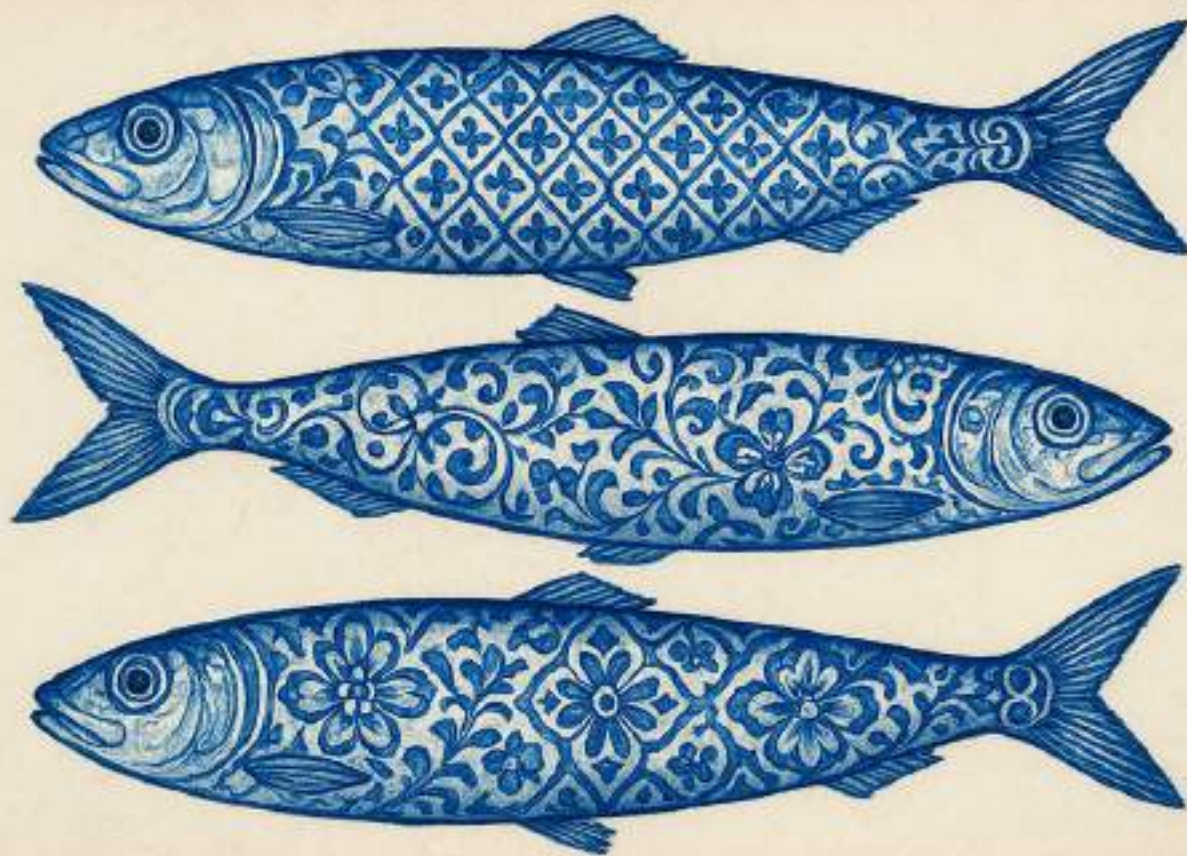


OUR HERITAGE



OUR FUTURE



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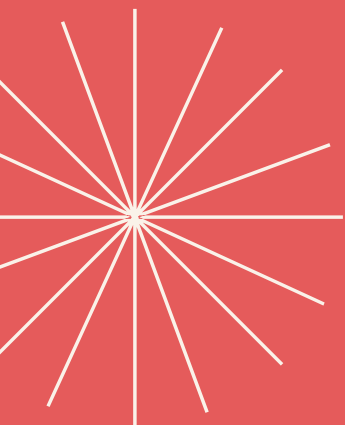
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INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Not all heritage is made of stone, wood or monuments. Some of the most meaningful parts of a culture are the things you can't touch – but that live through people, words, customs, and memories.

Intangible cultural heritage refers to living traditions passed down from generation to generation. It includes stories and oral traditions, music, dance and performing arts, traditional food and cooking, festivals and rituals, crafts and skills, knowledge about nature and the universe.

In a fast-changing, digital world moving toward globalization, many cultural traditions risk being forgotten or replaced. But losing intangible heritage means losing a part of who we are – our stories, our identities, and our community ties.

For young people across Europe, safeguarding this living heritage is not just about “preserving the old”. It's about knowing where we come from, so we understand who we are, and opening the door to who the others are; it's about connecting cultures, especially in a diverse Europe; it's about helping small local communities be seen, heard, and felt.

Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage means keeping traditions alive and relevant, not putting them in a museum. Youth have a special role – we are not just learners of heritage, we are its future storytellers, artists, teachers and innovators.

This publication was created by youth workers from across Europe during a training course on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through youth work. Inside, you'll discover a colorful collection of real-life examples of living traditions from their countries.

Each page is a piece of the puzzle that makes Europe's cultural identity so beautifully diverse, and proudly alive.



FADO

PORTUGAL

Fado, often described as “the soul of Portugal”, is a traditional Portuguese music genre performed by a solo singer (fadista) with Portuguese guitar, known for its melancholic style and the expression of ‘saudade’ (a uniquely Portuguese concept of longing, nostalgia and bittersweet yearning). Deeply tied to Lisbon and Coimbra, it’s a symbol of national identity, blending history, storytelling and emotion.

Passed down orally through communities, families and neighborhood taverns, and recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2011, Fado is valued not only as music but as a cultural ritual that preserves Portugal’s poetic, musical, and emotional traditions.

AZULEJO

PORTUGAL

Portuguese tiles (azulejos) are hand-painted, glazed ceramic tiles used for centuries to decorate buildings, churches and public spaces. They often feature geometric patterns, floral designs, or historical scenes, serving both artistic and functional purposes. They are a symbol of Portuguese cultural identity, blending influences from Islamic, Spanish, and European art, and play a key role in preserving the country's architectural heritage.

Azulejaria – the art and craft of producing and using azulejos – is not only decoration but also a form of storytelling and cultural expression, as many azulejo panels depict historical events, maritime discoveries, saints, or everyday life. They are visual archives of the past.

While azulejaria is not yet part of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list, it is recognized nationally in Portugal as important cultural heritage, with efforts underway to safeguard its traditional craftsmanship.





PASTEL DE NATA

PORTUGAL

Pastel de nata is a small Portuguese custard tart with a flaky pastry crust and creamy egg-based filling, often sprinkled with cinnamon. Originating in the 19th century at the Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon, it has become one of Portugal's most famous culinary symbols, loved both nationally and internationally. It's important to Portuguese culture as a link between history, monastic traditions and everyday life. While it is not listed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage, it is part of Portugal's recognized gastronomic heritage and a key element of its food identity.

The most famous version, Pastéis de Belém, is still made with a secret recipe created in 1837. It is said that only a few master pastry chefs know the full recipe, and it's kept in a locked safe in Lisbon.

LATVIAN SONG AND DANCE FESTIVAL

LATVIA

A nationwide cultural celebration, where thousands of singers from amateur choirs, dancers from folk dance groups and musicians perform traditional Latvian songs, dances, and choral masterpieces. It is one of the largest amateur choral events in the world and a powerful display of national identity.

From the first festival in 1873 with 1,000 singers, it has grown to a mighty movement. Around 40,000 participants were preparing to take part in the XXVII Nationwide Latvian Song and XVII Dance Festival. More than 1,600 groups in Latvia and more than 100 elsewhere were preparing for the event. This festival has also been recognised at an international level: in 2003, the Song and Dance Festival was included on the UNESCO List of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

The festival is held every five years, usually in early July, in Riga, Latvia's capital at the Liela estrade (Great Bandstand) at Mezaparks in Riga – an enormous open-air stage. Preparation can take three to five years of rehearsals, regional contests, and community gatherings. It's a unifying symbol of Latvian language, music, and traditions – a shared cultural heartbeat that survived foreign occupations and political repression. It fosters pride, identity, and intergenerational bonds.

Latvian Song and Dance festival is living proof of how art can unite a nation. Joining keeps the tradition alive, connects you to your roots, and offers a once-in-a-lifetime experience of singing or dancing with thousands of others.





JĀŅI AND LĪGO LATVIA

Jāņi and Līgo is a traditional Latvian celebration of the summer solstice, held on June 23rd–24th. It marks the longest day and shortest night of the year and is deeply rooted in pagan traditions honoring the sun, fertility, and nature.

The celebration is filled with folk songs, flower and oak wreaths, bonfires, and dancing until sunrise. People often jump over fires to chase away evil spirits and search for the mythical fern flower, symbolizing luck and mystery. Traditional foods like caraway cheese and beer are also enjoyed.

Jāņi is important because it connects Latvians to nature, heritage and community. It celebrates life, light, and renewal, making it one of Latvia's most cherished and vibrant traditions.

Although this tradition is not at risk of disappearing, it is still important to safeguard it by actively participating in festivals, celebrating with family and friends, or even hosting your own gathering to mark this special time of the year.

SUITU WOMEN

LATVIA

The Suitu sievas, or “Suiti women,” are bearers of the Suiti cultural tradition in western Latvia. They are known for performing in a distinctive bourdon, or drone-style singing, enriched with humorous, improvised verses. But their performances are much more than music – it's a lifestyle and pure embodiment of tradition.

The group is made up of women from the Suiti cultural space, mainly Alsunga, Gudenieki and Jurkalne. Their first public appearance was in 1924. Since then, they have performed not only across Latvia but also internationally, sharing their tradition in countries from France and Hungary to Estonia, Lithuania, and even Japan.

Their performances are vivid and deeply rooted in local heritage. Dressed in brightly colored regional folk costumes, they sing about the life of the community and tailor verses to different occasions, making each performance unique.

The Suitu sievas play an essential role in preserving the Suiti cultural space, which UNESCO recognized in 2009 as intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding, as the group consists of only 11 women, more than half of them being older than 64 years.

For the community, they are a source of pride and continuity. They ensure that the songs, humor and spirit of the Suiti people are not lost to time. For young people, engaging with this tradition is a way to connect with their roots, and be part of a rare group of people collecting, protecting and sharing stories of this small, tight knit community.





EBRU

TÜRKİYE

Ebru, or Turkish paper marbling, is a traditional art where colors are dropped on water and shaped with special tools. The design is then transferred onto paper, making each work unique. It has been practiced since the Ottoman times, and was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2014.

Ebru is important because it reflects patience, creativity and harmony, and today it is still taught in workshops and cultural centers.

Young people should safeguard Ebru because it connects them with their cultural roots while also giving space for modern and creative expression.

HAMAM

TÜRKİYE

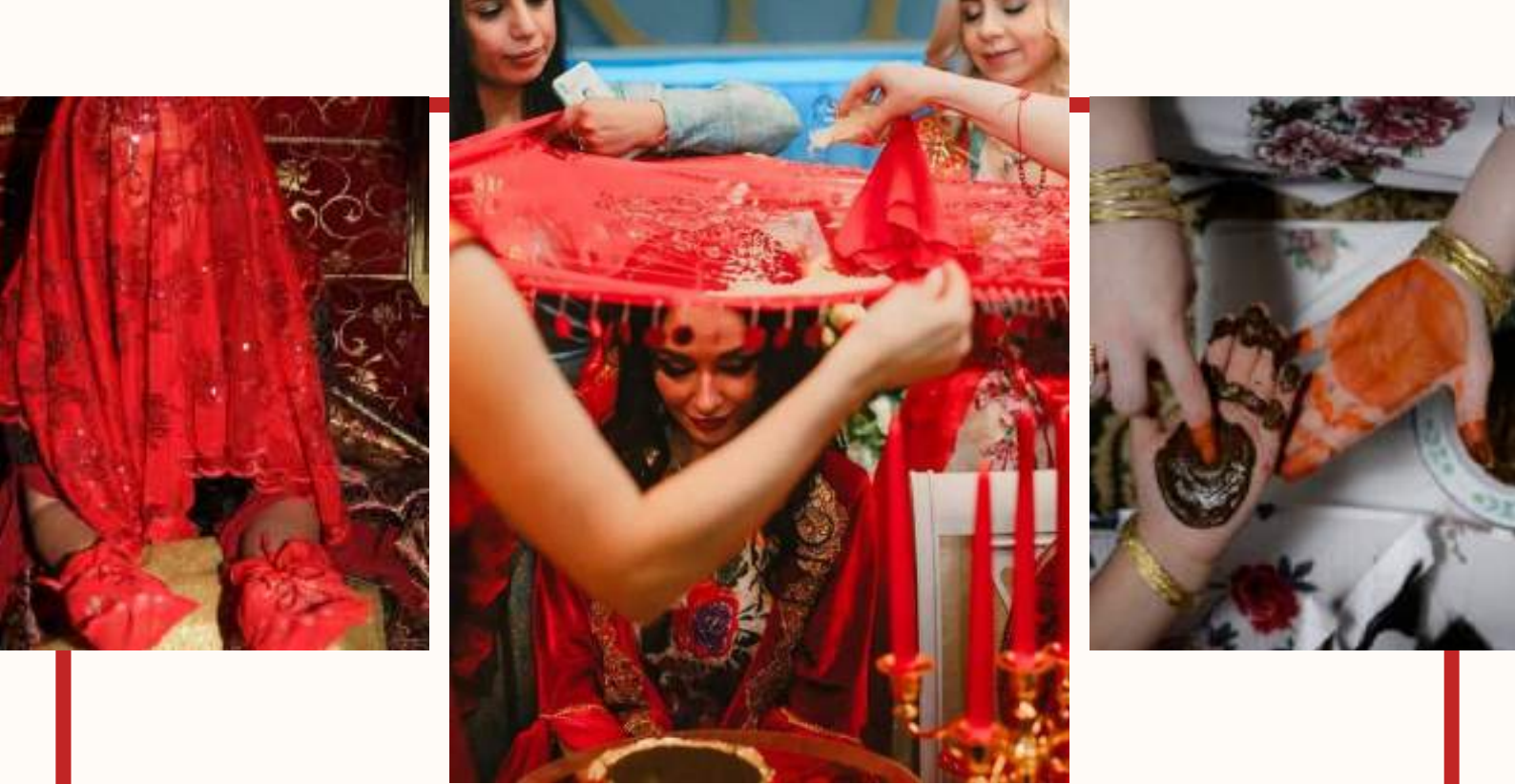
The Turkish bath, or hamam, is a centuries-old steam ritual. It began in the Ottoman Empire, influenced by Roman and Byzantine bath traditions, and became part of daily life in every city and town. Visitors first heat up in the warm marble room, then lie on the central stone. A bath attendant, known as a tellak (for men) or keseci (for women), gives a traditional treatment: scrubbing with a glove (kese), a foamy soap wash, rinsing, and rest.

Hamams are practiced by both locals and visitors. In the past, they were important social places, especially for women, who gathered there to talk and celebrate. Today, they still continue in historic Ottoman hamams and modern spas.

This tradition is important because it connects hygiene with health and community. It is a place for physical cleansing, but also for friendship, relaxation, and even wedding customs, like the bride's hamam.

For young people, the hamam is a chance to enjoy tradition in a modern way. They can contribute to safeguarding hamams by visiting them, sharing experiences, and advocating for preservation of the historic buildings.





KINA-HENNA TÜRKİYE

Henna Night, or Kına Gecesi, is one of the most important Turkish wedding traditions. It usually takes place the night before the wedding. The bride wears a red dress, and her head is often covered with a red veil. Her hands are decorated with henna in special patterns.

During this time, women sing emotional songs that symbolize both happiness and sadness, because the bride is leaving her family home and starting a new life.

Traditionally, the bride sits in the center while her friends and relatives dance around her. The atmosphere is joyful but also very touching, and sometimes the bride pretends not to open her hand until her mother-in-law places a gold coin in it. This small ritual shows love, respect, and blessing for her new marriage.

Kına Gecesi is very meaningful for the community because it gathers families, neighbours and friends together. It strengthens family bonds and keeps cultural values alive. Today, many young people still celebrate Henna Night, sometimes in modern wedding halls with music and dance, but the main spirit of the tradition continues. By joining and sharing it, young people help to safeguard this beautiful cultural practice.

MARTINKI

NORTH MACEDONIA

Martinka is a simple bracelet made of red and white wool threads. The red one symbolizes life, health and vitality, and the white one stands for purity, luck, and a fresh start.

Making and wearing a martinka is a centuries-old springtime tradition celebrated in Macedonia to mark the transition from winter to spring. People of all ages, especially children, wear a martinka around their wrist from 1st March until spotting the first signs of spring, like a blooming tree, a stork, or a swallow. Then they tie it to a blossoming tree or leave it in nature as a symbolic offering.

The tradition was inscribed in 2017 on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as a joint nomination by Macedonia, Bulgaria (where it is known as martenitsa), Moldova and Romania (mărțișor).

"When you give a martinka, you give your heart for spring."





AJVAR

NORTH MACEDONIA

Ajvar is a traditional relish made mainly from roasted red peppers. Families, neighbours, and sometimes entire communities come together during the autumn ajvar-making season, working together in the yard or garden. It is mostly made in September and October, across the whole country.

How to prepare it:

1. Select and wash sweet red peppers.
2. Roast them over open fire or in large ovens until the skins blacken.
3. Peel the peppers and add roasted eggplant.
4. Grind the roasted vegetables.
5. Slow-cook the mixture in large pots with sunflower oil and salt until thick and fragrant.
6. Store in glass jars for the winter months.

GALICHKA WEDDING

NORTH MACEDONIA

The Galichka Wedding is a traditional wedding celebration held annually on 12 July in the mountain village of Galichnik, North Macedonia. What began as a community event is now also a cultural festival that attracts visitors from across the country and abroad.

The main participants are the bride and groom, chosen each year (often from the village or with family ties to Galichik). Local villagers play key roles in preparing and performing the ceremonies. Folk musicians, dancers and artisans participate, keeping the traditions alive.

The event is supported by cultural associations and the municipality.

The Galichka Wedding is especially important because it preserves centuries-old Macedonian traditions, strengthens community identity, unites people socially, boosts local tourism, and symbolizes the resilience of the region's cultural heritage.





TRADITIONAL BLOUSE WITH EMBROIDERY **ROMANIA**

The traditional blouse with shoulder embroidery, known as *altiță*, is a vital element of Romanian and Moldovan folk dress for both men and women. It combines a simple white cut made from natural fibers – like flax, cotton, hemp, or silk – with richly colored, hand-stitched ornamentation. The embroidery uses complex horizontal, vertical, and diagonal seams to create distinctive textures and patterns.

Styles and motifs vary by region, age, and the skill of the women who craft them. Designs range from geometric to organic, and colors span from muted to vibrant. Entirely handmade, these blouses reflect deep cultural heritage, and attempts to mechanize or simplify the process are seen as departures from tradition.

This craft is traditionally passed down through families and practiced by women, though today it's also taught in workshops and cultural camps. Interest in making these blouses is growing, as people see it as a way to relax, express national pride, and stay connected to their roots.

CAPRA TRADITION

ROMANIA

In Romania, during winter, there is a special tradition called “Capra” – which means “the goat.”

It is a joyful custom that happens around New Year’s Day.

A person dresses in a colorful goat costume, with a big mask and bright decorations. The “goat” dances, jumps, and makes funny moves to bring good luck for the new year.

Other people sing special songs and play drums or bells.

The goat mask can open and close its mouth, making a loud sound.

It is a very old, colourful and cheerful tradition meant to chase away bad spirits and bring happiness.





EGG PAINTING

ROMANIA

In Romania, egg painting at Easter is a beloved tradition where hard-boiled eggs are dyed in bright colors or adorned with intricate wax-resist designs. The red eggs, the most iconic, symbolize life, renewal, and the blood of Christ.

It is practised across the whole country, with the craft especially alive in rural areas and in the skilled hands of artisans from Bucovina, Maramures and Moldova. The work usually takes place during Holy Week, often on Thursday or Saturday, in homes, courtyards, or workshops, using a fine-tipped tool called “chișiță”, warm beeswax, and natural or synthetic dyes.

Beyond its beauty, the custom preserves centuries-old craftsmanship, brings people together, and expresses a deep sense of cultural identity.

For younger generations, it's a chance to keep a unique art form alive – by hosting workshops, sharing the process online, or supporting local egg decorators.

Did you know that in some villages, the most beautiful eggs are never eaten, but kept for years as talismans? As a Romanian saying goes, “Red eggs bring abundance and good fortune into the home.”

MODROTISK (BLUEPRINT)

CZECHIA

Blueprint is a traditional textile printing technique that produces dark blue fabric with white patterns. The result is a characteristic contrast between deep blue and delicate white motifs.

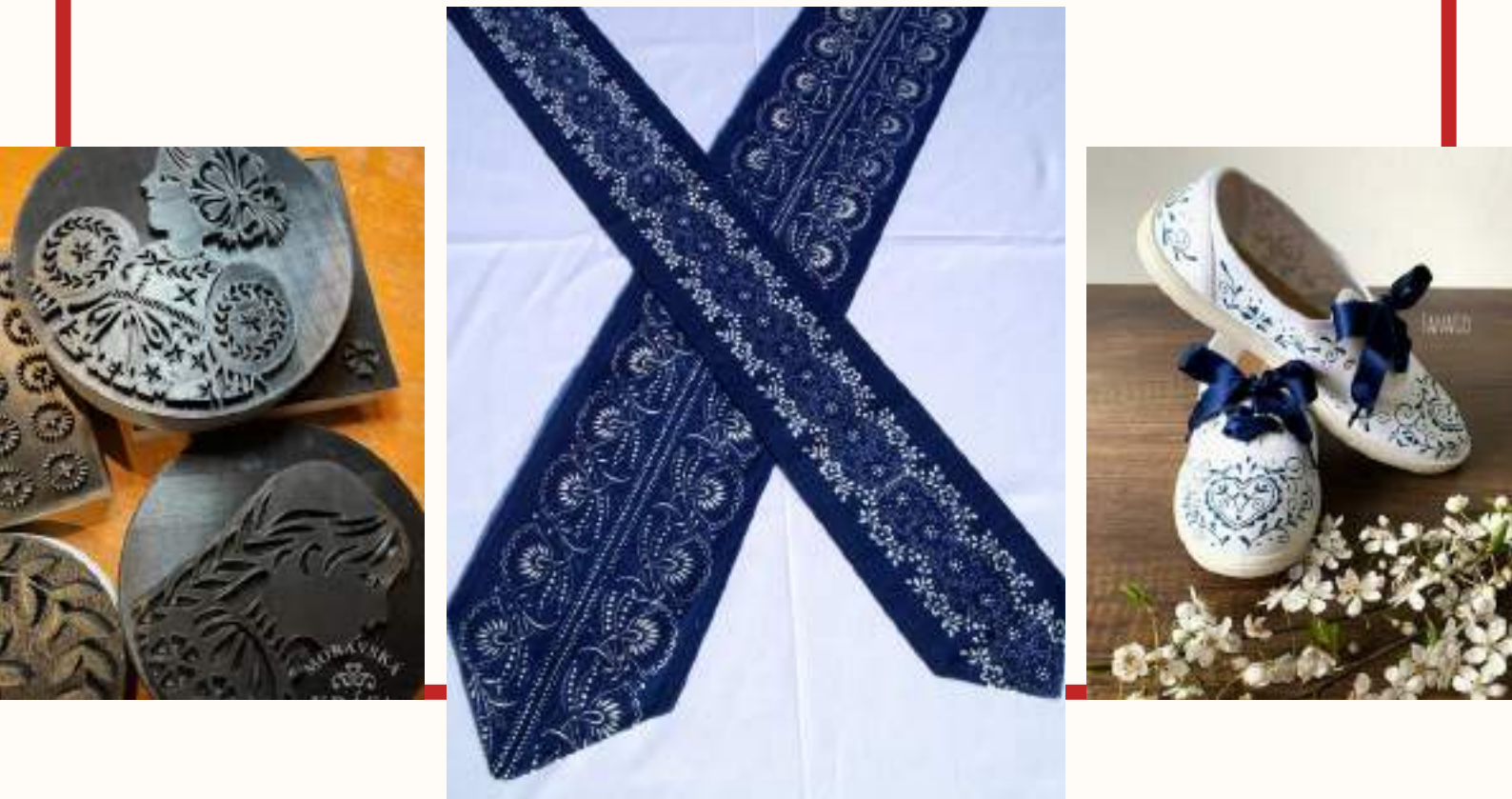
There are two historical workshops in the Czech Republic that still produce blueprint: Modrotisk Danzinger in Olešnice in Moravia and Strážnický modrotisk in Strážnice. Production is carried out by family workshops, often for many generations, and they collaborate with artists and designers.

Blueprinting spread in the Czech lands at the end of the 18th century, and most notably in the 19th century, when it was a common part of folk costumes, especially in the Horácko and Valašsko regions.

Production is done by hand: the fabric is printed with wooden and metal molds, then dyed in indigo, and finally the reserve is removed by washing. Today, blueprint is produced in small workshops that preserve the original techniques and offer tours to the public.

Blueprint is part of the cultural identity of the regions – it connects history, aesthetics, and craftsmanship.

In 2018, it was inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List as a joint nomination by the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Germany and Hungary.





VELIKONOCE

CZECHIA

Easter in the Czech Republic is a movable feast celebrated in spring, combining Christian celebrations of Christ's resurrection with pagan rituals welcoming spring. It is full of symbolism of new life, renewal, and hope.

It is celebrated by the general public across generations – from children who participate in caroling, to women decorating Easter eggs, to men who weave pomlázky (Easter whips). Traditions are alive in both rural and urban areas, and schools, folklore ensembles and local associations often participate.

Celebrations take place throughout the country, with individual regions retaining their specific customs – for example, in Moravia, whipping with a pomlázka is more pronounced than in Bohemia. Typical Easter customs include weaving pomlázka whips from willow twigs, which boys symbolically whip girls with for health and beauty. Eggs, known as kraslice, are also dyed and decorated using various techniques, from waxing to scratching. Traditional baked goods, such as Easter lamb or mazanec, are also baked.

Easter Monday is marked by caroling, when people go from house to house, often in traditional costumes, and in exchange for whipping, carolers receive painted eggs, sweets, or small gifts.

Easter has a deep meaning for the community – it brings families, neighbors and friends together to feast, carol and share traditions. Maintaining these customs helps pass on cultural heritage to future generations, and strengthens a sense of belonging.

PIVOFEST

CZECHIA

Beer festivals in the Czech Republic are social events that celebrate the tradition of Czech brewing. They offer visitors the opportunity to taste dozens to hundreds of types of beer – from classic lagers to modern craft specialties. Moreover, the program usually includes musical performances, competitions, workshops, and a wide range of food and other beverages.

People of all ages attend the festivals, even the children under 18 years old. You can find there beer lovers, tourists, locals, brewers, and brewery representatives. The events are often complemented by food trucks, craftsmen, and music bands, creating a friendly atmosphere.

Beer festivals are organized all over the country, but especially in the region of Bohemia, most often from spring to fall. Among the best known are the Beer Festival in Prague, the Beer Festival in České Budějovice, and the microbrewery show in Brno. Visitors usually purchase a tasting glass and tokens, which they use to sample individual beers.

These festivals are of great importance to the community – they support local producers, attract tourists, strengthen regional identity, and create a space for meeting and sharing experiences. In Czechia, beer is a part of the national culture, and beer festivals are living proof of both tradition and innovation.



We would like to thank the National Agency of Portugal and the European Commission for supporting the project "Our Heritage – Our Future" and granting the project team the opportunity to bring youth workers together to explore, share, and safeguard Europe's living cultural heritage.

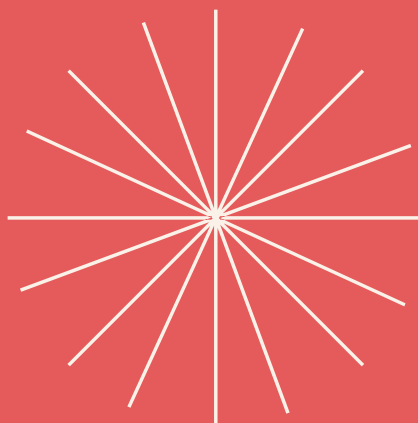
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Trainer Team: António Oliveira, Vasko Joshevski



THANK YOU



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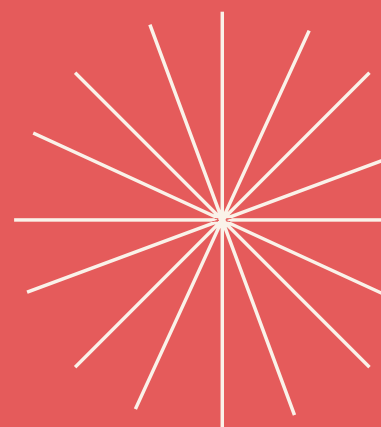
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These traditions are more than just customs, performances or crafts; they are the living heartbeat of Europe, passed down through generations.

The story continues.

