Timber Rafting – on the way to the Intangible Heritage of Humanity

The application process for inscription on the cultural heritage lists – the experience of local authorities and bearers

Dr. Frank Thiel
President of the International Association of Timber-Raftsmen

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CULTURAL HERITAGE:
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS
UNIEJÓW, 10 May 2022
1. Who We Are?

2. The Beginning

3. The Final Process

4. Shared Benefits for Local Timber Rafting Associations and Authorities

5. Contribution to Ensuring Awareness and to Encouraging Dialogue about Cultural Heritage of the Region

6. Social Functions and Local Identity

7. Safeguarding Measures – Cooperation of Bearers and Local Authorities
Timber rafting is traditional knowledge and skills on the construction and navigating the rafts on midland waters. The practice includes constructing wooden rafts, transporting logs, and knowledge of nature and its elements. Although there is no uniform rule for the selection of timber, preparation for the assembly, binding, and navigation, all rafters share a similar lifestyle, specific vocabulary, and habits passed down from generation to generation over the centuries.

Timber rafting originated in the Middle Ages when rafts were used to transport logs, firewood, goods, and people using natural water flows. In the middle of the 20th century the commercial importance ended in a lot of countries in Europe.

1. Who We Are?

Timber Rafters and Timber Rafting…

Vorařství (in Czech)
Flößerei (in German)
Plostnieku amata prasmes (in Latvian)
Flisactwo (in Polish)
La Maderada (in Spanish)
Raiers (in Catalan)
1. Who We Are?
Timber Rafters and Timber Rafting…

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Today in Europe, 8,500 timber rafters as members of the IATR safeguarding this old craftsmanship and passed the skills to the next generations, as a living heritage.

In order to strengthen local identity and attachment to the regional traditions, also the history of timber rafting and its social and economic importance for the regions is being communicated.

(The photos used in this presentation are private sources, from Facebook or websites of the member associations.)
In the 1990s, first discussions on the topic of timber rafting and World Heritage.

In the 2000s, further discussions, e.g. in Muldenberg in 2006 or in La Pobla de Segur in 2012.

Only with the inscription in the national cultural heritage lists could the international process be initiated.
In 2019, the first multinational conference took place in Ulanow (Poland). Representatives of the five countries Austria, Czechia, Germany, Latvia and Poland founded a working group. Since 2020, Spain has been involved in the work on the nomination.

Our multinational working group with timber rafting associations, representatives of the UNESCO commissions and ministries of culture from these six countries worked on the joint nomination for almost three years. The Polish Ministry of Culture took over the coordination.
At the end of March 2021, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, Poland and Spain submitted a joint proposal to UNESCO in Paris to nominate timber rafting as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The main requirement was to provide evidence of how the intangible cultural heritage of timber rafting is being further developed as a living craft and passed on to future generations.

It was also necessary to explain what is done in the associations for identity-forming, broad public relations work and what conservation measures are practised to safeguard this heritage by these associations, but also by local and governmental authorities.
## 3. The Final Process


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N°</th>
<th>State(s)</th>
<th>Title as submitted</th>
<th>Documents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Austria - Czechia - Germany - Latvia - Poland - Spain</td>
<td>EN: Timber rafting&lt;br&gt;FR: Le radeau</td>
<td><strong>Nomination form ICH-02:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Consent of communities - Austria:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Consent of communities - Germany:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Consent of communities - Latvia:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Consent of communities - Poland:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Consent of communities - Spain_Catalonia (video):</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Consent of communities - International Association of Timber Rafters:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Consent of communities - Czechia:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Consent of communities - Spain:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>ICH inventory - Austria:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>ICH inventory - Czechia:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>ICH inventory - Germany:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>ICH inventory - Latvia:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>ICH inventory - Poland:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>ICH inventory - Spain:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Mandatory photographs:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Film &quot;Timber rating&quot; (14.27):</strong></td>
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Letters of support of local authorities as part of the official documents

3. The Final Process

Landratsamt Bad Tölz Wolfratshausen

Landratsamt, Postfach 12 80, 82033 Bad Tölz

Josef Niedermayer
Landrat
Zimmer: 2.057

Telefon: 080 41 565-312
Telefax: 080 41 565-211
E-Mail: landrat@ra-btolz.de

Declaration of support
My name is Josef Niedermayer, I am district administrator of the Bad Tölz-Wolfratshausen district. I am happy to support the nomination of timber rafting for the UNESCO Representative List for the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, also on behalf of our district. Because the timber rafts, that are goods and means of transport in one, came from

23.02.2021. Nr. ĀND/1-12-3/21/242

Strenči municipality
Tourism Information Center
Rīgas Street 7, Strenči, Strenči municipality, LV-4730

Letter of Support

On behalf of Ādaži municipality inhabitants, I, the chairman of the council Māris Sprindžuks, express support to inscription of multinational nomination for intangible cultural heritage element “Timber rafting” on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
3. The Final Process

Mrs. JONE ALASTUEY GARCIA, with identification number 73115855M, as president of RONCAL VALLEY GENERAL COUNCIL, with tax identification number P3129900A and address in Julián Gayarre avenue, 5 in RONCAL (Navarra, Spain),

EXPENDS: That she has been informed by the General Direction of the Cultural - Institution Principe de Viana of the Government of Navarra of the UNESCO nomination "Timber Rafting" in order to get its registration in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. I represent an organisation which is directly involved in the practise and the safeguarding of the traditional aforementioned techniques, craftsmanship and celebration in our land and consider this UNESCO nomination of utmost importance for their recognition and safeguarding.

Letters of support of local authorities as part of the official documents

SUPPORT FOR THE INSRIPTION OF TIMBER RAFTING ON THE REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

On behalf of the local authorities and the inhabitants of the Ulanów Municipality, I strongly support the application for the inscription of timber rafting on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

BURMISTRZ GMINY I MIASTA ULANÓW
37-410 Ulanów, ul. Rynek 5, tel. (15) 876-30-41, fax (15) 876-30-53, www.ulanow.pl, e-mail: burmistrz@ulanow.pl

Ulanów, March 5, 2021

MĚSTYS DAVLE/ THE TOWN OF DAVLE

Městys Davle, Náměstí 63, 252 06 Davle, e-mail: starosta@obec davle.cz, Telefon: 257 77 02 57

Vltavan Čechy — svaz vltavských spolků, z.s.
ID No. 70106495
Rašínovo nábřeží 41/30 120 00 Praha 2

Davle, 22 Apr. 2020

Nomination for the inscription of timber-rafting on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by Vltavan Čechy

The town of Davle fully supports the efforts of Vltavan Davle together with the timber-raftsmen
4. Shared Benefits for Local Timber Rafting Associations and Authorities

1. It was not a "suddenly happening", but a result of yearslong of cooperation.

2. Associations safeguard old traditions, develop them further and motivate regional affinity and identity through their work.

3. Regional authorities and administrations contribute significantly to the support of voluntary work:
   1. Financial support through subsidies
   2. Assistance in public relations work
   3. Funding for children's and youth work
   4. Establishment of communal museums and places of memorials
   5. Granting of permits

4. There is a close correlation between engagement for the homeland and the diversity of the cultural heritage, to be proud of the voluntary associations and the task to make the region attractive for other people.
Accompanying Activities of the Nomination Process 2021/2022

Maeros del Xúquer (Antella, Spain)

Nabateros d´a Galliguera (Huesca, Spain)
The inscription of Timber Rafting into the “Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” will
• increase knowledge of ancient techniques and crafts practiced by communities.
• make clear that timber rafting is an activity carried out in different geographical areas, practicing different techniques and rituals adapted to the environment.
• explain many inhabitants and visitors of the rafter regions the awareness of the value and significance of this craftsmanship in the local area.
• increase public awareness as well as the visibility of this craftsmanship as a manifold expression of local identity.
• raise awareness that the intangible cultural heritage in general connects the past with the future, one generation with another, people and their environment.
Accompanying Activities of the Nomination Process 2021/2022

Schiltacher Flößer on the river Rhine (Germany)

Oberdrautaler Flößer on the river Drava (Austria)
The inscription of Timber Rafting into the “Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” will further

• illustrate the close interaction between intangible and tangible heritage, e.g. the preservation of local waterways as well as rafting sites and technical monuments

• raise awareness of other local traditional craftsmanship as a part of intangible cultural heritage:
  ➢ necessary tools and connecting brackets for building rafts are made by blacksmiths,
  ➢ wheelwrights supply the tool handles and ropemakers make ropes for tying the rafts,
  ➢ tree felling and transport by horses allow the rafts building

At annual rafters’ days and international meetings, different craftsmen are invited to demonstrate their knowledge and skills to visitors, which also contributes to raising the visibility of different aspects of intangible cultural heritage in the region.
Timber rafting is a practice requiring teamwork and has shaped a strong sense of community. Various traditions have been developed concerning the power of water, responsibility for nature, and the care of rivers and brooks, the integration of communities in difficult times as well as the passion for work.

They are expressed in traditional songs, poems, stories, or sometimes in religious services and celebrations of patron saints of rafters. These traditions live on and have local, regional, or national counterparts.

Today, rafting is a cultural form with a close relationship to wood as a sustainable energy source and building material as well as a particular mental relation to water.

In many ways, this also corresponds to the interests of local legislatures, authorities and administrations.
The bearers and practitioners who safeguard and transmit timber rafting gather during various events in which young members of the community learn the craft from older representatives.

Timber rafting festivals create a feeling of unity and strengthen the sense of belonging to the community, the territory and the landscape.

Timber rafting is a practice open to practitioners representing all age, social and cultural backgrounds. More experienced rafters naturally guide less experienced members in both practical and theoretical aspects.
Raftswomen and Raftsmen work together

In the past, rafters were mainly men. However, once dominant male roles have been adapted with respect to gender equality.

Therefore, participation in all aspects of timber rafting is nowadays open to people regardless of their gender in all participating countries.

This can be seen, for example, through the increasing participation and promotion of girls in youth camps and in leading positions of women in the rafters’ associations.
The bearers ensure element’s viability mainly by passing on know-how, skills, and values to the next generations as mentioned before. This happens above all during the annual timber raft building. The viability of the element is supported by activities such as timber raft floating for the audience, exhibitions, association meetings, distribution of information materials, etc.

Each country, and within these in each area where the tradition of timber rafting has been maintained, applied concrete initiatives for transmission of the element to new generations.

Besides, there are numerous examples of how museums and other institutions support the maintenance of documentary, photographic, and artisan legacy. To name but a few examples: the Rafting Museum in Ulanów (Poland), the Museu dels Raiers in Pont de Claverol (Spain) or the rafting section in the Handicraft Museum in Baldramsdorf (Austria).

Their activities and resources contribute to the process of transmission of the skills and techniques related to the transport of wood through rivers and channels.
In all submitting states, some general measures have been taken to safeguard the element:

- through the inclusion in national inventories, the element is formally identified and recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage
- the bearers can apply for grants to finance safeguarding measures
- the element is present in numerous museum collections (national and local)
- scientific research is done and publications and films are created
Austria: Timber rafting is regulated by the Navigation Law of 1997. Local rafting groups in collaboration with the government of Carinthia and the local municipality (in charge of public land and waterways management), ensure the viability and usage of natural space needed for rafting. Domestic and European funded projects for the revitalization and maintenance of the river Drava, take into account the necessary conditions for rafting when implemented. For the annual rafting days, the bearers can apply for funds from the culture department of Carinthia. For a few years, timber rafting in Austria has been a subject of research by the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna.

Czechia: Rafting was included in the key governmental documents in which the system of care of traditional folk culture is established. A set of dedicated grant programs from the public budget enabled the presentation of rafting and informal transfer of skills. The element has been included in educational and research activities taking place in regional and national cultural institutions. An important role in the promotion of the element through exhibitions and workshops is played by state and regional institutions.
Germany:
Funding programs offered by federal states support the maintenance of rivers, canals, typical devices (locks, weirs, ponds, logging), and monuments related to timber rafting and museum exhibitions. These measures for the safeguarding of timber rafting were also included in some cultural funding programs of the federal states after the inscription in the national inventory.

Latvia:
A Plan for the Safeguarding and Development of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is being developed to ensure coordinated actions of state administration and other authorities, including targeted use of resources. Furthermore, local governments take up various safeguarding measures.
Spain:
The regions are responsible for the implementation of measures concerning intangible cultural heritage. They support timber rafting associations with subsidies for the publication of studies, creation of schools as well as support for museums and interpretation centers in the area of documentation and dissemination.

Poland:
Many projects were financed by the government, e.g. organization of the Gdańsk rafts, a publication of albums, making films, traditional rafting clothing, and promotion. For 25 years, rafts on the Vistula, the San, and the Oder have been organized annually with presentations of timber rafting tradition. There are museums and exhibitions devoted to timber rafting.
7. Safeguarding Measures – Cooperation of Bearers and Local Authorities

Examples in Poland:

- Workshops devoted to the art of construction and navigation of rafts will be arranged as well as rafting trips for pupils from the Primary School in Ulanów and the School and Educational Center in Rudnik nad Sanem.

- Permanent exhibition in the Timber Rafting Museum in Ulanów will be expanded. The inhabitants will provide documents and items for the exhibitions located in a building of a timber rafting house purchased and restored by Ulanów Municipality.

- Oral tradition will be perpetuated by "Ziemia Ulanowska" magazine, an album about rafting, and the second part of the film about timber rafting traditions of Ulanów will be made.

- The organization of “The Rafting Days” in Ulanów (yearly in July), “Barbórka” (yearly in December), “The Timber Rafting along the Blue San route” (a raft trip starting in the town of Jarosław with the stops in Leżajsk, Sieniawa, Krzeszów, and Ulanów) will continue to be organized.

- Polish Guild of Rafters, Boatbuilders and Steersmen Association will continue organizing timber rafting on navigable rivers, documenting local binding techniques.
7. Safeguarding Measures – Cooperation of Bearers and Local Authorities

Polski Cech Flisakow, Szutnikow i Sternikow (Poland)

Accompanying Activities of the Nomination Process 2021/2022
7. Safeguarding Measures – Cooperation of Bearers and Local Authorities

Accompanying Activities of the Nomination Process in 2022

Polski Cech Flisakow, Szutnikow i Sternikow (Poland)
Bractwo Flisackie w Ulanowie (Poland)

7. Safeguarding Measures – Cooperation of Bearers and Local Authorities

Accompanying Activities of the Nomination Process in 2022

"ETNOFLIS" JAROSŁAW - ULANÓW 2022R.

Działania popularyzujące żywe i zanikające zjawiska kultury ludowej, takie jak wystawy, konkursy, przeglądy, festiwale, koncerty „Etnoflis” Jarosław – Ulanów 2022r.

Partnerem wydarzenia jest Województwo Podkarpackie.

Dofinansowano ze środków Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego w ramach programu Narodowego Centrum Kultury: EtnoPolska. Edycja 2022
Last but not least, especially in this time:

“Local associations of timber rafters follow common principles of peace, freedom, and equality without any geographical, racial, ethnic, religious, sexual or political discrimination…

… May this also be a guideline for activity for all politicians!
In our statute is enshrined: “Cultivating timber rafting traditions and cultural development of the local community”.

And in this sense we hope to win the inscription as Intangible Cultural Heritage auf Humanity in 2022!

International Conference „30 Years IATR“ (Prague, Czechia)