

**MINUTES**

**OF THE MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**OF THE REGIONAL CENTRE FOR SAFEGUARDING**

**OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN**

**SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE UNDER THE AUSPICES**

**OF UNESCO (2014)**



**СОФИЯ**

РЕГИОНАЛЕН  
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА ОПАЗВАНЕ  
НА НЕМАТЕРИАЛНОТО  
КУЛТУРНО НАСЛЕДСТВО  
В ЮГОИЗТОЧНА ЕВРОПА  
ПОД ЕГИДАТА НА  
ЮНЕСКО



**MINUTES**  
**of the meeting of the General Assembly of the Association**  
**REGIONAL CENTRE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF**  
**THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN**  
**SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE UNDER THE AUSPICES**  
**OF UNESCO**

**Hotel Balkan, Sofia, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014**

The following General Assembly members were represented to the meeting:

1. **Mr. Frank Proschan**, Representative of the UNESCO Director-General;
2. **Ms. Lyudmila Dimitrova, PhD**, Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Chairperson of the Executive Board, Director of the Institute for Culture at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
3. **Assoc. Prof. Ventzislav Velev, Phd**, Representative of the Ministry of Culture; member of the Executive Board, Head of “Intangible Cultural Heritage” in the Ministry of Culture;
4. **Assoc. Prof. Joanna Spassova-Dikova, D.Sc.**, Representative of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, member of the Executive Board, Scientific Secretary "Cultural-Historical Heritage and National Identity", "Man and Society";
5. **Ms. Mima Stoilova-Nikolova**, Executive Director of the Regional Centre;
6. **Ms. Roumiana Mitreva**, Secretary General of the Bulgarian National Commission for UNESCO;
7. **Prof. Stoyan Denchev**, Representative of the Association of Cultural Centres, member of the International Association of National Folklore Federations;
8. **Ms. Zhulieta Sina Harasani**, Representative of Albania;
9. **Ms. Yeranuhi Margaryan**, Representative of Armenia;
10. **Ms. Berisa Mehovic**, Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
11. **Ms. Velika Stojkova-Serafimovska**, Representative of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
12. **Acad. Sabina Ispas**, Representative of Romania;
13. **Ms. Miroslava Lukic-Krstanovic**, Representative of Serbia;
14. **Prof. Dr. Mehmet Öcal Oğuz**, Representative of Turkey;
15. **Ms. Mirela Hrovatin**, Representative of Croatia;
16. **Ms. Ivana Medenica**, Representative of Montenegro;
17. **Ms. Thekla Papantoniou**, Representative of Cyprus;
18. **Ms. Bojana Rogelj Škafar**, Representative of Slovenia;

Also in attendance were the following guests and observers:

- **Mr. Matteo Rosatti**, Representative of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe;
- **Ms. Zoi Margari**, Representative of the Hellenic Republic;
- **Ms. Maria Radakovic**, Representative of the Republic of Srpska within Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- **Mr. Kiril Arnautski**, Representative of the Sozopol Foundation;
- **Mr. Emil Pavlov**, Representative of the NS of CIOFF;
- **Ms. Mirella Decheva**, Representative of the Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS;
- **Prof. Mila Santova**, national expert on intangible cultural heritage;

The meeting was held to the following **agenda**:

1. Opening of the General Assembly meeting;
2. Election of a new Chair of the General Assembly (resp., confirmation of the current one);
3. Adoption of the agenda;
4. Admission of new members to the General Assembly;
5. Introduction of the updated line-up of the Executive Board and of the new Executive Director;
6. Discussion and adoption of the key documents of the Centre:
  - Proposals for amendments to the Statutes;
  - Annual activities report for 2013;
  - Financial statement for 2013;
  - Work plan for 2014;
  - Budget for 2014;
7. Scheduling the date for the next regular meeting of the General Assembly;
8. Any other business.

#### **ON ITEM 1 OF THE AGENDA:**

The session was opened by Ms. Lyudmila Dimitrova, Chair of the Executive Board of the Centre, who shared a few words about the Centre's operation and the challenges facing it, while expressing gratitude to the team and the Executive Director for the excellent organisation of the meeting of the GA, despite the brief time available. Mr. Frank Proschan, Representative of the Director-General of UNESCO, made an introductory address, noting the importance of category 2 centres around the world for the attainment of the UNESCO goals at a time of major challenges facing the Organisation.

#### **ON ITEM 2 OF THE AGENDA**

Ms. Dimitrova proposed that Mr. Proschan would carry on with his duties as Chairman of the General Assembly of the Centre. The proposal was put to the vote.

Of all members of the General Assembly who partook in the vote, 15 voted 'aye', none 'nay', and there were no abstentions, whereby the General Assembly

#### **DECIDED that**

Mr. Proschan was re-elected Chairman of the General Assembly of the Centre.

#### **ON AGENDA ITEM 3:**

Mr. Proschan put the agenda for the meeting to a discussion and the vote.

Of all members of the General Assembly who partook in the vote, 15 voted 'aye', none 'nay', and there were no abstentions, whereby the General Assembly

#### **DECIDED that**

the Agenda was approved and adopted.

#### **ON AGENDA ITEM 4:**

Mr. Proschan introduced the candidatures for new members of the General Assembly: Cyprus and Slovenia, as well as the Representative of the Hellenic Republic, who was attending the meeting as an observer.

Of all members of the General Assembly who partook in the vote, 15 voted ‘aye’, none ‘nay’, and there were no abstentions, whereby the General Assembly

**DECIDED that**

the nominated representatives of Cyprus and Slovenia were admitted as full members of the Centre and its General Assembly, whereby the full line-up of the General Assembly was increased to 17 members.

**ON AGENDA ITEM 5:**

Ms. Dimitrova introduced the two new members of the Executive Board: Assoc. Prof. Joanna Spassova-Dikova of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Assoc. Prof. Ventsislav Velev of the Ministry of Culture, as well as Ms. Mima Stoilova-Nikolova, the new Executive Director of the Centre. The nominations of the new members of the EB were put to the vote. After that, all participants in the meeting introduced themselves.

Of all members of the General Assembly who partook in the vote, 17 voted ‘aye’, none ‘nay’, and there were no abstentions, whereby the General Assembly

**DECIDED that**

the persons thus nominated were admitted as members of the EB.

**ON AGENDA ITEM 6:**

Under the **first sub-item** of Item 6, Mr. Proschan invited Ms. Dimitrova, as the EB Chair, to present the proposal for amendments to the Statutes of the Centre. Ms. Dimitrova stated that already the previous year, the General Assembly had made a decision to assign to the Executive Board the task to consider and prepare changes in the Statutes. She noted that during the three-year period since the inception of the Centre, its team had observed issues mostly related to the division of responsibility between its executive, supervisory and operational functions, i.e. there was a certain imbalance between the duties of the Executive Director (ED) and those of the Executive Board (EB). She underscored that the main thrust in the efforts of the EB must be directed exactly towards giving more discretionary powers to the ED, while at the same time strengthening the supervisory functions of the EB. Ms. Dimitrova clarified that the proposed amendments had been discussed and cleared with the legal teams of the three founding members: the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, which cost them significant time and effort, yet during the period of active involvement of the EB they managed to attain a suitable solution to the issue of division of duties and responsibilities between the ED and the EB. Further, Ms. Dimitrova drew the members’ attention to Arts. 28, 30, 31, and 32 of the Statutes, on which the proposed amendments were mostly focused. The proposals thus made were put to a discussion.

Prof. Stoyan Denchev pointed out that as a basic philosophy, the proposed new language was acceptable to him in its entirety, as was the way it was interwoven into the framework of the Statutes. He had, however, some technical remarks that he asked for the GA to put on record and discuss. Art. 18 (4) deals with the General Assembly (GA), as follows: ‘The General Assembly shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure. For its first meeting the procedure shall be determined by the three founding entities of the Centre (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) and the Director-General.’ Prof. Denchev’s proposal was that this paragraph would end at the first period, namely: ‘The General Assembly shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure.’ Nothing further was necessary, in his view, as the General Assembly had already conducted its first meeting.

His other proposal concerned Art. 22, which says that ‘All full members of the Centre shall have the right to one vote in the General Assembly.’ This, in his view, created an ambiguity and he proposed for the text to be changed to ‘Each full member of the Centre has the right to one vote in the General Assembly,’ and that the modal verb ‘shall’ would be dropped.

His third proposal concerned Section IX: Representation. Art. 42 therein postulates that ‘The Chairperson of the Executive Board shall represent the Centre before third parties in the domicile country and abroad,’ whereas Prof. Denchev proposed the following language: ‘The Chairperson of the Executive Board and the Executive Director shall, jointly or severally, represent the Centre before third parties in the domicile country and abroad,’ In his view, this strengthens the role of the ED, so that he/she would not be seen as a mere administrator without any representative functions. This, in his view, is normal for all such UNESCO-affiliated bodies around the world, namely for the ED to also have representative functions.

Mr. Proschan called upon the GA to focus the discussion on the proposals made by the EB and the contradiction between the proposed Statutes and the current language of Art. 42.

Ms. Roumiana Mitreva noted that the corrections initiated by Prof. Denchev were timely and appropriate, as they related to the sequence of changes being proposed, which aim at a better, clearer distinction between, and definition of, the operational and managerial functions of the ED and the supervisory functions of the EB.

Mr. Proschan noted that he had been following the development of the Regional Centre since its inception and the formulation of the Statutes and the other relevant legal documents. He added that it was a tall order reconciling UNESCO’s expectations of category 2 centres with the Bulgarian legislation governing not-for-profit organisations. The challenges are compounded by the fact that the Centre’s very status as a non-governmental organisation is quite peculiar, since it receives funding from the government, namely, from two ministries and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, making it difficult over the years to reconcile those structural and financial aspects while satisfying UNESCO’s expectations regarding the operation and good governance of the Centre. Herein lay, in Mr. Proschan’s view, the essence of the changes proposed by the EB, which constituted a major step forward towards reconciling those seemingly irreconcilable contradictions. The process of revision of the Statutes is to continue, for the Statutes will never be a hundred percent perfect document; but the point is to move forward in the right direction. As the Centre accumulates experience, as it carries on functioning, the need will crystallise for further amendments to the Statutes. It is entirely possible that the next meeting of the General Assembly will introduce further changes in it.

Mr. Proschan put the amendments to Arts. 27, 28, 31 and 32, as proposed by the EB, to the vote and they were adopted by the Assembly without amendment. Mr. Proschan put the amendments to Art. 18 (4) and Art. 22, as proposed by Prof. Denchev, to the vote and they were also adopted by the Assembly as proposed.

Also, Mr. Frank Proschan drew the Assembly’s attention to the fact that Art. 42 came in conflict with the just adopted amendment to Art. 32 (2), subpar. 4, which reads: ‘The ED shall [...] represent the Centre before third parties in Bulgaria and overseas in accordance with the powers vested in him/her.’ In that case, Art. 42 was no longer relevant and should be deleted since it stipulated that the Chair of the EB was the authority representing the Centre.

Mr. Proschan also put the deletion of Art. 42 to the vote and the amendment was adopted accordingly.

Of all members of the General Assembly who partook in the vote, 17 voted 'aye', none 'nay', and there were no abstentions, whereby the General Assembly

**DECIDED that**

the following amendments are to be made in the Statutes:

- **Art.18** is amended and complemented by creating a new item as follows: “**Art.18.** (4) (amended on the General Assembly on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014) – *The General Assembly shall adopt its own Rules of procedure.*”
- **Art.22** is amended and complemented to read as follows:  
“**Art.22** (amended on the General Assembly on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014) – *Each member of the Centre has the right to one vote in the General Assembly.*”
- in **Art.27** a new item (4) is included to read as follows:  
“**Art.27(4)** (approved on the General Assembly on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014) - *In the event that a representative of one of the permanent members is relieved ahead of term of his/her duties on grounds provided under Bulgarian law, the head of the relevant government agency shall notify in due course the heads of the remaining founding members of the Centre in order for the relevant changes to be entered into the Court Register.*”
- **Art.28** from item 4 is amended and complemented to read as follows (approved on the General Assembly on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014):  
“4. *approve the report of the activity of the Centre prepared by the Executive Director and submit it to the General Assembly for review; ;*  
5. *Prepare and submit to the General Assembly a draft budget;*  
6. *observe and consent to the performance of the Centre’s financial transactions in accordance with the approved budget;*  
7. *Determine the procedure and organize the performance of the activity of the Centre and be liable for that;*  
8. *Ensure the management and preservation of the property of the Centre;*  
9. *Control the allocation and use of the Centre’s available resources;*  
10. *Supervise the execution of decisions of the Executive Board by the Executive Director;*  
11. *Approve the organizational and management structure, the procedure for appointment and dismissal of staff, the payroll rules and other internal acts of the Centre;*  
12. *Approve the rules for appointment and dismissal of the Executive director;*  
13. *Appoint liquidators upon dissolution of the Centre, unless for cases of insolvency;*  
14. *Decide on the participation in other organizations;*  
15. *Decide on any matters which do not fall within the scope of powers of another body according to the law or the Statutes.*  
16. *Propose to the General Assembly to accept or exclude members.*”
- **Art.31(2)** is amended and complemented to read as follows (approved on the General Assembly on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014):

**“Art.31(2)** *The Chairperson of the Executive Board shall:*

- 1. organize and preside over the meetings of the Executive Board;*
- 2. Appoint and dismiss the administrative and technical staff of the Centre in accordance with Art. 28, item 11;*
- 3. Appoint and dismiss the Executive director in accordance with Art. 28, item 12;*
- 4. sign the financial documents of the Centre, guided by the decisions as per Art. 19, item 13, and Art. 28, item 6;”*

- **Art.32** is amended to read as follows (approved on the General Assembly on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014):

**“Art.32 (1)** *The Executive Director shall be appointed in compliance with the rules as per art. 28, item 12.*

**(2)** *The Executive Director shall:*

- 1. Organize the execution of the decisions of the Executive Board;*
- 2. carry out the day-to-day management of the Centre; conclude agreements where necessary for the operation of the Centre, etc.; manage the administrative and technical staff of the Centre;*
- 3. ensure the proper stewardship and protection of the property of the Centre;*
- 4. represent the Centre before third parties in Bulgaria and overseas in accordance with the powers vested in him/her;*
- 5. report without delay to the Executive Board about any significant events or circumstances as may affect the operation of the Centre;*
- 6. report his/her performance to the Executive Board and General Assembly at least once every year;*
- 7. prepare, on behalf of the Centre, an annual report of the activity that, following approval by the Executive Board, is to be submitted to the General Assembly for review;*
- 8. Make proposals to the Executive Board for appointment and dismissal of associates of the Centre.*
- 9. Prepare the annual work plan and submit it for approval by the Executive Board and General Assembly.”*

- **Section IX. REPRESENTATION** is deleted.

- **Section X. DISSOLUTION AND LIQUIDATION** is amended in **Section IX. DISSOLUTION AND LIQUIDATION** with Art.42 and Art.43 to read as follows:

**“Art.42** (approved on the General Assembly on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014) – *The Centre shall be dissolved as legal entity:*

- 1. by resolution of the General Assembly;*
- 2. upon the pronouncement of its bankruptcy;*
- 3. by ruling of the competent court in the cases as stipulated in the Not-for-Profit Legal Entities Act.”*

**“Art.43** (approved on the General Assembly on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014) – *(1) During the process of dissolution of the Centre as legal entity liquidation shall be carried out unless in cases of transformation.*

*(2) The liquidation shall be done by the Executive Board or by appointed liquidator(s) who shall carry out the actions as stipulated in the Commercial Act regarding the liquidation of the legal entity, cashing down its property and satisfaction of the creditors of the Centre.*

*(3) The property remaining after the satisfaction of the creditors shall be granted to a not-for-profit legal entity designated to perform activity in public benefit having the same or similar objectives, determined by the General Assembly.”*

- **Section XI. CLOSING PROVISIONS** with **art.45** and **art.46** are amended in **Section X. CLOSING PROVISIONS** with **art.44** and **art.45**.

Prof. Denchev sought to reopen the debate, explaining his proposal for the Chair of the EB and the ED to be authorised to represent, jointly or severally, the Centre before third parties in Bulgaria and overseas, i.e. to allow both of these authorities to perform representative functions before third parties. Mr. Proschan added that it was normal practice for other Category 2 centres to be represented by their Executive Directors, which was in line with the proposal of the EB, therefore he had moved for Art. 42 to be deleted.

The Albanian representative added that the adoption of a revised Art. 32 would enhance the visibility of the centre, whereas the ED, as the designated representative of the Centre, would follow all instructions and implement all decisions of the EB. Mr. Proschan clarified that the ED should be authorized to designate a representative to represent the Centre on his/her behalf wherever he/she was unavailable to represent the Centre him/herself. The question is, who should be regarded as the ‘face’ of the Centre from a legal perspective; who should be the person authorised to represent the Centre and speak on its behalf; the EB had proposed that such power be vested in the ED. The ED must be empowered by the Centre to represent the Centre as a legal entity, to be the person to whom any and all legal documents, notifications, international correspondence and the like must be addressed.

Ms. Mitreva emphasized the principle of subordination by pointing out that the supreme management body is still the EB. In this context, it would be expected for the Chair of the EB to need no special authorisation in order to represent the Centre, thus the proposal made by Prof. Denchev presented a compromise in its part referring to ‘jointly or severally’ as a function of the type of event or social function at which the Centre is to be represented to other third parties. For example, it is the Secretary-General who performs the day-to-day operational management of the National UNESCO Commission, and where a higher level of representation is needed, there is the Chair of the National UNESCO Commission. Similarly, the EB Chair may retain his/her representative functions, as the ED may continue to play a principal role in the day-to-day management, for which the latter needs sufficient authority. Given the fact that the proposed amendments strengthen the supervisory functions of the EB in respect of the day-to-day running of the Centre, there would be no internal contradiction or reason why the article in question would include the additional words ‘jointly or severally’.

Mr. Proschan noted that 7 months had passed in discussions and negotiations between the three founding members of the EB, with the direct involvement of their legal counsel, until the informed decision was made to vest the representative powers in the ED; we must assume that they did not make their recommendation without careful consideration. Mr. Proschan expressed his view that this function should not be shared between several people, as this

would make it devoid of meaning. If it turns out that this creates legal hurdles or challenges, then the EB could address a new proposal at the next GA meeting. He reiterated that the meeting was deemed to have adopted the amendments to the Statutes as proposed by the EB, together with the minor technical changes suggested by Prof. Denchev. Also, the meeting approved the deletion of Art. 42 for coming in conflict with Art. 32, as amended.

Mr. Proschan noted that these amendments lay a very solid groundwork for the new Director of the Centre, who will be tasked with implementing and overseeing its operation, while also clarifying the role of the EB and the administrative bodies and setting the ground rules and determining the relationship between the EB and the ED with much greater clarity. At the preliminary meeting with the EB it had been mentioned that the EB should also adopt its rules of procedure, which would clarify its inner workings while helping focus the expectations of others. The more clarity there is, the less the leeway for misunderstanding of the various functions and obligations.

Ms. Mitreva pointed out a remaining contradiction, in that the way the text had been before the change proposed by Prof. Denchev, namely, ‘The Chairperson of the Executive Board shall represent the Centre before third parties in the domicile country and abroad’, contained a more drastic contradiction than the language proposed by Prof. Denchev, since Art. 32 (4) stipulates that the ED would represent the Centre before third parties in Bulgaria and overseas. Prof. Denchev’s proposal aimed to remove the contradiction by sharing the representative duties between the Chairperson and the Executive Director.

Mr. Proschan reminded the participants that the Assembly’s decision was in line with the proposal made by the EB in Art. 32 (2), subpar. 4, namely, for the ED to represent the Centre before third parties in Bulgaria and overseas in accordance with the powers vested in him/her, which rendered Art. 42 irrelevant and therefore it had to be deleted by the GA.

Ms. Mitreva asked who, in the circumstances, would represent the Centre before third parties between the current and the subsequent meetings of the GA.

To that Mr. Proschan replied that according to Art. 32 (4), the ED will represent the Centre before any third parties, whether in Bulgaria or overseas, which was also the decision adopted by the GA.

Ms. Dimitrova added that she saw no contradiction between the new proposal, regarding an amendment to Art. 32 (4), and the suggestion made by Prof. Denchev for some additional text to be included in the clause of Art. 42. She also shared her impression that the decision to devise rules and an election procedure had also been a difficult one to arrive at between the three institutions in the majority, considering how much this would increase the responsibilities of the ED. The efforts of the EB had been focused on finding the basis for dialogue between the three institutions. It is for that reason that the powers of the EB include the language that the EB is responsible for devising the rules of election, whereas the powers of the EB Chair contain the authority to subsequently make appointments in accordance with the rules adopted jointly by all three institutions. There is still some work to be done regarding the rules of election. It is necessary for the ED to have the relevant expertise, i.e. in addition to his/her managerial functions he/she must have professional competences in the field of intangible cultural heritage, or if not there, at least in the area of cultural heritage in the broad sense.

Ms. Mitreva noted that the decision to drop Art. 42 altogether was not a decision made by the EB. Art. 42 does appear in the text proposed by the EB, the GA then deleted it, but this may require input by the other members of the EB and in case there is a contradiction, the ultimate decision may be postponed for the next GA.

Assoc. Prof. Ventzislav Velev spoke in support of what was said by the previous speakers. He pointed out that it is the usual practice with Bulgarian public entities to elect two persons as representatives of the entity, i.e. that is similar to the proposal made for the ED and the Chair of the EB to represent the Centre. He suggested that Art. 42 be retained in its version prior the proposal made by Prof. Denchev.

Assoc. Prof. Joanna Spassova added that she likewise did not see any serious contradiction between the new Art. 32 (4) and Art. 42, because on some occasions there must be a measure of interchangeability, but this is something that should really be subjected to a discussion and consultations, as to what may ensue from having an entire article deleted from the Statutes.

Mr. Frank Proschan noted that if further changes became necessary to rectify any errors, these should already be referred to the next GA. He then proceeded to the next item of the agenda.

Under the **second sub-item** of Item 6, Mr. Frank Proschan invited Ms. Dimitrova, as the EB Chair, to present the annual activities report of the Sofia Regional Centre for 2013. Having presented the activities report, Ms. Dimitrova opened the floor for members of the General Assembly to make their comments or remarks on it.

The first to take the floor was Mr. Proschan, who reminded the Assembly that all members of the GA had received in advance the detailed report and had had time to peruse it thoroughly. Mr. Proschan congratulated the Executive Board and the entire team of the Centre on their substantial accomplishments in the past 14 months of the Centre's operation, noting that despite the absence of an Executive Director for much of that time, they had proven beyond doubt their dedication and commitment to the all-round success of the Sofia Regional Centre. Then he shared with the members of the General Assembly some of his thoughts about the excellent organisation of the meeting in Sozopol of category 2 centres active in the field of the intangible cultural heritage, hosted by the Sofia Regional Centre, as well as the useful opportunity that meeting provided for all of the centres to share experience while outlining the key obstacles they had been facing and overcoming. In this context Mr. Proschan noted that some items on the work plan adopted by the preceding General Assembly of the Sofia Regional Centre in 2013 had not been implemented, on account of the difficult conditions in which the EB and the team of the Sofia Regional Centre had to operate. And yet, Mr. Proschan said he hoped that the members of the General Assembly and the national partners could show understanding for the omissions and should congratulate the Centre for a job well done.

Next, the Serbian representative congratulated the Sofia Regional Centre on its ambitious and varied activity and the good coordination with other centres in the region.

The Romanian representative commented on the activities report that had been circulated in advance as evidence of the fact that the Sofia Regional Centre regarded its goals and objectives with all due seriousness and enjoys good prospects for future development. Also, Acad. Ispas said she was appreciative of the diversity of activities performed by the Centre: international relations, giving wider publicity to the specificities of local activities, as well as

the high quality of the information supplied and the execution of the printed materials. She shared her very positive impressions with the work reported and expressed her hopes for proper cooperation in establishing an effective system of transmitting that heritage to the next generations in the specific regions of South-Eastern Europe.

The Croatian representative joined the previous speakers in their positive comments on the activities report and the performance of the Centre. Ms. Hrovatin expressed the view that the activities report bears evidence of the high level of professionalism and great dedication of the Centre's entire team. She expressed her gratitude for the shared information regarding the issues and challenges that had been facing the Centre in the past year. In her view, it is essential for such information to be communicated to the superior authorities with the relevant ministries and in future, things can only get better.

Ms. Dimitrova expressed her gratitude for the positive appreciation on the part of the members of the General Assembly, while giving thanks to the team of the Sofia Regional Centre for their exceptional commitment and responsibility in fulfilment of the tasks of the Centre during the past year.

The Turkish representative also congratulated the Sofia Regional Centre on its work in safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage as reported. Prof. Oğuz voiced an opinion that the Centre should strive to encourage the other countries in the region as well as others that have not as yet joined in the Centre's activities: Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, to do so.

In this context, Mr. Proschan replied that in her visits to the countries listed above, the UNESCO Director-General has invariably urged them to take the opportunity and join in the work of the Sofia Regional Centre, so that in the coming years it is quite possible for the membership and geographic scope of the Centre to expand.

The representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia thanked the Centre for confiding the difficulties it had been faced with in the previous year, as this explained some of the misunderstandings that occurred during the year. Then Ms. Stojkova-Serafimovska told in brief about the concert held in October 2013 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Following the comments and remarks, the activities report was put to the vote.

Of all members of the General Assembly who partook in the vote, 17 voted 'aye', none 'nay', and there were no abstentions, whereby the General Assembly

**DECIDED that**

The annual activities report for 2013 was approved.

Under the **third sub-item** of Item 6, Mr. Assen Senyov presented the financial statement for 2013 by making the clarification that the subsidy provided had been largely sufficient to cover the activities scheduled for 2013.

Following the presentation of the financial statement, it was put to the vote.

Of all members of the General Assembly who partook in the vote, 17 voted 'aye', none 'nay', and there were no abstentions, whereby the General Assembly

**DECIDED that**

The annual financial statement for 2013 was approved.

Under the **fourth sub-item** of Item 6, Mr. Proschan drew the GA members' attention to the work plan for 2014, which had also been circulated in advance. He noted that UNESCO is highly appreciative of the attention the Executive Board has given to the plan in order to best formulate the activities listed in it. It was important to note, in Mr. Proschan's view, that the plan had been developed during a time when the Centre did not yet have an appointed director. It is for that reason that the plan is not overly ambitious, setting realistic goals, but can in future be developed more thoroughly.

Ms. Mirena Staneva presented the work plan for 2014 in terms of the key priorities and principles of operation, the planned activities and expected results and how these fit into the strategic priorities of UNESCO. Special attention was given to two project proposals with which the Centre intends to apply for sponsorship to the Creative Europe Programme and the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation.

Mr. Proschan noted that from the perspective of UNESCO, this plan can be seen as a model of good practice. One of the conditions precedent that the Centre must fulfil is to demonstrate how it contributes to the implementation of UNESCO's programme and activities. It is necessary for the Centre to prove in four years' time that it deserves a renewed category 2 status by contributing effectively to the attainment of these goals. This does not in any way mean that there are no other interesting, important and exciting things that can be done in the area of ICH. This is an enormous field of activity, the needs are enormous, there are lots of opportunities and possibilities for effective implementation of various activities, all of which reflecting different aspects of that work. UNESCO, however, elects to focus on several crystal-clear priorities, such as strengthening national capacities, thus enabling individual countries to safeguard their heritage over the long run. All of the seven category 2 centres can assist UNESCO in one aspect or another. The Centre's mandate is synchronised with the priorities that UNESCO has adopted in recent years: it has a capacity-building function and a function in strengthening international cooperation in the region. The plan is very well structured and is an attempt to establish a closer link with, and focus the efforts for attaining the results that UNESCO aspires for; so in the centre UNESCO has a partner.

Mr. Proschan proposed for the discussion to be structured in two parts. One part should deal with the key activities of the Centre that will be funded by the Bulgarian national budget. And then, the second part should discuss the two extrabudgetary forms of financing. These two parts of the discussion should thus be kept separate, although they are both part of a common set of objectives that have been considered in concert. In the third part of the discussion the GA should identify opportunities that the Centre has not yet recognised. At last year's meeting the GA noted that it was advisable to have a more synchronised process, involving consultations with member states, during the preparation of the work plan for the current year, and that the input of the member states at an early stage was important. Given the challenges facing the Centre, it had not been possible this cycle to conduct those consultations as planned, but now we have an opportunity to consolidate our experience and build our own capacity as a Regional Centre, which is one of the first activities included in the plan. A capacity-building seminar would enable the participants to accumulate experience, to present capacity-building activities carried out in Bulgaria. Mr. Proschan pointed out that UNESCO believes that such a seminar would be important and that it is advisable and useful to exchange experience in building capacity in one's own territory. In his view, it would be appropriate, in the process of consolidating our efforts, for us to develop a sense of self-

confidence, a sense of being in control of the processes and being able to organise our work properly. The other activities have a much broader international focus, enabling regional cooperation between the member states and the Centre.

The Albanian representative added to that the work carried out in 2013 constitutes a solid foundation for future effort. Ms. Harasani suggested that, since the Centre already had an established system of training and sharing experience, such training seminars could be delivered in other member states, such as Albania. This does not require a lot of funds and can easily be organised. Also, the sheer number of initiatives and activities being implemented is quite impressive. Thus, for example, Albania organises festivals, concerts and other activities with the participation of ensembles and individual singers, and other artists from foreign countries. Should the Centre be willing to support such initiatives, this should guarantee that the region would be well represented. This would be a good investment, ensuring proper visibility for the Centre in the region at large. Ms. Harasani cited an example of how such activities, both traditional and rich in historical context, are supported in Albania. Also, in view of the limited resources available, the Centre could consider deploying online resources that would use up little funds, yet could reach a large number of people of different age groups. This could be organised within the framework of the region, once the web page becomes consolidated, which is the No. 1 priority. Such an approach could harness the efforts of people, making them feel that their contribution matters, enabling them to share it and make it public knowledge. It is a brilliant idea for the centre to try to become a coordinating body for such efforts. Ms. Harasani noted the existence of a very good initiative within the framework of the Council of Europe: the Cultural Corridors, adding that the Centre could try to emulate that with its very own ICH Corridors. Regarding the idea to apply for sponsorship to Creative Europe, she believes that this was a very good idea that needs to be pursued further. With respect to social networks, there are a number of links to such networks where efforts could be aimed. The Albanian representative shared her thoughts that it would be in the best interest of the EB to become a more regional body, to include members from other countries, to be more internationalised and with better regional representation.

Mr. Proschan added that these were all interesting suggestions, some of which could be included in the work plan for the coming year.

The Turkish representative congratulated the centre on what it had achieved thus far, and on the programme it proposed. Prof. Öcal Oğuz drew the delegates' attention to the lists of the Convention and the fact that this year, only two multinational dossiers are in existence. In his view, the Regional Centre could support the member states in preparing multinational projects that would transcend their national borders. His other proposal was for the Centre to aspire to encourage practitioners in safeguarding the ICH, thus ensuring the future of their children. Thus, for example, both formal and informal tuition could be included in the educational curricula. Turkey supports, and has an interest in, the Black Sea Trust project, and insists that all countries of the Black Sea Region should be invited to cooperate in any project of the Regional Centre.

The Romanian representative shared with the delegates that she had observed a change in the peculiarities of local arts and crafts in relation to the ICH, which could be described as their commercialisation, their becoming kitsch, which does not in any way contribute towards the promotion and safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, and this is a trend that must be eradicated completely. The local arts and crafts products being marketed today have nothing in common with the traditional ones. Tradition must be safeguarded, and we must perhaps be

more discerning in monitoring the connection between traditional arts and crafts and the products being marketed at present.

The Croatian representative supported the work plan, describing it as a major step forward as it includes some of the ideas generated at the last meeting of the GA. Ms. Hrovatin pointed out that in addition to the aspect of giving a product good publicity, there is also the need to popularise the practitioners of ICH, i.e. to place them in the focus of our attention.

The Serbian representative likewise supported the work plan, calling it ambitious and noting that it comprises a lot of issues and themes. The three main pillars of that plan, in her view, are cooperation, collaboration and exchange of information. Cooperation amounts to projects relying on partnership, something quite usual in our projects; to seminars and other events in which assorted stakeholders and institutions participate. Interaction is more important, however, and not just in the system of training and organising seminars with the participation of representatives of the government authorities and experts; it is also essential to have more and more seminars involving stakeholders and institutions. Next time we must find a way to involve such stakeholders, creative artists and institutions and to organise a seminar targeted at them. Social networks are instrumental in the exchange of information. Another problem that has been identified is, what exactly is the definition of ICH. The key words used to define that are community, yet it is always a matter of national patrimony, of member states, state commissions, i.e. the humanistic principle of the Convention changes in the process of its implementation, which is a matter of methodology.

The representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia congratulated the Centre on its work plan. Ms. Stojkova-Serafimovska suggested that, when we talk about networking, or about a plan to improve the website and other online activities, we should also consider setting up a network of ICH practitioners, rather than the communities, that would carry information targeted at both the community and the relevant practitioners. Thus, for example, during the past year the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had participated in two multinational projects and once they were prepared and implemented, Turkey had invited ensembles from Macedonia to participate in a festival, which is a good thing. The idea is that not only experts should be in a position to create networks but the practitioners themselves should be able to network among themselves and share their knowledge. Such information can be uploaded on the website, and local authorities should join in as they are the ones most responsible for the components of the ICH. Ms. Stojkova-Serafimovska said it would be nice to have a platform linking the local communities, especially the ICH practitioners themselves, rather than just experts. This would be beneficial for the region as it is clear that we have many things in common. So when we share the knowledge of how a particular element of ICH is practised and safeguarded in Bulgaria, this could be of help to some Macedonian community that is willing to preserve that same element and will thus have a positive example ready and available.

Prof. Mila Santova commented that all the considerations presented thus far had been very fruitful in that they opened up interesting and important perspectives of seeing things. She reminded the audience that without cooperation among the countries in the region, within the framework of the Centre, in an aspiration by the participating parties to apply with common projects and actively partake in their implementation, nothing would happen, regrettably. The Centre would be extremely happy if one of the parties were to demonstrate a concrete, genuine interest in joining one project or another, in order for such projects to be prepared in the form required by the donor programmes and thus become eligible for funding.

Prof. Santova noted that the focus on practitioners was very marked in the project presented by Ms. Staneva, regarding local policies, because it was clear to anyone to what extent the local cultural status quo is important and necessary for the perpetuation of ICH. The context of all of these important aspects that were mentioned is evident, to one extent or another, in the project proposals. It should be noted that they are, on the one hand, synchronised with the policies of UNESCO, while on the other, they also take into consideration the specificities of the donor organisation in order for the project to be acceptable to the latter. Prof. Santova shared with the delegates that she had strong reservations about the option of setting up active practitioner networks, as this by itself would jeopardise the preservation of ICH; it would be preferable, in her view, to conserve the mechanism of transmission of traditional skills in order for other characteristics of such ICH elements to be safeguarded in parallel with the mechanisms through which the relevant knowledge and skills have been preserved. This does not in any way imply that there should be no databases or that they were not important. If the members of the GA showed an interest in certain project proposals, it would be advisable for them to state their interest in a visible manner, in order for the Centre to prepare the relevant projects for the application to donor organisations.

Mr. Proschan clarified in response to a question raised that the mention of Africa in the third column of the work plan was related to the performance indicators of UNESCO, not the Centre. In this case, the point was to demonstrate that the Centre functions within the limits stipulated in the agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and UNESCO, and in accordance with its Statutes. In his view, some of the ideas proposed here in the Assembly are very interesting yet fail to comply with the Centre's mandate as agreed with UNESCO and, respectively, with the Statutes. Thus, for instance, the publicity of cultural exchange or the exchange of various ensembles does not belong in the mission of the Centre. This may be an effective tool of international cooperation, but it does not bear any relevance to the Centre's mission. The same goes for facilitating multinational nominations to the Convention's lists, of which there is no mention in the Agreement. The important thing is for members of the GA to be as familiar as possible with the goals and functions of the Centre as defined already. Another aspect of the Turkish proposal, concerning formal and informal education, is very much part of the mission of the Centre. There is no disagreement on that. Mr. Proschan reminded the audience that it would be advisable to proceed with care in other things, too, so that we would not merely talk about some interesting yet abstract activities but focus on things that are in synch with the mission of the Centre. Thus, for instance, the Black Sea Trust project, which focuses on policies, should not necessarily encompass all ICH-related policies as a whole, but may concentrate on the four member states forming part of the project group and may help develop interesting activities designed to strengthen cooperation on policies between those four countries in the arts and crafts sphere, to build upon the suggestion of the Romanian representative. Thus the needs identified by the member states will match the capacities identified by the Centre. There are interesting proposals regarding the use of social networks, there are pros and cons in the various ways of promoting direct communication of establishing networks amongst practitioners, as some people may have their reservations; there are also positive benefits in the long run. It is necessary for both extrabudgetary activities to be discussed by the GA, in order for a principle to be established and to demonstrate that they correspond to the work plan of the Centre. As we discussed with the EB, whenever we consider a work plan we should pay attention to the fact that there could be other options that arise the Centre is not yet aware of, and that those options should not be allowed to go to waste. On the other hand, strictly speaking, if the GA has not approved a certain activity it would be very hard for the Executive Director to make a proposal at a later point without having cleared it with the GA first. In this context, after a discussion with the

EB, Mr. Proschan proposed that the GA should adopt a decision to delegate to the EB the authority to approve other project proposals and extrabudgetary initiatives as may emerge, as long as they correspond to mission and main goals of the Centre, so that no such favourable opportunities are missed.

Prof. Denchev said he supported the work plan while proposing an additional activity to the attention of the EB and the ED. The proposed activity corresponded, in his view, to one of the principles of the Centre's operation in 2014, namely, to promote the involvement of young people, and would cost little to implement. In his capacity as the Chancellor of the University of Library Studies and Information Technology, Prof. Denchev said that the ULSIT has joint projects and good working relationships with two universities, in Nis and Edirne, making it possible to realise a project in the framework of the local policies for a local heritage initiative whereby all three universities would work together under the auspices of the Regional centre, e.g. by organising a round table that would promote the interrelation of local culture in the context of ICH, while showcasing the participation of young people in the study of ICH. The proposed activity would raise the awareness of ICH among young people.

Ms. Dimitrova added that at the preliminary meeting of the EB, they had discussed with Mr. Proschan the possibility for the Centre to support projects of other organisations, as there were some exciting proposals coming from Croatia and other countries. Also, that issue had also been discussed at the GA meeting in 2013, and an agreement had been reached that what is needed are rules and criteria as to how such partnership would come into being. The Regional Centre undertakes to develop such rules in order to create the conditions under which an organisation, or a member state, can propose projects. Thus each member state would be clear from the very beginning about the requirements for its participation, the expected involvement of the RC, the expected outcomes, and the manner in which that would fit into the implementation of the goals of the Regional Centre. The Regional Centre commits itself to discuss, in the coming 6 months, and adopt the rules of partnership according to which all member states could submit projects that would be included in the 2015 work plan.

Prof. Denchev made the clarification that his proposal concerned the work plan for 2014, while the rules in question were being developed, and that it was possible, if the projects proposed had merit, to have them implemented under the auspices of the Centre.

Mr. Proschan added that actually, the discussion concerned two different categories of activities. On the one hand, there are those activities that the Centre has been planning, those that appear in its work plan and must be paid for from the principal source of funding; then on the other, there are those that could potentially be supported from extrabudgetary sources of funding taking advantage of opportunities that could emerge in the future. The question of delegating authority to the EB to approve extrabudgetary activities is only one side of the issue. The other side relates to identifying patrons, co-sponsors, partners and collaborators for activities that could be implemented at national or regional level. Last year, the Centre undertook to try and develop a clear-cut procedure to enable the member states to propose that kind of cooperation. Time constraints did not allow the Centre to formulate standards and criteria for evaluation of the types of partnerships and patronage that can be supported and in what circumstances. It is necessary to develop such standards so that neither the ED nor the EB would need to improvise in making their decisions or adopt a piece-meal approach in deciding whether to support one activity or another, which could place the Centre in awkward situations. This will ensure that the process is transparent and involves clear-cut criteria and procedures, while the member states will be aware of the opportunities for cooperation and

patronage available to them, as well as the possibilities to apply, and how this can be brought to the attention of the Centre. The EB reiterated its commitment to develop detailed guidelines, instructions, and procedures, that would allow the member states to make the best use of the process in the future.

The Croatian representative added, in relation to the proposed extrabudgetary initiatives, especially the intercultural calendar, that it was necessary for the member states to receive an invitation for participation in a timely fashion, as at administrative level such an undertaking required coordination and approval. Therefore Ms. Hrovatin suggested that the invitation should specifically be addressed to those responsible for the relevant line of work.

Mr. Proschan noted that this was an important proposal and asked the parties interested in participating in either of the two projects, on local policies and the cultural calendar, or both, should keep close contact with the Centre if they are to know to whom they should address their application and what would be the time frame for that, in order to avoid forcing the addressee to respond and act urgently. The idea was also floated to send a circular email message and to invite potentially interested parties to respond in due course and get in touch with the Centre team in relation to those two activities or others as may be of interest to them.

After the discussion, the action plan for 2014 was put to the vote.

Of all members of the General Assembly who partook in the vote, 17 voted ‘aye’, none ‘nay’, and there were no abstentions, whereby the General Assembly

**DECIDED that**

The action plan for 2014 was approved.

- The General Assembly delegates to the Executive Board the powers to take advantage of the opportunities for extrabudgetary funding, as long as they are in line with the functions and goals of the centre as prescribed in its Statutes.
- The Executive Board has 6 months to develop a procedure, with the relevant standards and criteria, for supporting partnerships on projects proposed by the member states.

Under the **fifth sub-item** of Item 6, Mr. Frank Proschan gave the floor to Mr. Assen Senyov to present the budget of the Sofia Regional Centre for 2014. Mr. Senyov explained that he and the Chair of the EB had adopted a somewhat ‘out-of-the-box’ approach to the 2014 budget, by basing their calculations not on the budget but on the subsidy, which remains unchanged every year. He explained that the expenditures under budgetary items 1, 2, 3 & 6, namely, payroll, office maintenance, equipment, communications, office supplies, and funds for the organisation of the General Assembly meeting, are clearer and more predictable, whereas the allocations for organising seminars, training exercises and other events utilise funds based on the so-called preliminary forecast, the budgetary positions there remain open as it is impossible to make a clear and final advance estimate on account of the specificities of each and every event. Also, sources of additional subsidies will be sought through applying for certain programmes that the Centre will attempt to win, thus increasing the level of funding for certain activities.

Once presented, the budget was put to the vote.

Of all members of the General Assembly who partook in the vote, 17 voted ‘aye’, none ‘nay’, and there were no abstentions, whereby the General Assembly

**DECIDED that**

The budget for 2014 was adopted.

**ON AGENDA ITEM 7:**

Mr. Proschan put to a discussion and the vote the date for convening the next scheduled meeting of the General Assembly. Ms. Dimitrova suggested the end of March-early April of next year. Her proposal took into consideration the accounting policy and the time necessary for preparing the work plan. It was seconded by Ms. Spassova, and Ms. Stoilova confirmed her view that the time was opportune.

The proposal was put to the vote.

Of all members of the General Assembly who partook in the vote, 17 voted 'aye', none 'nay', and there were no abstentions, whereby the General Assembly

**DECIDED that**

The next regular meeting of the General Assembly is scheduled for the beginning of April, 2014.

**ON AGENDA ITEM 8**

The representative of Cyprus announced that his country was organising, on May 15<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, the 8<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting of experts in the field of ICH. Ms. Papantoniou added that the host country had already sent out invitations to the relevant ministries of the member states. The meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss various issues of education, of the transmission of ICH and the implementation of the 2003 Convention in the states of the region. She took the opportunity to thank BRESCE for its support. Ms. Papantoniou also noted that the Regional Centre would play an active role in capacity building, in sharing expertise, skills and experience, and said she looked forward to seeing all experts in Cyprus next week.

Prof. Santova reminded the audience that at last year's GA meeting as well as at the expert meeting the discussion had focused on the kind of subject matter that would be the focus of the next meeting of the network, and said she believed that the Cypriot organisers would take into consideration the suggestions thus made, by focusing on the issues of ICH transmission.

After all the comments were made, Mr. Proschan thanked and congratulated the EB and, first and foremost, Ms. Dimitrova who, in his words, had worked selflessly as the EB Chair in the intervening year. He wished all the best to the new Executive Director, Ms. Stoilova, who will be taking over the Centre and give it the best of her efforts. Mr. Proschan expressed his gratitude with the teamwork, logistics, organisation, the impressive work plan and said he believed that Ms. Stoilova has very favourable opportunities to mobilise the staff in fulfilment of the important tasks that the EB had adopted as its work plan.

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Proschan thanked the participants for their attendance and active involvement in the work of the GA. He voiced his hope that the Centre would continue to promote partnership in the region and would involve more member states in its activity.

Having exhausted its agenda, the meeting was adjourned.

**Chairman of the Meeting:**

**Record taker:**

*Frank Proschan*

*Mirena Staneva*