



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

## Concept Note on Traditional Sports and Games

# Traditional Sports and Games, challenge for the future

Safeguarding and promoting **Traditional Sport and Games (TSG)** requires developing knowledge, sharing information and raising awareness on its intangible heritage. Traditional sports and games have, for decades, faced a paradox: there is a renewed interest in TSG at national, regional and international levels but this is not concordant with its apparent marginalization. The increased professionalization and commercialization of sports, the corresponding shift in values that they encompass, the global preponderance of certain sporting activities and the neglect of physical education systems are important challenges contrasting with the *status quo* on the development of traditional sports and games. With this in mind, **UNESCO's work focuses on advocacy aiming to safeguard, promote and develop TSG, and to ensure that they form an integral part of national and international cultural development.**

## BACKGROUND

### Work undertaken to promote and safeguard Traditional Sports and Games

#### TSG Definition:

1. A Collective Consultation on the promotion of Traditional Sports and Games (TSG) was held in Tehran (Islamic Republic of Iran) from 16 to 20 January 2009, during which experts notably developed the following **definitional framework**:
2. *“Traditional sport and games are motor activities of leisure and recreation which can have a ritual character. They are part of the universal heritage diversity. They are practiced in an individual or collective manner, deriving from regional or local identity; they are based on rules accepted by a group that organizes competitive or non-competitive activities. Traditional sport and games dispose of a popular character in their practice and in their*

*organization, yet if turned into sport tend to be uniform and institutionalized. The practice of traditional and games promotes global health.”*

### **Progressive Institutionalization and agenda setting:**

3. Following the Third International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS III), which was held at Punta del Este, Uruguay, in 1999, the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPE) was entrusted with monitoring the implementation of the main conclusions of the Conference.
4. The *Declaration of Punta del Este* of MINEPS, aims at promoting the safeguarding and development of traditional sports and games notably through the elaboration of a worldwide list of traditional games and sports and providing governmental support to help enhance intercultural learning and understanding (*Annex I: MINEPS III Final Report*):

*Orators focused “on traditional games and sports, as a cultural heritage to be safeguarded so that physical activities could be practiced in many countries without the need for costly infrastructures.” They provide that “UNESCO should draw up a list of those traditional games and sports in recognition of their considerable cultural value for humanity.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“The Ministers support a policy of preserving and enhancing traditional and indigenous sports based on the cultural heritage of regions and nations, including a “worldwide list of traditional games and sports”, and of encouraging the holding of regional and world festivals.”<sup>2</sup>*

*“Request CIGEPE, with the help of the relevant regional and national bodies and networks, and the support of NGOs, associations and institutions concerned to prepare a worldwide list of traditional games and sports, and invites the Director-General of UNESCO, with the cooperation of existing and future regional and national bodies and networks as well as specialists on the subject, to draw up a world traditional games and sports policy, leading eventually to an international charter on traditional games and sports, to be followed by a mid-term and long-term plan of action.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“The Ministers support a policy of preservation and promotion of traditional sports and games and the organization of festivals of traditional sports and games at national, regional and international levels as a substantial contribution to intercultural learning, mutual tolerance and understanding among nations, to the benefit of a culture of peace.”<sup>4</sup>*

5. To that end, CIGEPE set up several working groups, among which was a group entrusted with the enhancement and protection of traditional games and sports. In this context, CIGEPE and its Permanent Consultative Council (PCC) furthered the elaboration of an international charter of traditional games and sports. A group of experts from CIGEPE, led by Germany and Bangladesh, under the supervision of the CIGEPE working group on this item, was created and the results of their work provided the backbone of the draft international charter of traditional games and sports, whose successive versions were the subject of regional consultations by the various Vice-Chairpersons of CIGEPE and the members of its PCC. The establishment of the CIGEPE working group was mentioned in the CIGEPE reports submitted to the General Conference at its 31<sup>st</sup> session, in documents

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<sup>1</sup> MINEPS III, Final Report, *General Report*, par. 28

<sup>2</sup> MINEPS III, Final Report, Annex I, *Declaration of Punta del Este*, par. 8

<sup>3</sup> MINEPS III, Final Report, Annex II, Commission II, *Promotion and preservation of traditional games in each country*, par.2

<sup>4</sup> MINEPS III, Final Report, Annex II, Commission III, *Promotion of sport and physical education*, par. 5.1

31 C/REP/20, 32 C/REP/19 and 33 C/REP/19.

6. This working group met in Hanover and Duderstadt, Germany, from 16 to 19 June 2000, where the following points were addressed (*Annex II: Report of CIGEPS Working Group on TSG*):

*A project for a “UNESCO Charter on Traditional Sports and Games was discussed and a preliminary draft of the Preamble was formulated”;*

*“World Heritage List of Traditional Sports and Games was a subject that came under serious discussion and debate as for the formalities”;*

*“[Regarding] National, Regional and Sub-regional TSG Festivals, it was agreed upon to gather contacts of competent institutions and persons, get the national and local governments and their sports administrators to be eagerly involved in the identification, preparing provincial and National TSG Festivals.”<sup>5</sup>*

7. Subsequently, the Round Table of Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for Physical Education and Sport, held at the Organization’s Headquarters in January 2003, stressed that it was important to “revitalize the practice of traditional sports and games, a key expression of cultural identities, and promote their interaction with modern sports”.
8. In 2003, under the collaboration between UNESCO and Prof. Liponski, the **World Sports Encyclopedia** was published in three languages, English, French and Polish as a “worldwide list of traditional games and sports” as advocated in the Declaration of Punta del Este.<sup>6</sup>
9. The same year, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted, at its 32<sup>nd</sup> session, the **Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage**. As part of the domains safeguarded by the Convention, there is increasing advocacy and mobilization for traditional games and sports from communities worldwide.
10. **The draft international charter of traditional games and sports**, drawn up by CIGEPS, was submitted to the MINEPS IV Conference, held in Athens, Greece in December 2004. (*Annex III, Decision 172EX/7; Annex IV: 33 C/59: Preliminary report on the desirability and scope of an International Charter on Traditional Games and Sports*). The draft received significant attention from participants, both in commissions and in the plenary – which adopted the recommendations submitted by the commissions, including, *inter alia*, “the submission of the draft charter for traditional games and sports to the next UNESCO General Conference”.
11. The General Conference of UNESCO adopted, at its 33<sup>rd</sup> session (2005), **Resolution 33 C/R21 on the preliminary report on the desirability and scope of an international charter on traditional games and sports**:

***Resolution 21. Preliminary report on the desirability and scope of an international charter on traditional games and sports<sup>1</sup>***

*The General Conference,*

*Recalling the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, the 2003*

<sup>5</sup> CIGEPS Working Group on Traditional Sports and Games Report

<sup>6</sup> MINEPS III, Final Report, *General Report*, par. 28 and

MINEPS III, Final Report, Annex I, *Declaration of Punta del Este*, par. 8

*Round Table of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport and the provisions of the Statutes of the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS), Considering that traditional games and sports form a significant part of the cultural heritage which should be protected and promoted, particularly with a view to improving the quality of physical education and sport in education systems,*

*Recognizing that traditional games and sports form a significant part of the cultural heritage, in particular, part of the intangible cultural heritage of societies,*

*Acknowledging the results and recommendations of the Fourth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS IV),*

*Taking note of 172 EX/Decision 6,*

- 1. Expresses its gratitude to CIGEPS for its initiative with regard to the elaboration of the draft charter, attached for information as Annex II to document 33 C/59;*
- 2. Invites Member States to find appropriate mechanisms for sharing information about traditional games and sports and about their efforts to preserve and protect them.*

12. In 2006 UNESCO convened a **Collective Consultation** aimed at creating an **International Platform** for the promotion and development of traditional sports and games. This platform was envisaged as a “**formal umbrella organization specifically concerned with TSG**” that could become an “*International Council on TSG*”<sup>7</sup>. The meeting aimed to build momentum on the outcomes of MINEPS IV (held in Athens in 2004) and Resolution 33 C/R.21 (*Annex V: Collective Consultation aimed at creating an international Platform for the promotion and development of traditional sports and games, Reference Document*);

13. Organized by UNESCO, in partnership with the Physical Education Organization (PEO) of Iran, the **second Collective Consultation**, focused on the establishment of a **UNESCO Advisory Committee**, was held in Tehran (2009). This advisory committee was meant to provide a platform for the exchange of knowledge and capacity-building on TSG, and to function as an umbrella body, advising UNESCO in order to achieve a common vision on the safeguard and promotion of TSG. The provisional bureau was expected to include a President ( Rif Gayanov - Russian Federation), a Vice-President ( Mohammed Hadi Hesam - Islamic Republic of Iran) and a Secretary-General (Khalil Ahmed Khan - Pakistan). The bureau was meant to be composed of 12 international experts working closely with UNESCO. The Committee was expected to be endorsed by the Collective Consultation. This Collective Consultation also facilitated the following conclusions:

- UNESCO representatives invited all participants to join UNESCO’s Network on TSG;
- The Islamic Republic of Iran offered to host the International Martial Arts Festival;
- The experts proposed an official definition of traditional sports and games.

14. Due to a lack of financial resources, the work on TSG was suspended after that.

15. Unanimously adopted at the end of the Conference MINEPS V (2013), the **Declaration of Berlin** underlined that TSG offer opportunities for increased participation in and

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<sup>7</sup> Report of the Collective Consultation aimed at creating an international Platform for the promotion and development of traditional sports and games

through sport (*Annex VI: Declaration of Berlin*):

*Underlining that traditional sports and games, as part of intangible heritage and as an expression of the cultural diversity of our societies, offer opportunities for increased participation in and through sport;*<sup>8</sup>

*We, the Ministers, are committed to provide opportunities for traditional sport and games as a means [?] for wider inclusion.*<sup>9</sup>

16. Adopted in 1978 by Resolution 20C/1/5.4/2 of the General Conference, amended in 1991 and revised in 2015 by Resolution 38C/43, the **International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport** promotes the safeguarding and the promotion of traditional sports and games:

*Acknowledging that cultural diversity in physical education, physical activity and sport forms part of humanity's intangible heritage and includes physical play, recreation, dance, organized, casual, competitive, traditional and indigenous sports and games;*<sup>10</sup>

*The diversity of physical education, physical activity and sport is a basic feature of their value and appeal. Traditional and indigenous games, dances and sports, also in their modern and emerging forms, express the world's rich cultural heritage and must be protected and promoted.*<sup>11</sup>

## STRATEGIC APPROACH

### A threefold approach

The strategic approach focuses on **three objectives**:

1. elaboration of **Policy Guidelines** on Traditional Sports and Games essentially based on the provisions of the draft Charter of 2005;
2. establishment of an **International Platform** on Traditional Sports and Games;
3. updating of the *World Sports Encyclopedia* and the development of an **Online Worldwide Encyclopaedia**.

The work will be carried out in **three phases**:

1. **Phase I – Preparatory Phase** (July-November 2017)
2. **Phase II – Consolidation Phase** (December 2017- November 2018);
3. **Phase III – Deepening Phase** (December 2018 - ∞).

### Implementation Process: Phase I, Phase II, Phase III

#### **Phase I – Preparatory Phase: Establishment of an *ad hoc* Advisory Committee and four *ad hoc* Working Groups (07/17 – 12/17)**

The process will officially start with the **third Collective Consultation on TSG** organized at UNESCO HQ, on 6 and 7 July 2017.

<sup>8</sup> MINEPS V, Declaration of Berlin, Annex, Specific Commission I, par. 1.5

<sup>9</sup> MINEPS V, Declaration of Berlin, Annex, Specific Commission I, par. 1.18

<sup>10</sup> International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, Preamble, Art. 5

<sup>11</sup> International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, Art.1.5

The Collective Consultation will namely examine the opportunity to:

1. elaborate Policy Guidelines on TSG;
2. establish an International Platform on TSG;
3. create an Online Encyclopaedia on TSG.

Participants will also discuss the establishment of **an *ad hoc* Advisory Committee** during the Collective Consultation. This committee will be furtherly finalized and established during a fourth Collective Consultation to be organized by UNESCO HQ (end of 2017). This *ad hoc* Advisory Committee shall advise UNESCO on implementing the sub-mentioned tasks as a **temporary and transitional entity** during the **transitional period** going through **Phase I and Phase II**.

Once established, the *ad hoc* Advisory Committee shall entrust four working groups with the following tasks:

1. Ad hoc working group n°1 entrusted of the elaboration of the Policy Guidelines;
2. Ad hoc working group n°2 entrusted of the International Platform;
3. Ad hoc working group n°3 entrusted of the elaboration of the Online Encyclopaedia;
4. Ad hoc working group n°4 entrusted of the management of resources and communication.

## **Phase II – Consolidation Phase: Monitoring of the activities led under the *ad hoc* Advisory Committee and the four *ad hoc* Working Groups (12/17 – 11/18)**

Once the Preparatory Phase of the programme has been achieved with the establishment of the *ad hoc* Advisory Committee and the four *ad hoc* Working Groups, the program shall focus on the monitoring and the implementation of the following activities:

### **▪ Ad Hoc Working Group 1**

- Objective: Elaboration of the **Policy Guidelines**

Instead of re-drafting an International Charter on TSG, the elaboration of a policy framework in the form of **Policy Guidelines**, on the basis of the draft Charter's provisions and scope (*Decision 172 EX/7; 172 EX/61 Part II; 172 EX/62; 33C/59 Annex II*) shall be deemed more appropriate, as it would be more flexible and less demanding for the concerned parties. It would make it possible to restart the harmonization of practices and public policies on TSG with lower institutional and financial costs.

### **▪ Ad Hoc Working Group 2**

- Objective: Establishment of the **International Platform**

The **International Platform** shall ensure the safeguarding and the promotion of TSG, aiming at supporting and assisting governments, NGOs, as well as sport movement at the national, regional or international levels through harmonization, coordination of efforts, guidance, assistance and advice.

The **International Platform on TSG** shall be composed as an **International Umbrella** of various stakeholders from the following fields:

- international organizations;
- governments and ministries;
- sport federations and sport movement;
- experts and researchers;

### ▪ **Ad Hoc Working Group 3**

- Objective: Elaboration of the **Online Encyclopaedia**

The interactive and online Encyclopaedia will disseminate research, collected data and related knowledge on TSG, promote TSG and mobilize resources. Partially piloted by **UNESCO Beijing Office**, this project will feed into the global framework of the **Online Worldwide Encyclopaedia on TSG**.

### ▪ **Ad Hoc Working Group 4**

- Objective: Managing **resources** and **communication**

Monitoring and implementing the roll-out of the activities conducted by the *ad hoc* Advisory Committee and the four *ad hoc* Working Groups will require the mobilization of human and financial resources this working group will be managing. It will establish a fundraising strategy and assess the needs in human resources.

Moreover, this committee will be entrusted of elaborating a communication strategy to ensure the promotion and dissemination of the outcomes and progress accomplished.

## **Phase III – Deepening Phase: Establishment of the Executive Advisory Committee and the four sub committees (12/8 - ∞)**

Once the *ad hoc* Advisory Committee and the four *ad hoc* Working Groups have completed the following objectives:

1. Elaboration of the Policy Guidelines;
2. Establishment of the International Platform;
3. Creation of the Online Encyclopaedia;
4. Mobilization of financial and human resources.

An **Executive Advisory Committee** and **four sub committees** shall be established in order to conduct the activities of the International Platform. This latter, indeed, will be entrusted of ensuring the roll-out of TSG related activities.

The Executive Advisory Committee shall entrust four sub committees as follows:

1. **Sub Committee n°1**: Secretariat of the International Platform;
2. **Sub Committee n°2** entrusted of the roll-out of TSG related activities:
  - a. Organisation and promotion of cultural and sport events and sports competitions;
  - b. Organisation of trainees and workshops.
3. **Sub Committee n°3** entrusted of updating the Online Encyclopaedia and developing a system of grants and peer review to enhance knowledge sharing and research;
4. **Sub Committee n°4** entrusted of the management of resources and communication.