

Intangible Cultural Heritage and EU Cultural Policy

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(Summary)

Many of the practices in safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (further ICH) show considerable specifics in different regions of the world, as well as in different countries or social environments. As a result the concept of ICH is often understood in various ways. Even some of the most important international documents concerned with ICH – which is for example the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage or the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (i.e. the so called Faro Convention) presuppose notions of ICH which seem considerably different from one another. At the same the EU cultural heritage policy does not imply a specific, fixed understanding of ICH and thus allows for the term to be used with several incongruent meanings.

The present article is an attempt to examine some of the EU documents underlying explicitly the processes of safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. As a result of their analysis the author advocates that while some of them tend to differentiate between tangible and intangible heritage (in a way following the understanding of ICH in the UNESCO ICH Convention), others prefer to differentiate between material and immaterial aspects of heritage (quite in the spirit of Faro Convention). This lack of a unified notion reflects different attitudes about the scope of intangible heritage and different points of view on the possibility or impossibility of its reduction to the sphere of traditional culture in particular. Therefore the EU cultural heritage policy is presented as an intriguing arena of implicit debates on the content and nature of the concept ICH.

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