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“*Living Human Treasures – Bulgaria*” is part of UNESCO’s pilot program *Living Human Treasures*. It was initiated by the international organization at the beginning of the 1990s.

Many are UNESCO’s initiatives and activities realized in the course of the years, which led to the appearance of document *142EX/18*, adopted by UNESCO’s Executive Committee at its 142nd session in August 1993, thanks to which the *Living Human Treasures* program became a fact. One of the most important fundamental predecessors of this document is the *Recommendation for the Preservation of Folklore*, adopted at the 25th session of UNESCO’s General Conference in 1989. In this *Recommendation* the UNESCO member states for the first time reached a general agreement on the frame definition of notions like “traditional culture” and “folklore”, as well as on the necessity to preserve and protect them. In this respect some practical measures were also outlined and were recommended to the member states.

Introducing internationally also the broader term “*intangible cultural heritage*”, in the documents adopted and related to the *Living Human Treasures* pilot project, UNESCO for the first time in its many a year history of activities, aiming to preserve the cultural heritage, placed a new and extremely important accent. It was connected with the fact that now in the focus of the interest is the living human being, the bearer of traditional activities and skills, who, being a master of them, can transmit his traditional knowledge to the future generations. The final aim of this project was to create national and international lists of *people – “living human treasures”*. This final aim, however, was preceded by different stages.

Point *II.3* of document *142EX/18* states that each of the member states “builds its own criteria and procedures for selection”. Point *A.6* formulates four basic functions in this direction: preservation, protection, distribution, transmission. And according to point *C* “*countries build their own lists*”.

A result of hard and long-time work and consultations of experts from different countries is the conclusion, adopted with no reservations by the international organization, that unification in the field of intangible cultural heritage might appear fatal, as the different cultural traditions are extremely rich and multiform. The formulations in document 142EX/18 and the documents that followed it are a result of exactly this established concept. What is more, in the quickly globalizing modern world, knowledge and skills in the field of non-material cultural heritage are transmitted mainly in an oral way, which makes them extremely fragile, and they can be easily forgotten or lost. Thus a large number of cultural activities such as traditional music, dance, narration, rites, fairs or different traditional cultural skills are endangered to disappear.

UNESCO's program *Living Human Treasures* presupposes and stimulates the opportunity for the member states to determine and to systematize on their own and in documents-lists those traditional activities and skills which they consider important for the sustainability of their citizens' identity. Thus, recognizing the activities and the skills for its own territory, every member state in fact "enumerates" important spheres of its traditional culture and their specific manifestations in the form of particular cultural facts. Of course, in the process of recognition, each state uses the competence of expert teams who formulate its priorities in the respective sphere. Having recognized at the highest possible level the important traditional activities and skills in its cultural heritage, every country adopts lists in which these traditional activities and skills are specifically pointed out. The ultimate aim of the program is to make an international list of *living human treasures* – i.e., of those bearers of the intangible cultural property, who are extreme masters. These persons should be supported, stimulated and encouraged in order to preserve and transmit their unique knowledge and skills to the next generations.



The project "*Living Human Treasures – Bulgaria*" has been realized under the auspices of UNESCO in Bulgaria, and thanks to two authoritative institutions – the Ministry of

Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Institute of Folklore at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The work on the project started in 2001 and was carried out within a two-year period. In December 2002 “*Living Human Treasures – Bulgaria. List of Activities*” was submitted to the state, represented by the Minister of Culture, and was published in the Internet.

For the realization of the project a *highly qualified team of researchers from the Institute of Folklore*, well acquainted with the Bulgarian and the international experience in preservation of the intangible cultural heritage, prepared a questionnaire card, the aim of which was to collect and later to analyze the data on the contemporary state of the of intangible cultural tradition in Bulgaria. The card was distributed on the territory of the whole country and was filled in on the spot. The data that it provided (generalized and systematized by the specialists) together with the active dialogue with representatives of central and regional structures in the field of culture and, last but not least, the knowledge and the abilities of the team working on the project, allowed the completion of the “*List of Activities*”.



Bulgaria is lucky to have to the very present day a folklore culture in a considerably preserved state and in its syncretism: as an inseparable union of sound, movement, word, ritual, etc. “*Living Human Treasures – Bulgaria. List of Activities*” identifies traditional activities and skills, officially recognized by the state as important components of Bulgaria’s intangible cultural heritage, which should be the subject of preservation.

The “*Living Human Treasures – Bulgaria*” list has two basic chapters – *national* and *regional*. The national one includes the activities and skills that are considered to be representative for the country and on the preservation of which the State especially insists. The regional lists, for which the principle of the country’s administrative division in regions was adopted, are more detailed and include also activities and skills typical for the region and the district. The aim was to outline *those traditional activities – skills, technologies and*

practices, which are preserved in the form of a living human experience and are characteristic of Bulgaria on a national and regional plane. The terms *traditional, folklore* and *ancient* are used as synonyms throughout the document.



Traditional *folklore culture* exists through a variety of *local variants*, outlining relatively independent cultural areas and predetermining the special role and place of the dialect, understood as a cultural specificity. Local variants also contribute to the variety in folklore aesthetics as a system of norms and rules forming the view of what is good and valuable.

The principle of organization and ordering of the cultural facts and the activities in the list is related to the very character of the Bulgarian traditional culture, to its *collective and individual* forms of existence and performance, to the ritual and the non-ritual activities and skills. Most often the ritual ones are associated with a larger community (the village, the ritual group), hence they are placed first in the list. Then come activities and skills connected in most cases with an individual bearer and performer. Existing in an inseparable unity with the rest, each of the folklore spheres has its own specifics which determined the principle of selection of the activities in the different sections. The aim was maximal unification, but it was not always possible to carry it out systematically and to the end. Here a specific feature of the living cultural tradition in the Bulgarian lands should be added. It is connected with the circumstance that in this part of the world, apart from the basic traditional population of Bulgarian Christians, lived and continue to live also representatives of different communities – both confessional and ethnic. Typical cultural facts from the traditional culture inherent to these communities have also found their place in the list.

The order of the *activities* in the list has no evaluative character: the activities enumerated *are equal as cultural values*, and the principle of ordering them combines simultaneously scientific and practical considerations, aiming clarity. The list could be further expanded with at the moment still not regis-

tered in it cultural activities and skills, provided they meet the basic criteria adopted.

Above all, the activities must be *authentic*, which presupposes that they should be performed in a natural environment and conditions and should not come from the sphere of professional and specialized art. Besides, they should be representative for the community, and would mostly have an artistic nature, which marks their uniqueness and value as cultural facts.

An important condition to include a certain activity or a skill in the list is its *vitality*: it should be practiced and transmitted to the next generations by training. Of no less importance is also the criterion for *antiqueness*, which may manifest itself in different forms: the activity may be thought of as performed “from times immemorial”; it may have been introduced as traditional from another place together with migration movements; there may be a memory of the time of its appearance among the forms of folklore culture, but this time should, however, be sufficiently distant, etc. In connection with this was adopted the internationally established principle of a minimum of fifty-year period of existence.

No matter how preserved the Bulgarian traditional folklore culture is, certain essential changes have occurred in it in the long run. One of these, for instance, is the gradual nowadays loss of the fundamental for the tradition cultural opposition men’s/women’s, connected with a series of taboos men’s activities to be fulfilled by women and vice versa. Today these strict borders are somewhat diffusive. The culture itself is realized in a different social milieu. What is meant in the list as “traditional culture” is the folklore culture both of the village and of the town or city. Special attention is given to *the activities that are part of the ritual and the festive complex*, part of the living community tradition, being sustained not only by the amateur groups.



Last but not least, we should bear in mind that in modern times we in fact observe only separate cultural phenomena, the roots of which are in the traditional folklore culture.

Under the influence of many factors related to the development of society, however, today folklore does not exist as a preserved wholesome culture. In modern times, which offer us mainly survivor cultural fragments, we restore with a high degree of truthfulness the traditional image of the old culture through reconstruction and in terms of investigation. And it is precisely here that the special value of two different types of phenomena reveals itself. On the one hand, the exceptional value of the living cultural heritage, which we are trying to preserve and to handle to the following generations; and, on the other hand, the necessity of a team with specific competences that could reconstruct to the utmost degree the pattern of traditional culture. It is precisely on the basis of such a reconstruction that is possible the competent recognition of the traditional activities and skills, so essential for the Bulgarian citizens and for the modelling of their identity.



The readers have in their hands an edition which represents the Bulgarian list of traditional activities and skills on the program *Living Human Treasures*. It is organized in six basic sections: “*Traditional Rites and Feasts*”, “*Traditional Singing and Music Playing*”, “*Traditional Dancing and Children Games*”, “*Traditional Narration*”, “*Traditional Crafts and Traditional Production of Home-made Objects or Products*”, “*Traditional Medicine*”, and includes specified essential cultural activities from the basic spheres of the traditional culture of the Bulgarian citizens, outlined on a national level, as well as with their regional variants, following the contemporary administrative division of the country. The edition also contains analytical texts written by the specialists in the different spheres of folklore culture. The texts aim, on the one hand, to reconstruct the general picture of the different traditional cultural practices in the particular field and the way in which they function. On the other hand, telling in brief about the work done on the preparation of the lists, also to portray the contemporary state of the cultural tradition, the bearers of which are the *living human treasures of Bulgaria*.