its infancy**. There are some stand-alone fine examples, as well as some **inspiring practices** of intangible heritage education in the fields of lifelong learning, part-time education in the arts, adult education, socio-cultural work, and at heritage organisations. A **rich educational landscape** with a lot of dynamism has surely been flourishing in Flanders for some time. Nonetheless, overall awareness around intangible heritage in education remains nascent and scarce. There is a **need for more coordinated initiative, collaboration and impetus** to strengthen intangible heritage in learning contexts. In other words, **opportunities abound for future development**.

EDUCATION BY THE HERITAGE COMMUNITIES

A great deal is happening on behalf of intangible heritage communities around education. Educational offerings have been developed for two out of three practices in the Flanders Inventory. More than half of them focus on formal education. There are also some singular, specialist courses, such as the [Royal Carillon School in Mechelen](#), or the training to become a [shrimp fisher](#) on horseback in Oostduinkerke. There is a lot of initiative and enthusiasm. On the other hand, many heritage communities have limited educational know-how. Hence, there are some great opportunities to work on this in the coming years.

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE IN EDUCATION

In Flanders, we have a framework of attainment targets, in which intangible cultural heritage has been given a place. This is an asset. These attainment targets are broadly facilitative and rather non-committal, however, just like the curricula of education providers. Teachers themselves also indicate that they are not yet sufficiently skilled to incorporate intangible heritage into their teaching practices. Teacher training can play a role in this. Today, much depends on individual initiatives and networks of teachers. In 2021, heritage communities are also often still not involved in how their intangible heritage practices are handled in education. Yet, recently, we have been seeing a greater intention among partners from the education policy and heritage sectors to work more closely together.

MASTER APPRENTICESHIPS FOR TRANSMITTING CRAFTSMANSHIP IN INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Through [scholarships for transmitting craftsmanship](#), Flanders is giving an impetus to handing down craftsmanship with roots in tradition. Flemish policy aims to honour masters and apprentices who are committed to doing so, and to support them in teaching and passing on knowledge and skills. A broad view of craftsmanship is taken in this regard: it may include crafts, but also certain applied arts, music and performing arts, circus techniques and so on.

This is why there have been scholarships, where masters and apprentices can go through a master-apprentice programme together, since 2018. Masters are thereby given the space to work intensively over an extended period of time with one or more passionate enthusiasts who wish to apprentice with them. An [educational trajectory](#) is seen as a partnership, in an equal relationship, with the master's qualities as well as the learner's drive to grow and impart the knowledge acquired. The craftsmanship always relates to a know-how or practice that is not offered in formal educational programs in Flanders, and thus complements existing educational offerings. A master apprenticeship can run for up to two years and the scholarship is up to 30,000 euros.

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE IN LIFELONG LEARNING

There is a particularly broad and richly varied playing field in Flanders, where non-formal (cultural and heritage) education, lifelong and lifewide learning can flourish. This includes youth work, sociocultural adult work or everything that happens in the heritage field at museums and associations. Intangible heritage themes and practices are popular there and are richly featured in the programmes. The living heritage of circus practices, traditional knowledge in nature education, musical traditions or other genres is abundantly shared and transmitted there.

In part-time education in the arts in Flanders (academies, conservatories) and in adult education (CVO, Syntra), there are a great many courses linked to intangible heritage too: from lace-making or weaving through glass art and accordion music, to training in falconry, growing soil-grown chicory, fries shop (Frietkot) operation, beer barrel cooperage or micro-brewing. If until recently this was mostly done unconsciously, here we see a clear and growing awareness after all.

Field inspiration

COMENIUS CAMPUS IN UNESCO PILOT PROJECT

In 2018, a series of UNESCO-EU pilot projects in [Teaching and learning with living heritage](#) was launched to weave [intangible heritage](#) into curricula and deploy it in the classroom. The Campus Comenius school in Brussels also participated in such a pilot project.

IRON & FIRE

'[Iron & Fire](#)' raises awareness and offers training, introducing people to techniques such as blacksmithing, bronze casting, coppersmithing or silversmithing. Between 2015 and 2018, they set up the 'Virtuoso with Fire' project, in which training with international smithing masters takes shape.

STOETEN DOEN ONTMOETEN (‘PARADES MAKE FOR MEETING’)

This project from the Ypres Museum started in 2017 with 'Y'parade': an artistic, virtual pageant in which no fewer than 1,400 Ypres primary school children participated. '[Stoeten doen ontmoeten](#)' is now here to stay. It is organised every year for all Ypres primary schools.

FRIETKOT CULTURE

A primary school [workbook](#) explaining the living heritage of the 'frietkot culture' as part of a world orientation course.

CURIOUS GIANTS

A collaboration between the non-profit organisation LECA (now: Histories) and the [Giant Culture heritage](#) community in Flanders produced an education pack for primary schools.

NEIGHBOURHOODS WITH HERITAGE

'[Buurten met erfgoed](#)' ('Neighbourhoods with Heritage') aims to strengthen and structurally embed links between schools and local heritage. The school is a starting point, from which education centred on the surroundings takes shape. The transmission of intangible heritage with and through practitioners also has a place in this programme.

ROYAL CARILLON SCHOOL IN MECHELEN

[The Royal Carillon School](#) is a professional training programme for qualified carillonneurs in the city of Mechelen. It is part of the safeguarding programme included in the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

IZRAN REVISITED

'[Izran Revisited](#)' is a multi-year project focusing on the tradition of the Izran – sung poetry from northern Morocco. The emphasis is on transmission – learning melodies, technique and rhythms – in order to learn the Izran tradition and pass it on to the younger generation.

TRAINING AS A SHRIMP FISHER ON HORSEBACK IN OOSTDUINKERKE

Since 2013, prospective [shrimp fishers](#) on horseback have been undergoing a two-year training programme to ensure a high-quality transfer of the craft. After training with a licensed fisher on horseback, candidates can take a theoretical and a practical exam. The theoretical exam takes place at the National Fisheries Museum NAVIGO. The practical exam is judged by a panel of licensed fishers on horseback.



Beleidsvisie 2022: uitdaging 7

7. Beleid rond immaterieel erfgoed cultuurbreed en in het beleidsdomein onderwijs ontplooiën



3. Inventorying and Research

Where does Flanders stand with the inventory of intangible heritage, with an eye for diversity, inclusion and safeguarding?

The **Flanders Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage** has existed since 2008, following the 2003 [UNESCO Convention for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage](#). States parties to the convention commit to inventory the intangible heritage that is present within their territory. The cultivation of soil-grown chicory, the Bayard Steed Parade of Dendermonde, the 'frietkot' culture and flower parades are some examples of intangible heritage that have been included in the Flemish Inventory.

An **evaluation of the Flanders Inventory was drawn up** after 10 years. One key finding was that the Inventory did not yet adequately reflect the diversity of existing intangible heritage practices. The Flemish government decided to focus on **fostering a broader and more diverse inventory** and **giving visibility** to intangible heritage. The pursuit of **greater visibility, usability and accessibility** required a different approach.

Hence, in 2019, **new regulations** were established for the **Flanders Inventory**:

- providing more accessibility to heritage communities;
- with **a declaration of ethical principles** as part of the application, which strengthens the care for ethics (e.g. human rights, animal welfare);
- with **biannual reporting** on evolutions in the living heritage and the safeguarding measures from the heritage communities;
- with **an exit procedure** that allows heritage to be deregistered or withdrawn.

In addition to this, the Flemish government launched a **Register of Inspirational Examples** in 2019 as well. In doing so, it is aiming to highlight inspirational actions, projects and programmes that liven up intangible heritage in Flanders.

The **broadening of the inventory from 2019** thus led to an approach with three 'inputs' or approaches.

1. the easily accessible inventory with visibility at immaterieelerfgoed.be;
2. the official inscription on the Flanders Inventory;
3. the Register of Inspirational Examples.

The Flemish online platform for intangible heritage, **immaterieelerfgoed.be**, is the hub where all this comes together and is being shared.

This actual effort to actively inventory a broader and more diverse intangible heritage at immaterieelerfgoed.be is already producing results in abundance since it was launched, with the online publication of some **300 practices** reflecting a variety of themes and domains, ethno-cultural backgrounds, gender, distribution across Flanders, etc. The official **Inventory** lists **67 elements** in 2021. In the coming years, the aim is to gradually lead heritage communities from the broader network around immaterieelerfgoed.be towards the Inventory and further safeguarding.

[Read more here!](#)



INVENTORY & REGISTER?

The **Flanders Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage** and the **Register of Inspirational Examples** each contribute in their own way to a flourishing practice around safeguarding intangible heritage in Flanders:

- The **Inventory** identifies the **intangible heritage**, as well as the heritage communities involved that are committed to this heritage. It is a growing overview of the intangible heritage that is being sustainably safeguarded in Flanders. In order to have intangible heritage recognised on the Inventory, it is a heritage community that gets to apply.
- The **Register** highlights a series of **inspirational examples** of the **safeguarding of intangible heritage**, focusing especially on interesting ways of working and on methods that may also be inspirational to others. These actions and programmes may be led by all kinds of actors: by the heritage communities themselves, as well as by a museum or archive, a local government, a sociocultural organisation and plenty more. The purpose of the Register is for others to draw inspiration from this dynamic tool. Anyone can nominate some inspirational examples for the Register via immaterieelerfgoed.be.

unesco

INTERNATIONAL UNESCO RECOGNITIONS FROM FLANDERS

9 elements listed on the **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage from UNESCO**:

- Processional giants and dragon parades in Belgium and France
- Procession of the Holy Blood in Bruges
- Houtem Jaarmarkt, annual winter Fair
- Krakelingen and Tonnekensbrand in Geraardsbergen
- Leuven age set ritual repertoire
- Shrimp fishing on horseback in Oostduinkerke
- Falconry
- Beer culture in Belgium
- Musical art of horn players

2 safeguarding practices selected for the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices from UNESCO:

- Programme of cultivating ludodiversity: safeguarding traditional games in Flanders
- Safeguarding the carillon culture: preservation, transmission, exchange and awareness-raising

How do research and documentation contribute to safeguarding intangible heritage?

Research on intangible heritage in Flanders is **small-scale** yet **innovative, interdisciplinary** and **internationally** oriented. It covers a **range of research topics and types**, from micro-research and documentation around traditional techniques, to action research with pilot projects in safeguarding, to the mapping of widespread traditions, citizen science or policy preparation research. Regular historical research takes place, as well as innovative applied research, for example on intangible heritage and sustainable tourism, or the use of video in safeguarding living heritage. There is also artistic research, for example on textile crafts and 'tacit knowledge'. Master's and bachelor's theses on intangible heritage topics are issued and supervised in the field.

The heritage sector is also paying increasing attention to documentation and archiving.

For all this, active collaboration with many heritage communities is being shaped. More generally, **collaboration is paramount!** Academics, heritage professionals, heritage communities, heritage experts and other partners join forces in knowledge-building and sharing, research and documentation related to living heritage.

Yet, there is hitherto **no structural support** for research and studies in intangible heritage and there **are few funding lines**. Research on intangible heritage does form part of the policy in the heritage sector, but resources are limited. Thus research often depends on more general calls and on the creativity and commitment of the requesting researchers, and on working context that allow for this.

UNESCO Chair on Critical Heritage Studies and Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage

In 2014, at the initiative of Professor Dr Marc Jacobs, the UNESCO Chair on [Critical Heritage Studies and Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) was established. The aim is to encourage the development of academic research and training, both in Flanders and in [international networks](#).

Recent research topics on [intangible heritage](#) in Flanders

- Intangible heritage brokers and mediation
- Intangible heritage and diversity
- Intangible heritage and sustainable tourism
- Intangible heritage, ethics, controversy and human rights
- Participatory documentation of intangible heritage
- Museums, archives and safeguarding intangible heritage
- Valuation assessment of intangible heritage
- Intangible heritage and education
- Intangible heritage, transmission, craftsmanship and apprenticeships

Journals that improve access to research on intangible heritage

[Faro](#)

[TIJD-SCHRIFT](#)

[VOLKSKUNDE](#)



Policy vision 2022: challenge 3

3. Inventory, document and research broader and more diverse intangible heritage



4. Policy and Regulation

Where does Flemish policy development on safeguarding intangible heritage stand in 2021?

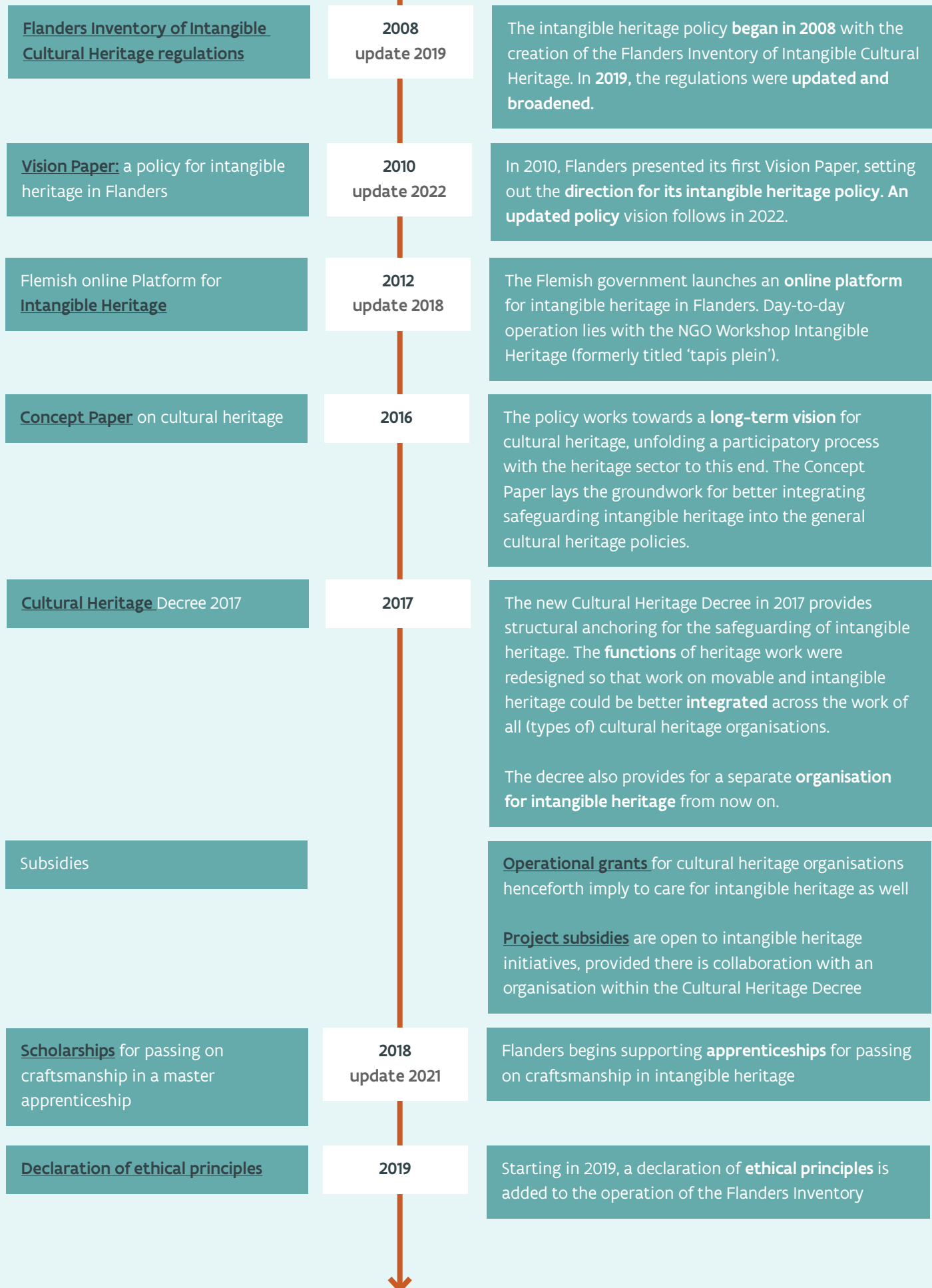
In cultural policy, initiatives have been taken in recent years to gradually embed the safeguarding of intangible heritage in policy frameworks and instruments. Thus, in 2021, there is a Flemish policy vision and a wide range of structural and project-based support lines.

For heritage communities wishing to develop heritage care for their practice (for example, for recognised elements of the Flanders Inventory), there is no targeted support yet, however. So there is still a void to be filled there to date.

In other policy areas, the work is just beginning. There are already some interesting leads and exploratory initiatives, but real policy development and collaboration with an eye for intangible heritage across sectoral boundaries, for example in the fields of economy, biodiversity or copyright, are a working area for the future. UNESCO itself places strong emphasis on intersectoral collaboration from the perspective of sustainable development: inclusive, socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development. Examples in this respect can be found mainly in the local policy context today, such as the measures taken in Oostduinkerke around shrimp fishing on horseback, in the city of Geel around the foster care heritage of psychiatric care, or in Bruges around Handmade in Bruges as part of sustainable urban development.

[Pulse Transition Network](#) and the [Flemish UNESCO Commission](#), after the launch of the SDGs in 2015, along with the broad artistic, sociocultural and heritage field, implemented an [SDG practices website](#), in which intangible heritage practices from Flanders also fully demonstrate their power in sustainable development.

Culture policy



Links with intangible heritage in other policy areas since 2021

IMMOVEABLE HERITAGE

A great deal of intangible heritage is linked to the physical environment. In people's perceptions of heritage, intangible, movable and immovable heritage rarely are being distinguished. Heritage is experienced as a coherent whole. In Flemish policy, however, competences are divided. Through periodic consultations, the Flemish administrations involved keep each other informed. Admittedly, there is still much growth potential for greater collaboration, including at the European level, for example around the grants for craftsmanship, through the 'cultural routes' and so on.

EDUCATION

New descriptions for the **key competencies** of 'historical awareness' and 'cultural awareness' are approved in the final attainment targets for first-grade secondary education in 2018, creating space for intangible heritage in the curriculum. There are also links to competencies in sustainability and in citizenship. They provide opportunities and leads for intangible heritage in education.

Bridges can also be built with many existing cultural education initiatives in the education sector, such as Canon Cultuurcel, KlasCement, het archief voor onderwijs, cultuurkuur.be.

ANIMAL WELFARE

For several years, there has been regular intersectoral **consultation** between the policy areas of Cultural Heritage and Environment regarding **traditions with animals**.

The Department of the Environment's **website** also explains the mediating role of heritage organisation CAG in proactively coordinating and, if possible, mitigating potential conflicts between heritage and animal welfare approaches.

TOURISM

There is no specific Flemish tourism policy on intangible heritage in 2021, but 'VisitFlanders' (the Flemish Tourism Agency) recent policy approach '**Travel to Tomorrow**' is wonderfully in line with the principles of sustainable safeguarding of living heritage. It is based on working together on responsible and sustainable tourism. It nurtures and cultivates **thriving destinations**, with the **associated communities flourishing** as well.

ECONOMY

The Economy policy area provides **legal recognition as a craftsman/-woman**. Since that law took effect in June 2016, more than 1,100 craftspeople have already received that recognition.

URBAN POLICY

Local programmes to support **craftsmanship in the city** are on the rise, in the form of projects, as well as longer-term policies linked to local economy, urban development or urban renewal, sustainable tourism and so on. **Handmade in Brugge** is an exemplary case.



Policy vision 2022: challenge 7

7. Develop policies enhancing intangible heritage within broader cultural policies, other policy areas and policy levels



5. In society

What place does intangible heritage have in inclusive living together in 2021?



Intangible heritage is contemporary living heritage at the heart of society in Flanders. Examples of heart-warming initiatives among heritage communities or civil society are ubiquitous. And in the heritage sector, a whole series of projects, conferences, workshops, publications, etc., in which intangible heritage, diversity and inclusion go hand in hand, is growing.

REVEIL

Along with artists and local communities, [Reveil](#) breathes new life into the annual ritual of commemorating the dead on 1 November.

FANFARE CULTURE

[Fanfare orchestras](#) are inseparable from local cultural life in Flanders. They bring people together from all walks of life, both within the association and outside, when these brass bands perform on the streets or in concert halls.

DOEK: TEXTILE LAB FOR LIVING TOGETHER

The non-profit organisation [DOEK](#) is a textile platform. Textiles are central as materials, and are seen as a connecting tissue to others. Through textiles, a wide variety of people and organisations with different expertise, skills and backgrounds come together: from foreign-language newcomers and young people to fashion professionals, from artists and anthropologists to heritage professionals or textile innovators.

GIANT DIVERSITY

Flanders' much-celebrated giant traditions are emerging as cross-cultural success stories. Giants evolve along with the population and diverse identities colour the street scene. The giant tradition is thus helping to build an inclusive and warm society in which engagement, creativity, imagination and dialogue are central.

[Mechelen](#)
[Borgerhout](#)

CARILLON FOR PEACE

A new (German-Belgian) [carillon](#) carries the message of peace. The sounds of this Peace Carillon show us the power of intangible heritage to connect people. Even in unusual times, such as during the COVID19 pandemic in 2020, this carillon takes on a role with consoling and connecting performances, request songs and a tailored musical programme.

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS AT THE MAS

Since 2012, [Día de los Muertos](#) has been celebrated annually at the [MAS Museum](#) in Antwerp, a collaboration between MAS and Mestizo Arts Platform.

GEEL FOSTER CARE

The town of Geel has a 700-year-old tradition of **foster care** for mentally vulnerable people in families' homes. It evolved into a contemporary psychiatric treatment model, as well as being an example of intangible heritage that for centuries has linked together a local community in caring for people.

CLUB ZAGHAREED

The Brussels YouYou group and their **Zaghareed clubs** create times for exchange, where women of all ages and backgrounds gather to share practices, experiences, stories and memories of the (formerly traditional Arabic) use of ululation.

WOMEN OF THE YEAR IN THE LEUVEN AGE SET RITUAL

Traditionally (for 140 years), the **Leuven Age Set Ritual** – included on the Representative List in 2011 – was primarily a male ritual. An important recent change is the **launch** of Women of the Year since 2018.

BATUCADA BATERÍA FOR LGBTQIA+

Batucada Baterías, in the wake of the tradition of Brazilian percussion groups, take to the streets around the world to get people dancing, at demonstrations, parades, parties and events. Famba, a Batucada Batería in Flanders, mobilises this practice as a medium to make LGBTQIA+ visible.

CHILDREN AT THE FLOWER PARADES

Young people are involved from an early age and taken seriously in building the **flower parades**. They have their own procession, floats and an independent children's jury.



Policy vision 2022: challenges 4 & 5

4. Develop an intangible heritage field that includes different viewpoints
5. Explore intangible heritage work in sustainable development

ETHICAL ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES

In recent years, ethical issues and dilemmas have surfaced in the context of safeguarding intangible heritage. Are traditions that are environmentally harmful still of our time? Is there no discrimination against people involved? And what about animal welfare? Heritage communities are struggling with shifts in societal norms and values, and you can hear opinions on every point of view in traditional media and on social media.

UNESCO drew up 12 **ethical principles for safeguarding intangible heritage**, which emphasise, among other things, that the primary role of heritage communities is paramount, that transparent collaboration is expected, that external value judgements are to be avoided, and that there should be mutual respect. The idea behind this? Strengthening communities and providing a framework for appropriate forms of external intervention, while respecting (the autonomy of) communities.

After this, the Flemish government presented a **declaration of ethical principles** in 2019, as part of the Flanders Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is a first step in the development of instruments on ethics and intangible heritage, tailored to the situation in Flanders.

AALST CARNIVAL, ISSUE OF PEACE-BUILDING AND MUTUAL RESPECT

Aalst's **carnival** in 2019 prompted high-profile discussions and the first ever removal from UNESCO's Representative List, after commotion over stereotypical caricatures by carnival association De Vismooil'n.

Of course, the removal from UNESCO's Representative List does not mean that the practice of the carnival as such no longer continues – quite the reverse. Once the media storm had subsided somewhat, there was all the more need to work on the principles of mutual respect and inclusion for this living heritage and the many thousands of people involved who were swept up in the international storm surrounding the incident. Several players have stepped up to the plate there. The Denderland Heritage Cell, for example, through the **Carnival Academy**, wants to provide more background on the craftsmanship of building the carnival parade, on the history and character of carnival as an inversion ritual, on the role and limits of humour, and so on. Schools introduce children from different backgrounds to the carnival, and carnival groups welcome people from different backgrounds into their midst.

The whole situation remains fraught and sensitive; there is fear of misunderstanding among many, but there is also much goodwill. Aalst Carnival, like other elements in the Flanders Inventory in 2019, has also signed the Declaration of Ethical Principles, which provides a tool for further dialogue, awareness and initiatives around inclusion.



6. Awareness and Visibility

How (much) is intangible heritage present in various communications and media?

Even though intangible heritage is **not yet a widely known concept** in Flanders in 2021, it is becoming **increasingly visible** in all manner of ways:

- in press coverage;
- through heritage communities' social media channels;
- in communications from www.immaterieelerfgoed.be, the heritage sector and the government
- in all kinds (and increasingly so) of exhibitions, workshops, lectures at museums and other cultural organisations.

The growing attention, appreciation and respect for the many topics of living heritage and the people behind them is noticeably growing.

WWW.IMMATERIEELERFGOED.BE

Online hub for information and communications about intangible heritage in Flanders. The website has an ever-expanding reach. In 2021, there were nearly 150,000 unique page visits.

LEVE IMMATERIEEL ERFGOED!

Leve immaterieel erfgoed! ('Long live intangible heritage!') is an annual networking day that brings together, celebrates and inspires all those involved in living heritage in Flanders.

ULTIMAS

Since 2014, the Flemish **ULTIMAS** (Culture Prizes) have also been awarded to intangible heritage initiatives of great merit.

ERFGOEDDAG

Erfgoeddag ('Heritage Day') is the largest public event around cultural heritage (movable and intangible heritage) in Flanders, reaching some 250,000 visitors. It is organized by FARO, with input from many heritage communities and organisations. Intangible heritage is also featured every year.

FLEMISH UNESCO MEETING DAY

The annual **Flemish UNESCO meeting day** invariably features **intangible heritage** on the programme.

IN THE MEDIA

On the rise:

Media coverage of intangible heritage is growing steadily. To illustrate, since 2012 there has been a ten-fold(!) increase in the number of mentions of intangible heritage in Google News from Belgium.

Challenges:

'Intangible cultural heritage' remains a difficult concept to introduce broadly to the public and in the media. The smoother-sounding alternative 'living heritage' already stands for the preservation of old animal breeds in Flanders, so this is no help either. We often see the phrase 'intangible world heritage' appear in the press and media, and there are also some misconceptions, such as the idea that traditions should remain unchanged. Therefore, the Flemish UNESCO Commission created this enlightening **bookmark**.

BEACH FLOWERS IN THE SUNSHINE

In 2021, Ostend's beach transformed into a veritable sea of flowers. Through the press and all kinds of communication campaigns from the tourism and culture sector, children, (grand) parents, family and friends, youth movements, playground activities, etc., were called upon to craft as many colourful **paper beach flowers** as possible. One hundred thousand, to be exact. In doing so, they were contributing to practising, experiencing and passing on this living heritage tradition of paper flower-making by the sea.

FACEBOOK FOR SAFEGUARDING

A great many heritage communities use **social media** for safeguarding and visibility actions, such as actions around Flemish Sign Language with the hashtag #VGT10years, or the Facebook group '**Behoud de woonwagencultuur**' ('safeguard caravan culture').

APP & TOUR

Intangible heritage inspires heritage apps and tours, such as a **heritage app walk** where you learn about the Leuven Age Set Ritual.

#VIRGAYESMOBIEL

Volunteers from the Virga Jesse Celebrations set out with the **#VirgaYesMobiel**, to inform and recruit all kinds of young and new people, and to expand and broaden the heritage community.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

A **new museum** wing on intangible heritage at the NAVIGO Museum, numerous exhibitions and campaigns around intangible heritage at the Huis van Alijn museum of daily life in Ghent, at the Bokrijk Open-Air Museum or at the PARCUM Dialogue Museum, and local intangible heritage at the various city museums in Flanders. Living heritage is unmissable at Flanders' 21st-century museum!



Policy vision 2022: challenges 2 & 4

2. Raise visibility and awareness of intangible heritage in society
4. Develop an intangible heritage field that includes different viewpoints



7. Involvement and Engagement

What is the participation and commitment of heritage communities and civil society for safeguarding intangible heritage in Flanders?

Flanders is flourishing in the field of culture and heritage with enormous commitment from **volunteer and civic initiatives**. So the policy naturally drew **the participatory approach** around intangible heritage, with the active **heritage communities at its heart**, and **all manner of stakeholders and players around them**: safeguarding committees, friends associations, volunteers, heritage organisations, local governments and so on.

We also see actors in the **private sector and the business world** getting involved in safeguarding intangible heritage. This happens especially when there is a direct involvement in current practice: for example, umbrella associations for beer culture or frietkot culture, entrepreneurs in various crafts or tourism players. We also often see it when there is a local connection: consider, for example, the importance of local sponsors who help make many festivals and traditions possible.

The [SofinaBoël Fund](#) from the King Baudouin Foundation is an example of a **private initiative that supports intangible heritage: it provides young talented craftspeople** in the heritage sector with follow-up scholarships.

In the **Flemish policy**, in addition to the **support framework for heritage operations and projects**, instruments and funding opportunities were developed that give impetus to cross-sector collaboration projects. Examples at: www.cultuuroptil.be and immaterieelerfgoed.be.



Policy vision 2022: challenges 6 & 7

6. Sustainably expand and deepen the commitment for safeguarding intangible heritage in the cultural heritage sector
7. Develop policies enhancing intangible heritage within broader cultural policies, other policy areas and policy levels



8. International collaboration

To what extent is Flanders committed to international collaboration around the 2003 Convention and safeguarding intangible heritage?

In the wake of the 2003 Convention, a **learning network** in bilateral, regional and international **exchange and collaboration** has been growing over the years. Policy-makers, experts and organisations are turning to face the same direction for the shared long-term goal: to give our world's rich diversity of humanity's living heritage a sustainable future. **Flanders has been at the forefront** of this [international collaboration on intangible heritage](#) from the start. And the input of **UNESCO 2003 experts** from Flanders is being actively and generously shared in numerous international forums (juries, webinars, expert meetings and so on).

IN THE COMMITTEE

Belgium had a seat in the Intergovernmental Committee for the 2003 Convention in 2012-2016 (previously also in 2006-2008), with input from the Flemish delegation and expertise. Flanders has thus actively helped shape the development of the Convention for several years.

MULTINATIONAL UNESCO NOMINATIONS

The UNESCO lists are proving to be a significant lever for collaboration across borders. The vast network surrounding the UNESCO recognition of Falconry Heritage appeals to the imagination in that regard (24 countries by 2021), including Belgium. But there are plenty more examples, such as collaboration around safeguarding carillon culture, the musical art of horn players, fairground culture, traditional irrigation methods, or the Tocati programme for safeguarding traditional games and sports.

SAICH

The **SAICH project** (2010-2020) developed a collaboration between seven southern African countries and a shared online platform for intangible heritage.

The project was made possible by the **Flanders UNESCO Trust Fund (FUT)**, with a total of \$1.2 million in support for successive project phases.

FLEMISH-DUTCH INTERACTION

For many years, there has been a particularly fruitful interaction between the neighbouring countries of the Netherlands and Flanders in the context of intangible heritage. This includes, for example, the exchange of experience, policy advice and joint knowledge-building around new topics.

UNESCO-ACCREDITED NGOS

Several **non-governmental organisations** from Flanders have been accredited by UNESCO for providing services to the international operation of the 2003 Convention.

These are the following eight organisations:

- CAG. Centre for Agrarian History
- Sportimonium. Center for Sports Culture
- FARO – Flemish Interface for Cultural Heritage
- IVV. Institute For Flemish Folk Art
- Lace in Flanders
- PARCUM
- The Domain Bokrijk
- Workshop Intangible Heritage Flanders

In total, there are thirteen accredited organisations with their registered offices in Belgium, including some international NGOs.

EUROPEAN COLLABORATION

In 2021, a brand-new **network** formed around the 2003 Convention in the European region. The network aims to encourage convention development, dialogue and exchange in the European countries and region.

RESEARCH NETWORKS

In the **UNITWIN network** of UNESCO Chairs on Intangible Heritage and the 2003 Convention, the Flemish Chair in Critical Heritage Studies and the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, led by Marc Jacobs, is making every effort.

ICH & MUSEUMS PROJECT (IMP)

The **IMP project** achieved extensive knowledge-sharing and networking in Europe between 2017 and 2020 at the intersection of museums and safeguarding intangible heritage. The project was led by Flanders, with EU co-financing.

ADVICE IN EVALUATION BODY

In 2019, Workshop intangible heritage was elected as an accredited NGO from Flanders to join the 12-member **Evaluation Body**, responsible for advising on UNESCO nominations.

ICH NGO FORUM

ICH NGO Forum is the platform for communication, networking, exchange and collaboration among NGOs accredited under the 2003 UNESCO Convention. NGO Workshop intangible heritage (back then named 'tapis plein') deployed a pace-setting role for the development of this forum..



Policy vision 2022: challenge 8

8. Further develop and differentiate the international policy on intangible heritage



III. Caring for tomorrow: challenges and commitment for the coming years

The **Flemish policy vision** (2022) for intangible heritage actively addresses **the long-term goals** of the **UNESCO Overall Results framework** and the challenges we identified for UNESCO in the reporting. The diagram below brings together goals and challenges in a concise overview.

They provide a compass and orientation for all the actors and networks involved – policy-makers and heritage communities, heritage organisations, researchers and educational institutions, civil society, private players and the media – for further engagement and **collaboration** in safeguarding intangible heritage in Flanders in the coming years.

Results framework

Unesco

themes

1

Organisation, resources and people

2

Transmission and Education

3

Inventory and Research

4

Policy and Regulation

5

In society

6

Awareness and Visibility

7

Involvement and Engagement

8

International collaboration

Policy vision

Vlaanderen

challenges

1

Enhance heritage communities and intangible heritage practices

2

Raise visibility and awareness of intangible heritage in society

3

Inventory, document and research broader and more diverse intangible heritage

4

Develop an intangible heritage field that includes different viewpoints

5

Explore intangible heritage work in sustainable development

6

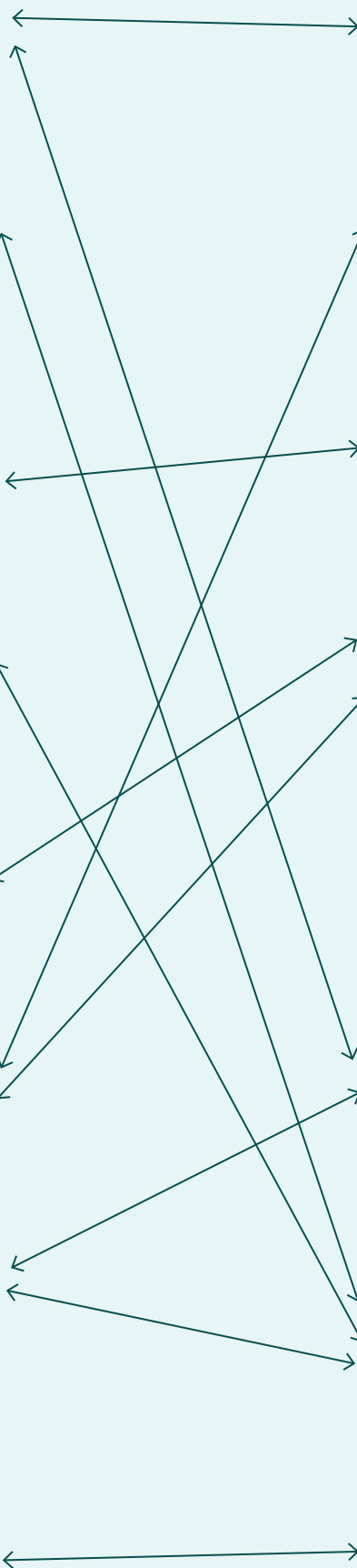
Sustainably expand and deepen the commitment for safeguarding intangible heritage in the cultural heritage sector

7

Develop policies enhancing intangible heritage within broader cultural policies, other policy areas and policy levels

8

Further develop and differentiate the international policy on intangible heritage





III. EDITORIAL DETAILS

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