

# EUROPEAN HERITAGE DAYS 2023

## Living Heritage







**EUROPEAN  
HERITAGE DAYS  
2023**

**Living  
Heritage**

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A joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Union



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You can get in touch with your National Coordinator by visiting our website: [www.europeanheritagedays.com/contact](http://www.europeanheritagedays.com/contact)



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## INTRODUCTION

The European Heritage Days (EHD), a joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, are the most widely celebrated participatory cultural events shared by people living in Europe. The pan-European nature of the events contributes to bringing people together and highlighting the European dimension and the value of cultural heritage in the signatory States of the European Cultural Convention. Thousands of events are organised every year in order to help raise awareness of Europe's common heritage and the continuous need for its protection, as well as to create shared cultural heritage experiences, promote inclusiveness and foster creativity and imagination.

Every year there is a theme for European Heritage Days, which all participating countries are encouraged to adopt for their annual programme.

This brochure will help you think about how to deliver your 2023 programme based on the theme of *Living Heritage*.

# WHAT IS LIVING HERITAGE?

**Living Heritage** is the theme for 2023. The theme will explore the practices, places and objects that are part of our cultural heritage today. Event organisers are welcome to change the wording to suit a unique approach suitable to your own culture and language. Intangible cultural heritage, understood here as a synonym for living heritage, is passed down from generation to generation, and constantly reshaped by communities and groups in response to their environment and today's needs. Shared heritage, and the way in which it is shared, provides a sense of identity and continuity, promoting respect for cultural diversity and creativity. This process is always in motion, and in choosing it as our annual theme we hope to explore it in depth.

We want to create the opportunity for local and national programmes to reconsider and expand what they offer to visitors, reaching out to and working with more diverse audiences. We hope the theme will help coordinators and heritage professionals putting together national programmes to plan events and activities, to consider how to extend the reach of their EHDs to under-represented groups and individuals, and to welcome those not normally included as participants.

**Living Heritage** is found in the values, beliefs and ways of living we inherit from past generations that we still use to understand the present and make choices for the future.







It is constantly recreated by communities and groups, adjusting to their changing cultures, and the landscapes and places that they inhabit. Living heritage has followed populations throughout history, and today unique practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and artefacts can be found both in the places where they originated and across the world.

**Living Heritage** also refers to the practices and forms in which the past is preserved in collective memory, and it also encompasses events and forms of knowledge that form part of the community's history. By remembering and performing the activities or rituals related to these events and knowledge, the community selects and redefines them throughout time, maintaining and even recreating the purpose and meaning of its living heritage. The relationship of people to place and nature is also central to this theme.

The theme focuses on the role of heritage in addressing societal challenges, in line with the Council of Europe's approach to heritage. Living Heritage draws connections between recognizing, safeguarding and promoting intangible cultural heritage assets, as well as transmitting them to future generations in a rapidly changing world. It addresses both the heritage itself, and the means by which we use it today to address today's needs. In this way it builds on the work developed by event organisers as part of our most recent preceding annual themes, **Sustainable Heritage** and **Heritage: All Inclusive**, and encourages event organisers to explore the entire spectrum of means by which we remember the past in the present.



# LIVING HERITAGE TODAY

Today, as the world changes and our communication methods transform in line with the modernisation of our societies, *Living Heritage* continues to take on new meanings. Creativity is increasingly directed into digital channels. This is a living process, and people continue to play the key role in the creation and carrying forward of intangible cultural heritage.

By 2050 66% of the world's population are predicted to be living in urban areas, with three million people moving to cities on a weekly basis<sup>1</sup>. We are therefore facing a new set of challenges. There is a tendency towards the creation of a standardised monoculture in many communities across the globe as traditional knowledge and practices fade out, while consumerism takes over. Almost three quarters of the European population were living in an urban area in 2015, and this rate is projected to rise to just over 80% by 2050<sup>2</sup>. In light of such a rapid pace of change, finding a balance and a sense of belonging becomes rather difficult and encourages us to revisit and question the relationship between our daily lives and living heritage.

As a form of human expression, *Living Heritage* is about the stories of people and places over time, conveying a slice of the history and the culture of a people, with their particular characteristics, from one generation to the next. This need for the acknowledgement of heritage is very much related to human dignity as well as a sense of pride, playing an ongoing role in transmitting traditional knowledge within communities. In order to provide for the demand of communities for recognition and protection, a safe and equal space for all inhabitants is needed.



<sup>1</sup> International Organization for Migration, "World Migration Report 2015", IOM, 2015, p. 1-15

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat, "Urban Europe — statistics on cities, towns and suburbs", 2016 edition, p. 7-14

**Living Heritage** constantly reshapes itself to adjust to the prevailing culture of the context it is formed in, and is therefore vulnerable to flattening global influences. Viewed from this perspective, there is need to protect minority cultures and communities. In such settings, the identification, safeguarding and transmission of intangible cultural heritage to future generations plays a crucial role in ensuring its continued survival<sup>3</sup>.

Living Heritage, as it relates to the quality of life in present time, is informed by the past and shapes cultural life today. Understanding the value and responsible care for living heritage positions individuals and communities as “agents of change<sup>4</sup>” in their respective contexts, empowering people to engage in a pluralistic world and the co-creation of culture in the future.

<sup>3</sup> Federico Lenzerini, “Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Living Culture of Peoples,” *European Journal of International Law* 22, n.1, (February 2011): 118. <https://academic.oup.com/ejil/article/22/1/101/436591>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid





# LIVING HERITAGE AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The 2005 Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention) recognises the relevance of meanings and uses that people attach to objects and places (tangible heritage) and the values they represent. These forms of knowledge are passed on to future generations to renew the consensus of society about values and democratic debate. Living heritage is recognised as being in a state of constant evolution, and its meaning is inextricable from tangible cultural heritage, as it builds meaning from these forms of heritage.

The Council of Europe, in its Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2269 (2019), “Safeguarding and enhancing intangible cultural heritage in Europe,” recognises the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Followed by this resolution, Recommendation 2148 (2019), welcoming the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,<sup>5</sup> highlights its connection to the Faro Convention as per its broader understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society. Pointing to the vulnerable position of ICH under the challenges faced by contemporary societies, the Council of Europe advocates for cooperation with UNESCO and the EU, with particular attention given to participatory governance and the process of strengthening democratic citizenship.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/resources/in-focus-articles/safeguarding-communities-living-heritage/>





While the intergovernmental support by the leading agencies in the field is encouraging, it is essential to acknowledge that the discourse on intangible cultural heritage has been at the heart of community across the globe for centuries, particularly among indigenous groups. In this regard, great importance has been given to the value of traditional knowledge, its protection and transmission to future generations. This cumulative body of collective knowledge, practices and skills, provides unique insight into each community and society's worldview, internal dynamics and relation with its surroundings, including the natural world. Accordingly, often transmitted orally, each generation layers in its own interpretation, adjusting to their contemporary needs and conditions, taking pride in their contribution to the wealth of knowledge that will be transmitted to the next generation.

The Council of Europe, in line with the Faro Convention principles, has carried out exemplary work on intangible cultural heritage through its field work. Among others, some examples can be found at [the Council of Europe dedicated page to culture and cultural heritage](#), with specific titles including *Filigree*, *Bridal umbrella*, *Roma Flag Day*, *Okarina*, *Zurla*, *What is Heritage I and II*, *Face Painting*, *Sheep Shearing* and *Intangible Heritage Days*. These examples may be useful and inspirational for further activities in 2023.

# LIVING HERITAGE

## AND THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE DAYS

In terms of definition and protection measures, the 2003 UNESCO Convention provides remarkable resources that offer precise guidance regarding living heritage, including oral traditions and expressions, the performing arts, social practices, landscape/wildlife management, rituals and festive events, and knowledge and practices concerning traditional craftsmanship. Intangible heritage allows diverse communities to flourish, giving shape to their way of life and relationship with the natural world, where they may have not chosen or found themselves able to express themselves through built heritage. Intangible cultural heritage is therefore one of the places in which democratic participation plays out, and it is therefore also vulnerable to socio-political changes over time. Indeed, as per the Faro Convention principles, in community-based, people-oriented and heritage-led activities, tangible and intangible heritage are understood as inextricably connected, as they all present essential parts of communities and have significance to society in their entirety.

The European Heritage Days programme, by adopting the *Living Heritage* theme in 2023, can build on 2022's theme of *Sustainable Heritage*, and emphasize the elements of participatory governance and democratic citizenship opened up by the new theme.



# EVENT IDEAS

## Creativity



- 1 Organise pottery workshops.** Working with plasticine, visitors could learn about traditional practices from experienced local artists.
- 2 Host a workshop exploring traditional skills,** such as sewing, knitting, or patchwork.
- 3 Organise jewellery-making workshops** for young people in schools or clubs. In the workshop they might make things from natural materials, or from beads and locally produced fibres.
- 4 Arrange a traditional crafts presentation** and ask visitors to bring a special object or traditional craft from their home. It could be anything from an old lamp, to a woven rug, an ornament, or an embroidered tablecloth. They can share their stories and explore the way, and the time, in which it was made.
- 5 Organise an embroidery workshop** for secondary schools. The students' work can be displayed in the school, or the pupils could host a fashion show to share their work.
- 6 In cooperation with a dance school or club, host courses teaching traditional dances.**
- 7 Plan a video-making contest** for young people based on a theme of local living traditions, like practicing of old crafts, performance of traditional music and dances, celebrating some religious feast or practicing of some other living tradition. The awards at the contest might be some products of traditional crafts.



- 8** Schools with children from different backgrounds could **deliver a presentation exploring local cultural diversity**. It can be done by preparing exhibitions of photographs brought by children representing their family histories, or exhibitions of traditional artefacts showing traditional skills distinctive to their community.
- 9 Organise an exhibition of traditional crafts**. The exhibition might include different tools and utensils used in practicing the crafts, in addition to the original objects as products of the crafts.
- 10** Museums might **host an exhibition of photographs** of local traditions, customs, rituals with masks, or whatever objects are at their disposal. The exhibition could also include some original objects used during the performance of these living traditions.
- 11 Curate an exhibition about traditional medicine**. It might present healing plants and more recent methods, as well as explanations of what they are used to treat, and how they are used.
- 12 Host a traditional dance in a public place**. It could be organised on weekends, so that it might be attended by a wide range of people in the community.
- 13** Museums could host and promote **guided tours** exploring the forms of living heritage specific to their collections.
- 14 Organise a contest or a performance** of singing or playing traditional music.
- 15** In rural areas, **organise a demonstration in local practices of agricultural activities**, with local farmers and producers.
- 16 Host a market for local craftspeople**, traditional and present-day, to help them to make connections and share their work with new people.
- 17 Arrange a singing contest** around the performance of traditional music. Local organizations/authorities could advise elementary and/or secondary schools to teach traditional songs in their music classes. In bigger local communities, contestants might be separated into several age categories.
- 18 Organise an open-air screening** of documentary films based on traditional dances, music or traditional crafts.

- 19 Traditional food preparation lessons** can be hosted in castles, historic houses, or museums.
- 20** You could **host an event based on the traditional agricultural calendar** and occasions. For example, towards the end of a harvest, a local farmer might be able to share stories or practical demonstrations. It can be followed by sharing traditional meals.
- 21 Collect recipes** of dishes from the archives or your grandma's diary. Invite other people in the community to join you in preparing and enjoying it, using local produce where possible.
- 22 Open a Living Library!** Invite people in your local area to share their knowledge and experience of traditional practices at a special event, with a view to promoting social inclusion and fostering intergenerational dialogue.



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- 23 Host a fashion show** showcasing traditional outfits. This could be done by borrowing folk costumes from local museums. The event can also be organised in cooperation with a theatre and the traditional outfit and props in possession of the theatre might even be worn by actors.
- 24** Museums, castles and other historic buildings, archaeological sites and other heritage sites could **host poetry evenings** presenting oral traditions. It can be done in cooperation with local theatres, whose actors would read traditional (or contemporary!) poems, dressed in theatre costumes corresponding with the time when the poems originated.
- 25 Traditional dancing events** for senior citizens can be organised in retirement homes. If dancers are promising and they can show some nearly forgotten traditional dances, these events can be followed by an open-air dance at some urban public space, where seniors would perform dances and the people attending could join in, if they would like to try and learn the dances.
- 26** Local governments of towns located near borders might **establish cooperation with the closest cross-border municipality**. It can be done by organizing a joint event or celebration on occasion some national holiday.
- 27** You could **design an on-line exhibition** of photographs of local living traditions, customs, and rituals. The exhibition might also include photographs of some objects and materials used in the practicing of the traditional activities, and contributions could be invited from anyone who is interested in offering their input.
- 28** Organise a **painting competition** at school on the theme of Living Heritage, and invite the participants to define it for themselves.



# EVENT IDEAS

## Communities



- 1 Take part in the next edition of the [Young European Heritage Makers initiative](#)**, which invites young people to explore their cultural surroundings and find their story of Europe. Encourage young people to take a photo, make a video or tell a story and share it with the rest of Europe on our website as part of the next edition.
- 2** Are you an organiser of a project involving European cultural heritage, with a mission to share your experience with the rest of Europe? Do you have an idea for a new project to further develop your story? If you organise an EHD event, you will be eligible to **take part in the next edition of our [Call for European Heritage Days Stories](#)**. We particularly encourage applications from community projects based on sustainability for a source of inspiration for your 2023 event.
- 3 Follow your nearest [European Cultural Route](#)** to discover the rich and diverse heritage of Europe, and the living heritage that has grown from the places it crosses. Find out what it has to offer for responsible heritage tourism and sustainable development. There are now 45 routes to choose from, stretching across the whole continent.
- 4 Pick a place!** Examine the interactions between people and community who meet in this place. Consider how the place itself has contributed to local history, and how it might continue to do so.
- 5 Create a map or an inventory** of significant cultural heritage in the area you live. It might be displayed in a public building or made into a mural, or a smaller version might be printable and distributed as a leaflet locally to encourage people to explore their surroundings in new ways.

- 6 You could **prepare a public presentation** of some intangible heritage inscribed on the UNESCO lists, if there are any nearby. If it is some traditional skill or craft distinctive of the community that consider it a part of their cultural identity, you could ask some representatives of that community to perform it in practice for the general public.
- 7 Towns located near borders might **host exchange visits** of folk dancers clubs or traditional music bands with the closest cross-border town. These visits could be planned to coincide with an anniversary or some other traditional celebration.
- 8 Digital technologies have an increasing role as a tool to interpret and disseminate multiple values of heritage. Bring together a group of community members and specialists including, historians, heritage managers, data scientists and IT specialists to organise a **heritage science hackathon**.
- 9 **Hold a community consultation** on local heritage that is at risk, in all its forms. Through participatory community consultation methods, bring the community together to discuss, define and design plans for local heritage in the local context. This process has the potential to engage all inhabitants to stimulate interest and commitment on the issue while encouraging greater involvement in decision making. It is essential that meetings are accessible for diverse groups.



# EVENT IDEAS

## Nature and Place



- 1** Organise a bird/insect watch and do a **count of 'endangered species'** in your area.
- 2** **Work with a local drama group** to create outdoor theatres or reenactments of significant events in local history, staged in the places where they happened. If there are significant archaeological sites nearby, they could be the perfect stage.
- 3** **Host a map workshop with your local library**, studying old editions of maps of your town. By comparing them you can see how it has grown and changed over the years, and you could update the collection by drawing new versions together.
- 4** **Have a field day** – The protection of biodiversity is increasingly seen as a priority by landowners and farmers, and a lot of work is being done to care for the wildlife and plants that share our fields. Invite people to see the work you are doing and share your knowledge, and if you are able to host a group, you could organise a workshop.
- 5** **Organise a stargazing workshop** with local experts and explore what you can see when looking at things from a different angle.
- 6** **Collect wildflowers** and make artwork with them. Become a 19th century botanical artist and learn about how flowers are painted onto the pages of manuscripts.
- 7** **Plan an urban wildlife safari** and meet the animals, birds and plants that share our towns and cities with us.



- 8 Build an insect hotel or a butterfly garden** – our insect populations are under threat as a consequence of changing climate, pollutants, and the destruction of natural habitats. An alternative might be birdhouses, or any kind of wildlife refuge you can think of!
- 9 Organise a Wilderness Survival Event.** Learn how to build a fire, how to purify water, and how to signal if you are lost.
- 10 Bird song** – How many bird songs are you able to identify? So much music has been influenced by bird song. Organise a link up with your local bird-watching experts and a classical music enthusiast and see how one has influenced the other and enjoy some great sounds.
- 11 Create a guided tour** of a National Park or nature reserve near you, to share your knowledge with others.
- 12 Many traditional skills have local roots and were dependent on what was available locally, what could grow, what type of stone or rock lay underground, and the availability of clean water. Ask a historical geographer to give a talk about the aspects of your local landscape that have defined your place and how to provide a platform for the development of innovative ideas in heritage management.**
- 13 Organise a tree identification workshop** and raise awareness of old trees as both nature and cultural monuments.
- 14 Create a demonstration by local craft workers to discover and promote local skills and know-how related to nature** (forests, agriculture, water management) or on the **planting of hedgerows** to promote pollination.



# RESOURCES

The Council of Europe and the European Commission are not responsible for the content of external resources and sites. For queries, amendments and additions, please e-mail us at: [jep-ehd@coe.int](mailto:jep-ehd@coe.int)

[Council of Europe – Culture and Cultural Heritage - Publications](#)

[Strategy 21 – Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage](#)

[Faro Convention Action Plan](#)

[Safeguarding and enhancing intangible cultural heritage in Europe](#)

[The European Heritage Academy](#)

[New European Bauhaus](#)

[New European Bauhaus Prizes](#)

[European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage](#)

[UNESCO – What is intangible cultural heritage?](#)

# NEXT STEPS

We hope that you find some inspiration from these examples for delivering *Living Heritage* as part of your events programme in 2023.

This is a digital resource that can grow and expand, so please share your practices and projects with us and we can add them in future, share them widely with the National Coordinators, and highlight them on the EHD website. Submit project summaries and relevant links to: [jep-ehd@coe.int](mailto:jep-ehd@coe.int)





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