

Digitizing Cultural Heritage in Bulgaria

A Survey of Intellectual Property-related Experiences and Practices

Prepared for the
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present survey highlights the role intellectual property (IP) plays in the preservation of the Bulgarian culture and its unique forms of expression. As many new and challenging questions arise when digitizing intangible cultural heritage (ICH), the use of IP tools to protect, preserve and promote ICH becomes vital.

The Bulgarian culture comprises a large and dynamic diversity of ICH as it is based on the cultures, traditions, customs and cultural expressions of the different ethnic and ethnographic communities, which have historically inhabited the country, and of the Bulgarian minorities living abroad. Although each community has its distinct identity and cultural characteristics, they all consider themselves “Bulgarian” and this has been an important prerequisite for the development of regional folklore in the Balkan region.

Bulgaria has, in the course of time, developed a national legislative system and ratified certain international conventions to administer its cultural heritage. The country is presently also amending and supplementing the recently adopted Cultural Heritage Act (2009). This Act introduces a new scope of “cultural heritage”, so as to include tangible and intangible, immovable and movable heritage as a combination of cultural values, which carry the historical memories of the country and have a scientific and/or cultural importance.

ICH is generally considered as “public domain” and its utilization and practice do not require any authorization from or payment to its custodian or original creator. IP issues do however play an important role in the research, collection, documentation, digitization, preservation and promotion of ICH.

This survey directly addresses these issues and provides an overview of best practices on how IP could add value to the preservation, protection and promotion of ICH in Bulgaria. It maps out the inter-institutional collaborations, participation of the private and civil structures and role of the State and its national legislative system. The findings could not only be a fruitful base for future scientific works and practical research, but also perhaps add value to the development of a strategy for digitizing cultural heritage, for the benefit of the Bulgarian society. Finally, the survey comes with a “supplement”, which provides a historical overview of Bulgaria and the cultural groups inhabiting the country.