

## SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND FORMAL EDUCATION: COMPARISON OF POLICIES BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND FLANDERS (BELGIUM)\*

**Somut Olmayan Kültürel Mirasın Korunması ve Örgün Eğitim: Türkiye ve Flanders (Belçika)'taki Politikaların Karşılaştırılması**

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### ABSTRACT

The 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage introduces a set of interrelated measures among which education is an intersection point. Since education is crucial to the transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), the States Parties have focused their attention on connecting their activities to the education sector in recent years, with formal education making up the greater part of the efforts. Belgium and Türkiye both ratified the Convention in 2006 and education ministries in both countries or parts in it seem to have concentrated on secondary education (12-18 years old) to raise awareness of the meaning and importance of safeguarding ICH. The purpose of this paper is to compare and evaluate the Flemish and Turkish formal education systems at the secondary education level regarding the implementation of the Convention. Therefore, this qualitative research is based on the investigation of the policy texts and curriculum (mainly in Dutch and Turkish) that are explicitly or implicitly connected to the presence of ICH in the education systems of both cases. From this perspective, it takes the ratification of the Convention by both countries as its point of departure and presents three levels of discussion. First, in order to comprehend the present context wherein potential connections between ICH and education are established, the overall policy of Flanders and Türkiye is briefly outlined. Second, the discussion is directed to the implications these policy choices might raise. In the final section, the frame of discussion is further narrowed to the level of curricular choices. It can be stated that the analysis of the documents revolved around the implications of centrality (Türkiye) and relative autonomy (Flanders) to mobilize ICH in education. While in Türkiye, the course Folk Culture in secondary education was initiated on the national level as a direct response to the Convention, in Flanders, this safeguarding perspective did not seem to have permeated educational policy processes. However, the Flemish Government has tolerated an open curriculum framework that seems beneficial for the inclusion of relevant content on a regional or local level. Considering achieving connections with its specific teaching context, in both cases, attention has to be drawn to the role of teacher agency. It can be stated that teachers are in need of a balance between sufficient support (capacity building, instruction manuals, didactic suggestions, explicit references to ICH) and the autonomy to execute (open curricula, professional freedom).

### Keywords

Formal education, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO, Türkiye, Flanders.

### ÖZ

UNESCO Somut Olmayan Kültürel Mirasın Korunması Sözleşmesi, kesişim noktasında eğitimin bulunduğu birtakım koruma tedbirlerini içerir. Eğitim, somut olmayan kültürel miras (SOKÜM)'ün aktarımında çok önemli olduğundan, Taraf Devletler çoğunluğunu örgün eğitimin oluşturduğu eğitim sektörü faaliyetlerine odaklanmıştır. Belçika ve Türkiye 2006 yılında Sözleşme'ye taraf olmuş ve her iki ülkede de eğitim bakanlıkları bu mirasa yönelik farkındalığı artırmak için ilk ve orta eğitim kademesine (12-18 yaş) yoğunlaşmıştır. Bu makalenin amacı, Flaman ve Türk örgün eğitim sistemlerini ilk ve orta öğretim düzeyinde Sözleşme'nin uygulanması temelinde karşılaştırmak ve yorumlamaktır. Dolayısıyla bu nitel çalışma, açık veya örtülü biçimde bu mirasla ilişkili Flamanca ve Türkçe politika belgeleri ve müfredatın incelenmesine dayanmaktadır. Makale, bu çerçevede, anılan iki ülkede Sözleşme'nin kabul edilmiş olmasını hareket noktası olarak almakta

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ve tartışmayı üç düzlemde sunmaktadır. İlk olarak SOKÜM ile eğitim arasında bağlantı kurulmasını sağlayan mevcut bağlamın kavranması amacıyla, Flanders (Belçika) bölgesi ile Türkiye'nin politikaları ana hatlarıyla anlatılmaktadır. İkinci aşamada, politika tercihlerinin doğurabileceği veya işaret ettiği sorunlara değinilmektedir. Son düzlemde ise tartışmanın çerçevesi müfredata ilişkin tercihlerin değerlendirilmesiyle sınırlandırılmaktadır. Belgelerin analizi, SOKÜM'ün okullara entegrasyonu bakımından eğitimde merkezîyetçilik (Türkiye) ve göreceli otonomi (Flanders)'nin olası sonuçlarına odaklıdır. Türkiye'de Sözleşme'ye yönelik taahhütlerin parçası olarak orta okulda Halk Kültürü dersi açılırken Flanders bölgesindeki eğitim politikalarında bu türden bir yaklaşıma rastlanmamıştır. Bununla birlikte, Flaman Hükümeti bölgesel veya yerel düzeyde bu mirasla ilişkili içeriklerin eğitime entegrasyonuna hizmet edebilecek ucu açık bir müfredat çerçevesine toleranslı yaklaşmıştır. Kendine özgü öğretim bağlamlarında başarı için her iki ülkede de öğretmenlerin, çevreleriyle kurdukları ilişkinin niteliğine (teacher agency) dikkat çekilmelidir. Makale, öğretmenlerin yeterli destek (kapasite geliştirme, kılavuz kitaplar, didaktik öneriler, Sözleşme'nin esas alınması) ile dersin tasarımı ve idaresinde otonomi arasında bir dengeye ihtiyaç duyduklarını iddia etmektedir.

#### **Anahtar Kelimeler**

Örgün eğitim, somut olmayan kültürel mirasın korunması, UNESCO, Türkiye, Flanders.

### **Introduction**

The 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter the Convention) introduces a set of interrelated measures among which education is an intersection point. Consider for instance articles 2.2 and 14 of the Convention and paragraph 107 of its Operational Directives. Since education is crucial to the transmission of intangible cultural heritage (hereinafter ICH), the States Parties have focused their attention on connecting their activities to the education sector in recent years,<sup>1</sup> with formal education making up the greater part of the efforts, as concluded from the in-depth study of the periodic reports by UNESCO's Living Heritage Entity.<sup>2</sup> In tandem with these developments, the Overall Results Framework<sup>3</sup> was approved in 2018 to enable the monitoring of the impacts of the Convention on national or regional levels. This framework specifies the thematic area "Transmission and Education" to increase the relevance of formal education systems, making it more important than ever to keep track of the extent to which schools are aligned with the Convention's objectives. On the other hand, the fact that awareness-raising activities to which education is inevitably linked had been criticized as being "one-off, rather isolated events" (Torggler and Sediakina-Rivière 2013: 40). Now that it is 20 years since the adoption of the Convention, it is high time to examine current implementations and question the compatibility of theory, policy and practice in order to mobilize the potential of formal education. While there are a number of studies examining ICH and education on a national or regional level (Aral 2020, 2022; Borges and Botelho 2008; Kutlu 2009, 2013; Kasapoğlu Akyol 2015, 2016, 2017; Van Doorselaere 2021b; Labrador 2022), comparative studies elaborating on States Parties' policies and practices in formal education are lacking.

Addressing the need to spotlight this neglected aspect, the comparison of how ICH is represented in formal education in Flanders (Belgium) and Türkiye can serve to present a relevant case and encourage more research of comparative nature. Belgium and Türkiye both ratified the Convention in 2006 and the education ministries in Türkiye and Flanders have made policies that prioritise secondary education (12-18 years old) to raise awareness of the meaning and importance of safeguarding ICH. Therefore, such basic similarities form the departure point pertinent to the purpose of the paper.

Belgium, on the one hand, has a rather complex state structure. Due to a gradual process of cultural emancipation, the country adopted several state reforms during the past five decades, which eventually led to its federal state structure in the present (Witte,

Craeybeckx and Meynen 2009). There are three regions, which are connected with their territory - even literally the ground or soil (hence also the competence for monuments, landscapes and archaeology), and three communities, which are related to the people living within that territory (hence the competence for moveable heritage, intangible heritage, digital heritage). Subsequently, the Flemish Community is legally responsible for culture and education in both the Dutch-language area as in the bilingual area Brussels-Capital, although to make it even more complicated since the last state reformation, this entity is responsible for immovable and also intangible heritage. Each of the communities or regions has its own legislative body and government. However, in Flanders, both were immediately merged into one entity, giving rise to one Parliament and one Government, although the difference is still represented in different ministerial entities. So under one Flemish government, there is an administration for immovable heritage (and a separate minister) and another department for intangible and moveable cultural heritage (under yet another minister for culture).

Nevertheless, in Belgium, freedom of education is a constitutional right since 1831. This gave rise to several tensions or so called "school wars" throughout the 19th and 20th century regarding the right to organize education (Valcke et al. 2023). An agreement in 1959 made an end to these conflicts, resulting in the formation of two educational networks: official education (organized by the state, provinces, cities or municipalities); and free education (established by private persons or organizations). In 1989, educational policy was fully transferred to the Flemish Community. Therefore, under a minister of education, the development of a curriculum framework and attainment targets that describe what students need to learn, is the legal responsibility of the Flemish Administration, which serves as the general public body of civil servants. Transferring policy outcomes to schools, teachers, and students is the right of the educational networks. They play an intermediate role as they have the right to combine or expand attainment targets according to their educational identity and transfer them into school courses of their choice (Valcke et al. 2023). In June 2022, and as a strong example of this autonomy, the attainment targets previously adopted by the Flemish Parliament were annulled by the Constitutional Court (2022). The Constitutional Court followed the complaint of the Catholic and Steiner education umbrella organizations that these standards can be seen as a threat to their constitutional right to educational freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Türkiye, on the other hand, has a centralized government system that is prevalent in various phases of decision-making processes and administrative operations. Accordingly, top-down decisions made by the Ministry of National Education frame the content, approaches, and priorities in the Turkish formal education system since the 1920s. Notwithstanding that some consultation processes with teachers, students, and wider education networks were carried out in recent years for the renewal of the curriculum,<sup>5</sup> the Ministry is the only competent body authorizing, coordinating, and monitoring the preparation of course books, curriculum formation, and teacher training on a national level, making sure that all plans and actions correspond to the Basic Law of National Education and learning outcomes of courses. Given the policy environment and lack of educational networks with an intermediary role and excluding the personal efforts of those who make up the minority, it is very difficult for teachers and school administrations to have a certain amount of autonomy.

### **Methodology**

The qualitative research is based on the investigation of the policy texts and curriculum (mainly in Dutch and Turkish) that are explicitly or implicitly connected to the

presence of ICH in the secondary education systems of Türkiye and Flanders. As this is the first attempt of its kind as comparative research on the topic and considering the adequate number of sources, the paper builds on document analysis as the main method of investigation. The Flemish and Turkish systems will be evaluated on a comparative basis with the intention of revealing the pros and cons of both experiences and drawing conclusions to influence policymakers and enhance the functions and visibility of ICH in schools.

On the side of Türkiye, the analysis will primarily draw on documents and decisions from the national level. Here, the curriculum of the course Folk Culture and some policy papers (latest decisions taken at Turkish National Education Council, Turkish National Cultural Council, National Education Quality Framework, and Turkish Education Vision for 2023) are the main research materials. In contrast, the Flanders' case focus will mainly be on the documents on the regional ICH policy, the Flemish Heritage Decree, and the texts and framework developed during the last five years in the context of the Flemish Curriculum Reform. The analysis will be limited to relevant policy discussed and adopted on the macro level, and in more general terms on the meso level, as including documents from the variety of educational networks would make the comparison needlessly complex. However, the periodic reports submitted by both countries to UNESCO in 2021 will be one of the common grounds for the investigation. The paper examines these sources in a way to reveal differences and similarities in policy and implementations in the two countries. The methodology adopted also enables to discuss how ICH-related topics are interpreted in order to see the extent to which national and regional policies are aligned with the Convention.

This paper takes the ratification of the Convention by both countries in 2006 as its point of departure. In what follows, three levels of discussion are presented. First, the overall policy of Flanders and Türkiye is briefly outlined. Centrally, this section will reflect on the question of how ICH-related elements are interpreted in formal education. Second, the discussion is directed to the implications these policy choices might raise. Here, the comparison scrutinizes the inherent differences between the Flemish (relative autonomy in a Community in part of the country, and in that arm's length structures) and Turkish (centrality) educational context, and draws attention to what this entails in terms of flexibility and adaptability of local or regional content for ICH education in schools. Moreover, the discussion will be extended and connected to the current state of affairs regarding (the development of) a canon of the historical and cultural heritage of Flanders, which will be launched in 2023. In the final section, the frame of discussion is further narrowed to the level of curricular choices.

### **Overall Policy**

The ICH field in Flanders has grown organically from the bottom-up. The first periodic report of Belgium in 2012 described these pre-existing dynamics in the field and stressed the role of a network depending on civil society organizations.<sup>6</sup> At the turn of the last century, policy changes altered subfields such as that of popular culture to the paradigm of cultural heritage (Jacobs 2004). After ratification in 2006, the Flemish Community pursued a policy of increasing visibility of ICH via participating in the international instruments of the Convention. The Cultural Heritage Decree of 2008 officially sanctioned the ICH concept in Flemish policy, which bound the various bottom-up organizations to the same legal framework and paved the way for the development of a long-term vision to ground future policy on (Agentschap Kunsten en Erfgoed, 2012). The launch of the vision paper (Schauvliege 2010) consolidated the good practi-

ces in the field and marked the start of a policy based on the principles of the Convention, adapted to the specific Flemish context. Besides a conceptual outlining and a delineation of the Flemish Community's different roles, the paper draws attention to relevant policy areas in the second part. In light of the aim of transmitting ICH, the link with education is touched upon. Although the vision paper does not elaborate on this connection further, it does explicitly stress the considerable duty of the Flemish Community to include ICH in the educational curriculum (Schauvliege 2010: 22). Moreover, the Flemish Community initiated an update of the vision paper (Department of Culture, Youth and Media 2022). On the one hand, this took shape during a participative process with relevant stakeholders while, on the other hand, the periodic report that Belgium had to submit by the end of 2021 provided significant input.

The policy areas of culture and education have separate ministers, each with their own administration. Therefore, educational policy is mostly developed separately, leading to a disconnect from cultural policy in general or ICH in particular. This is also continued on the level of the educational networks when developing curricula, causing a diversity in vision and approach (Van Doorselaere 2021b). However, promising steps were taken according to the periodic report of 2021, such as the establishment of general connections between both policy areas. It also claims that progress can be made concerning the specific inclusion of ICH into primary, secondary, and higher education (Department of Culture, Youth and Media 2022: 27-28, 41). From this perspective, a reform focusing on secondary education took shape in 2019. Following the preceding separate development process of the first grade (12-14 years old) and the second and third grades (14-18 years old), the enrollment takes place in two phases. The new curriculum and attainment targets meant for the first grade entered into force on 1 September 2019. The second grade followed two years later, while the old framework faces a progressive phasing out that will be completed by 2025. The reform is part of a new general framework consisting of sixteen key competences and is roughly grounded on and extended from the eight key competences for lifelong learning adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (2006).

On the other hand, following Türkiye's ratification in 2006, the ICH Experts Committee was established at the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO. In addition, as the competent body of the Convention, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism established the Branch Office for ICH in 2007, which evolved into the Department of Turkish ICH later. Notwithstanding that Ankara Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum was founded in 2013 (one of the first museums in the world dedicated to ICH at that time), the number of UNESCO-accredited NGOs increased and many national meetings took place to discuss the current safeguarding status of inscribed elements on ICH lists, it should be noted that no policy document on ICH could be developed out of the experience.

Despite the absence of a policy paper, there are remarkable developments, some of which are related to ICH and education. Two ad-hoc working groups on ICH and education were established by the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO from 2018 to 2022, which focused on ICH mapping in the curriculum of primary, secondary, and higher education. On the other hand, to promote research, the Higher Education Council started the 100/2000 Research Fellowship Program aimed at Ph.D. students in 2016, based on the identification of one hundred priority research areas, one of which is ICH. In parallel with these developments, the UNESCO Chair on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Formal and Informal Education was established at the Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli

University in 2017, the first and only UNESCO Chair on ICH in Türkiye. On a wider level, while the reference in the final report of the National Cultural Council to ICH in terms of overall awareness, inventory-making, and the idea to establish research centers (Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı 2017: 8, 31) is remarkable, the absence of reference to and lack of awareness of ICH in the decisions of the National Education Council (2021) seems to reveal the incoordination between the two ministries with regard to their approach to ICH. Such problems do indicate that National Commissions for UNESCO can play an important role to facilitate coordination and dialogue between the ministries and increase the coherency of policy and practice.

Türkiye's latest periodic report submitted in 2021 highlights a wide range of initiatives in schools and points up the variety of courses and programs that are related to ICH in various levels of formal education. Shaped by the report format that is, just like the Belgian report, aligned with the Overall Results Framework, the document introduces potential connections between ICH and education. Nevertheless, it also manifests the nonsystematic, isolated, and dispersed characteristics of actions in the education sector. Thus, the report is a strong indicator of the unavailable links between ICH and education policy. Above all else, it is a timely reminder of the need to form a policy on ICH with particular attention to the ways to connect ICH to the diversity of courses, programs, and more importantly, teacher training.

### **Policy Choices**

Besides grounding the curriculum reform in the guidelines of the European Union (2006), the Flemish Government incorporated other texts to serve as reference frameworks. However, when screening the general guidance notes that have been elaborated as an addition to the 16 key competencies (Flemish Administration), the Convention is not mentioned as one of these reference frameworks. Van Doorselaere (2021b) found that the Convention has not yet permeated policy processes in education. As an example of this, he points to the fact that relevant stakeholders, such as FARO and Workshop Intangible Heritage (WIE), which are UNESCO-accredited NGOs, were not consulted during the development process of relevant key competences.<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, the framework of key competences seems to offer possibilities in light of the Convention's objectives. For each key competence, the Flemish Government developed a set of attainment targets that are formulated in a broad sense. As an example, for the first grade, no explicit references to heritage in general are present (Van Doorselaere 2021a). Here, heritage seems incorporated into the generic concept of "artistic and cultural expressions". Nevertheless, when screening the more recent curriculum framework for the second and third grade (Flemish Parliament 2021), ICH explicitly comes to the fore. Although the use of "artistic and cultural expressions" is continued, ICH is introduced and mentioned in a more explicit way, mostly in the key competence on historical consciousness. However, interestingly, for the three stages of secondary education, the framework refrains from imposing specific ICH-related content. This can be seen as beneficial, since regional or local content and the possible connections with its specific context, evidently, need not be included for Flanders as a whole, but have to be worked out at a lower level.

One of the reasons for this and tendency toward a broad formulation is to be found in the intermediate role of the educational networks in Flanders, and their right to adapt the attainment targets. On the meso level, therefore, curricula are developed that may contain substantive differences for each educational network. Moreover, on the micro level, schools and teachers possess a certain autonomy as well. Schools are free to gro-

und their operation in a self-chosen pedagogical vision, which is called a “pedagogical project”, while teachers can draw on their professional freedom to choose suitable methods to achieve the set goals (Valcke et al. 2023). All this, added to the premise of an open curriculum framework, implies that the responsibility of integrating ICH is shifted toward the role of schools and teachers.

Next to this bottom-up approach regarding the selection of heritage in general or ICH in particular, the development of a Flemish Canon was announced. In 2019, the then-newly formed Flemish Government revealed its plans to introduce a canon of the historical and cultural heritage (Flemish Government 2019). In the assignment letter from the minister of education (Canon van Vlaanderen 2020), the concept of the Dutch model is referred to as an example, which means the selected history and culture that defines the region of Flanders will be presented through the use of “thematic windows”. Although in the Netherlands fifty of these windows were developed, the integration of ICH in the canon was limited.<sup>8</sup> As the Flemish canon is intended for education, the responsible minister designated a historian from the Catholic University of Leuven as chair, after which he, in his turn, could assemble experts to form a scientific committee that will be in charge of the selection process. Although the committee is pluralistic and stressed its autonomy, the (concept of the) canon has sparked up debates which led relevant stakeholders, such as the historians that elaborated the key competence on historical consciousness for history education to avoid the plans (Jacobs, Verreyke and Zhang 2022). Although the launch of the Flemish Canon is scheduled for the first part of 2023, its intentions seem to give rise to a field of tension in history education concerning the selection process of heritage. On the one hand, a bottom-up approach emerges that holds on to the inherent features of the newly conceived curriculum framework and provides teachers with sufficient autonomy while, on the other hand, a top-down selection will be made and suggested for use in schools.

In contrast, as a consequence of the centralized administration, the basic formation, execution, and monitoring of education in Türkiye are based on top-down decisions of the Ministry of National Education. The “centrality” as an integral characteristic of the formal education structure makes it difficult to integrate context-specific ICH into schools since the curriculum, course books and learning outcomes of courses are uniform and executed in a similar manner nationwide. For example, according to *Millî Eğitim Temel Kanunu* [The Fundamental Law of National Education] (1973), standardization of educational materials and instruments is among duties of the Ministry (Article 53) and the Ministry is responsible for the execution, supervision, and control of education and training service on behalf of the State (Article 56). With that being said, the decisions of *Millî Eğitim Şurası* [National Education Council] in 1996 and 2006<sup>9</sup> to “start working on legislation to enhance the contribution and participation of local authorities” and “encourage non-governmental organizations and local administrations to provide support to schools and students in need” are rather about financial, technical, and social aspects of formal education. In this sense, these decisions are not directly about decreasing the predominance of centralized administration in a way that could work for the integration of ICH into schools.

On the other hand, Development Plans brought out every five years since the 1960s corroborate the ongoing operativeness of centralization in education. It is an indication of this that the only part addressing the intention to increase schools’ authority and responsibility in the previous plan (2014-2018) is limited to budget making (Ministry of Development 2014: 32). Nevertheless, the idea in the latest version (2019-2023) to

create a School Development Model in which active participation of all stakeholders is emphasized should be noted as a recent consideration (Presidency of Strategy and Budget 2019: 141). In addition, without any reference to education, the current development plan mentions the use of knowledge and values consisting of traditional knowledge and folklore for research and development purposes, strengthening its relationship with intellectual property rights, support for handicrafts, the transmission of knowledge related to traditional production and preservation, and also traditional sports (2019: 95, 113, 166 and 182).

Regarding the Turkish National Education Council, the latest decisions mention “common cultural heritage” as one of the aspects of teacher training (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı 2021: 11), although its connection to ICH went unnoticed. On the other hand, the latest Turkish National Cultural Council can be said to better correspond to the objectives of the Convention as its final decisions mention raising awareness of children of ICH and Living Human Treasures and strengthening the connection between ICH and courses (Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı 2017: 7). Moreover, having referred to children in transmission of ICH, the document is also in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4), UNESCO's policy of prioritizing children and youth in education. Last but not least, it should be noted that the part titled “Knowledge, skills and attitudes related to competencies and skills to be attained by students with the renewed curriculum” in the Turkish Qualifications Framework which was designed in line with the European Qualifications Framework includes “Cultural Awareness and Expression” as one of the key qualifications, with “awareness of local, national and international cultural heritage” being one of its components. Nevertheless, the strategic plan of the Ministry of National Education makes no reference to any form of cultural heritage, except for the importance of educating students who are conscious of “national culture” (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı 2019: 38). So the overall view of these documents indicates that ICH is not identified as an important component of education policies in Türkiye.

### **Curricular Choices**

In Flanders, the curriculum reform is based on 16 key competences and their associated attainment targets. On this level, no school courses are outlined. It is the responsibility of the educational networks on the meso level to transfer and cluster relevant attainment targets and create courses or project-oriented trajectories for their schools. Subsequently, relevant attainment targets for ICH are spread across the set of key competences.

In general, the framework offers possibilities to include heritage as a means or as a goal. For instance, on the one hand, ICH could be used to demonstrate math-specific content or skills. However, due to its high potential cross-curricular employability throughout the framework, this approach of integrating ICH seems difficult to chart. On the other hand, achieving knowledge of or skills in ICH could be a goal in itself. Nevertheless, as no specific ICH content is imposed in the framework, these goals need to be connected to related elements. From this second perspective, there are a number of key competences that warrant consideration when reflecting on the inclusion of ICH in light of the Convention's objectives. For example, cultural awareness and expression, historical consciousness, citizenship and living together, sustainability, or language competences (Dutch or foreign), could accommodate substantive connections with ICH. Therefore, in theory, the curriculum framework, seems to meet the Convention's objectives by facilitating the awareness raising and, to a lesser extent, the safeguarding of ICH.



Nevertheless, there are some disadvantages of a more practical nature to the situation in Flanders as well. Firstly, the openness of the curriculum framework can also be seen as a drawback. As the attainment targets remain generic and no conditions are set on where or how to include heritage, they can be achieved without taking ICH into account. Secondly, the responsibility of considering ICH is shifted toward the educational networks, schools, and teachers. Although the curriculum framework implicitly provides support, almost no explicit references to ICH are present, which means the familiarity of curriculum designers, schools, or teachers with heritage in general or ICH in particular plays an important role. These personal and professional factors (e.g., interest, training, knowledge of the school context) refer to the concept of (teacher) agency (Priestley, Biesta and Robinson 2015). Moreover, this approach seems confined to teaching “about” ICH. That means teaching and learning “with” ICH to integrate this heritage into school subjects that are seemingly not connected to this heritage goes unnoticed, as emphasized again in one of the latest publications (UNESCO, ICHCAP and APCEIU 2022: 27). In other words, the existing approach in curricula does not help to see interrelated and intersectional links between ICH and the Sustainable Development Goals.

On the other hand, although the Turkish Qualifications Framework suggests a potential to link courses with ICH, no systematic plans or actions have been adopted to connect ICH to various content and teaching methods. Although the content of textbooks and curricula of some particular courses such as “Turkish” and “Social Studies” contain implicit information and links to topics that are related to ICH, it is obvious that the potential can not be realized. In addition, although the section titled “Culture and Heritage” in the curriculum of Social Studies explains some elements (Nevruz, Hıdırellez and traditional craftsmanship of Çini-making) that are also inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, it is striking that no mention is made of the Convention and UNESCO lists. Besides, the course rather highlights tangible heritage elements, natural world heritage, and historical development of artifacts. On the other hand, the curriculum of the Turkish course, at the least, speaks of “intergenerational transmission” of ICH and emphasizes the role of “human agency” while mentioning Living Human Treasures. So these courses stand out as two relatively more pertinent examples with links to ICH. As to the overall situation with ICH and formal education in Türkiye, it is important to emphasize the drawback, similar to Flanders, that the approach is limited to teaching “about” ICH.

Apart from these courses and in contrast to the experience in Flanders, Türkiye preferred to assign a course dedicated to ICH in secondary education. Folk Culture, an elective course offered in 5th-8th grades at state schools, is the primary experience in terms of ICH integration into schools in Türkiye.<sup>10</sup> The course was introduced by the Ministry of National Education right after Türkiye ratified the Convention in 2006. It aims to bring students into contact with folk culture and familiarise them with the Convention (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı 2018: 7). Having incorporated folklorists as program consultants, the course stands out as a distinguishing initiative as it was independently designed to contribute to safeguard ICH through schools on a national level. Attracting 259.000 students<sup>11</sup> in the 2021-2022 academic year and mainly taught by Social Studies teachers, the only material guiding the execution of the course is the teacher’s manual which includes curriculum, objectives, and instructions for teachers on delivery and content. As the subjects were intended to be in line with the Convention, six learning domains refer to oral expressions, performing arts, social practices, folklore, crafts-

manship tradition, and ICH safeguarding which are presented in a balanced manner in the objectives outlined in eight articles.

The section titled “Points to Consider in Execution of the Course” in the curriculum is another evidence that the design of the course is compatible with the Convention’s objectives and heritage interpretation. Because it suggests taking local culture and students’ interests into account in application designs, and establishing links to other courses such as “Visual Arts”, “Music”, “Technology and Design”, “Turkish”, “Social Studies”, and “Physical Education” to facilitate teaching of multidimensional aspects of ICH. In addition, the specific reference not only to “learning subjects” but also “learning process” seems to imply that teaching and assessment of the course should address teaching and learning methods, in addition to “topics” to be discussed, which echoes with the current approach “learning with” ICH. Finally, yet importantly, the section mentioned emphasizes that the course should be taught in a way that presents cultural elements as dynamic pieces that can inspire science, arts, and administration, not as artifacts of the past times.

Kasapoğlu Akyol’s study reveals that, albeit having started with good intentions, the execution of the course tells a different story (2015). For example, the ninth article of the section mentioned above states that “local conditions and characteristics where the course is taught should be prioritized in teaching process” (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı 2018: 8). However, it reveals an implicit contradictory aspect which eventually makes the curriculum designed by the Ministry the only source of teaching. In other words, the ideal in the ninth article can not be realized due to insufficient capacity building programs aimed at teachers, as emphasized recently (Aral 2022). Teachers, receiving no particular training on how to deal with its curriculum in a way that will allow them to think about connections to local environment, the Convention, and the perspective of “teaching with ICH”, can not be expected to develop a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach to the execution of the course Folk Culture. Consequently, the current situation leaves no choice for teachers but to confine themselves to the curriculum, which in turn gives rise to the execution of the curriculum as it is, serving to strengthen centrality. Other than the issues addressed, two things need to be underlined: First, the integration of ICH into education in Türkiye has not been considered enough through alternatives other than assigning independent courses set for the purpose. Second, the lack of interministerial coordination stands out as a crucial problem.

### **Conclusion**

The main aim of this paper was to compare and evaluate the Flemish and Turkish formal education systems regarding the implementation of the Convention. Centrally, it can be stated that the analysis of the documents revolved around the implications of centrality (Türkiye) and autonomy (Flanders) to mobilize ICH in education. In Türkiye, a specific course on ICH was conceived and assigned on a national level. This points to an important difference. While in Türkiye, the course Folk Culture was initiated as a direct response to the Convention, in Flanders, this safeguarding perspective did not seem to have permeated educational policy processes. Nevertheless, the Flemish Government has developed a curriculum framework that seems beneficial for the inclusion of relevant content on a regional or local level, and establishing possible connections with its specific context. Although this open framework can be extended by the educational networks on the meso level, the real responsibility of integrating ICH is, therefore, shifted toward the micro level. So, in contrast to Türkiye, where the inclusion of ICH somewhat follows a top-down approach imposed by the central government, educatio-

nal institutions and teachers in Flanders seem relatively flexible and have autonomy with a variety of options to navigate through ICH.

In both cases attention can be drawn to the role of teacher agency. It needs to be stated that integrating ICH is not something teachers do spontaneously or find easy to do. They are in need of sufficient support. On the one hand, by creating a specific course in Türkiye, the connection between the Convention (supranational), the implementation in education (national), and execution (teachers) is made explicit and easy to follow from a policy perspective. Although the teachers receive support via instruction manuals and a specific curriculum, as a drawback, it can be stated that this leaves little room for input. On the other hand, in Flanders, the lack of explicit references to the Convention, heritage in general, or ICH in particular has made the follow-up on different policy levels difficult. From a teachers' perspective, the launch of a Flemish Canon seems to disrupt the selection process of heritage. As the Canon is not compulsory, it will leave the autonomy of teachers intact while creating a field of tension for schools and teachers between a top-down and a bottom-up approach. Moreover, both cases are confined to the drawback of teaching "about" ICH, without paying much attention to the Convention as a source of reference.

To conclude, teachers engagement with the Convention, relevant policies and research play an essential role in the integration of ICH into formal education. It is already recognized in both cases that it is up to the teachers to harness ICH as a multidimensional source of teaching and learning in specific contexts. However, it is of critical importance to find a balance between support given to the teachers and their radius of action, that is autonomy. In addition to crucial need of capacity building aimed at teachers, deficiency in or imbalance between these two interrelated aspects poses the risk that efforts in formal education might remain inconclusive. An important aspect of this balance in future policy could be to introduce teachers to implicit or explicit links to the domains of ICH that are already available in curricula. For Flanders and Türkiye, a framework on heritage education, which connects research, policy, and practice seems to be missing. To overcome this problem, interministerial cooperation and involvement of universities in policy-making and capacity building can be considered two key steps in the future. In both cases, the lack of teachers' capacity building undermines the adaptability of ICH to different themes, courses, and contexts. Rather than changing existing curricula, a new, holistic heritage education policy that focuses on connections between ICH, tangible heritage, and a wide array of courses is needed..

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#### NOTES

1. UNESCO Living Heritage Entity's decision to identify the integration of ICH into formal and non-formal education as one of the funding priorities for the term 2018-2021 can be said to serve as a springboard to encourage the States Parties.
2. ITH/15/10.COM/6.a: 12-16. See also <https://ich.unesco.org/en/focus-on-transmission-and-education-2015-00875>
3. <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/41571-EN.pdf>
4. In a transitional phase, the standards for the second and third stages of secondary education will remain active until the school year 2024-2025.
5. The press release by the Board of Education on July 18, 2017.
6. [https://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2017\\_07/18160003\\_basin\\_aciklamasi-program.pdf](https://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2017_07/18160003_basin_aciklamasi-program.pdf)

7. For the periodic reports of Belgium (2012 and 2021), visit <https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/belgium-BE?info=periodic-reporting>
8. FARO acts as an interface centre for the cultural heritage sector in Flanders, while WIE is appointed by the Flemish Government as a competent body and organization for the safeguarding of ICH.
9. In June 2020, a renewed version of the Dutch canon was presented. See also <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/en/page/141750/the-canon-of-the-netherlands-has-been-renewed>
10. For decisions in 2006, visit [https://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2017\\_09/29165619\\_17\\_sura.pdf](https://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2017_09/29165619_17_sura.pdf) and decisions in 1996, visit [https://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2017\\_09/29165430\\_15\\_sura.pdf](https://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2017_09/29165430_15_sura.pdf)
11. M. Muhtar Kutlu and Pınar Kasapoğlu Akyol are the first researchers to study the course Folk Culture, whose publications are provided in the references.
12. The number of students was received through personal communication from the Ministry of National Education on December 15, 2022.

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