

Support to the safeguarding and promotion of cultural diversity and heritage, with a special focus on intangible cultural heritage and the diversity of cultural expressions



Soz and Tar making training programme © MDC-F JP Turkey

BACKGROUND

The JP provided concrete contributions to the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), through a set of complementary activities aimed to raise awareness on the ICH concept, and to support its safeguarding and viability. Bearing in mind that the preparation of the national inventory of ICH is a long-term and dynamic process under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT) and considering the short timeframe available for the implementation of the JP, it was decided that the JP activities related to ICH would consist in the identification and mapping of the main intangible cultural assets in the Kars province, and in the provision of support to selected manifestations of this heritage, particularly Minstrelsy tradition. Support by means of transmission through written form, creating a platform for the making and performing of traditional instruments, contributing to promotion, and providing a culture house, all formed a solid basis for further activities.

PROCESS

Activities started with two workshops intended to inform and train local stakeholders for the preparation of the national inventory of ICH, led by the MoCT. Activities continued with the preparation, implementation and publication of research for mapping ICH main assets in the Kars province. The research covered 80 villages; 50 students from Kafkas University (50% women, 50% men) were trained. Approximately 7,000 pages of data transcriptions, 2,000 photographs, and 260 video recordings were collected. Selected data was presented in a publication and the research was submitted to MoCT for archiving and further processing.

Besides this encompassing action, specific activities especially designed to support the safeguarding, viability and promotion of the 'Minstrelsy' tradition, a distinctive feature of the local cultural heritage (also inscribed in the UNESCO Representative List for ICH), were implemented. These activities included vocational training for making traditional musical instruments, recording and publishing an audio CD with Minstrelsy performances, preparation and publishing of a book in traditional folk tales, organizational support for an international festival, and the establishment of a permanent meeting point for Minstrelsy in a refurbished, historical building named 'Culture House'.

Outcomes

Awareness was raised concerning all stakeholders, from relevant authorities, to the bearer-community, to local civil society at large, on the nature, importance and value of ICH. Tools and resources were made available for supporting the safeguarding, viability and transmission of local intangible heritage, with special focus on the Minstrelsy tradition wherein professionals were trained in the making of traditional musical instruments. Local intangible cultural heritage was better integrated into processes and policies for the sustainable development of cultural tourism, notably through the completion and publishing of research for the mapping of the primary ICH in the province of Kars. Ownership from local communities and authorities was prioritized. The overall experience formed a model for the establishment of other culture houses and the creation of platforms for different traditions in different contexts.

It is important to note that, while 20% of the audience of the Minstrelsy tradition is female, the practice mostly involves men as the tradition stemmed historically from travelling. Through the JP, however, women from Kars were exposed to the tradition and were encouraged to practice it themselves. The most important component of this initiative was the establishment of the Culture House, and the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Municipality of Kars and the Minstrelsy Association, which will strive to ensure the sustainability of related activities beyond the end of the project. Furthermore, an audio cd of Minstrelsy performances was produced, and International Minstrelsy Festivals were organized in Kars, Kağızman and Sarıkamış. In addition, a book on Eastern Anatolian Folk Tales was published, which will help raise awareness on the overall importance of safeguarding oral traditions.

- Awareness-raising on the importance and value of intangible cultural heritage
- Women from Kars were encouraged to practice the Minstrelsy tradition themselves.
- Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Municipality of Kars and the Minstrelsy Association