

The 4th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk

Villa Decius, Krakow, 30 June - 1 July 2017

Resolution

Concerning the Lemko Culture and Heritage

The Lemkos have lived in diaspora for a long time. Emigration to Northern America and then disgraceful deportations between 1945 and 1950 have definitely put an end to the natural development of their community. Today the Lemkos live in the United States, Canada, Serbia, and Croatia.

A vast number of them inhabit Ukraine where they settled after deportation conducted in 1945-1946. Those who remained in Poland became victims of the action 'Vistula' which exiled them to the former German territories of Western and Northern Poland. Family and neighborhood bonds were destroyed; many Lemkos lost all of their possessions and were persecuted due to their origin. Contacts with the Rusnaks, a minority group that shares similarities with the Lemkos, common faith and dialect, who still live on the southern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains, in Slovakia, were therefore terminated. All the mentioned compulsory and facultative relocations of the Lemkos put them in a very difficult position. Looking after and developing their culture is highly endangered, as well as teaching their dialect or sustaining ties between the scattered and remote Lemko communities around the world.

Taking into consideration all the mentioned facts and the threat of total assimilation of the Lemkos, the 4th International Civil Society Forum on World Heritage at Risk calls upon the national government of Poland, where the Lemkos live on their own land to ensure that the Lemko sacral and secular objects inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List are well taken care of, and assist them in development of their culture and dialect. We request substantial support for their traditional cultural and social activities and the safeguarding of their material heritage.

Taking into consideration that, in the time of rapid globalisation, the Lemko culture is moving very fast from a traditional to a virtual realm (internet and social media) we call for efforts to help them in developing research and scientific models of consolidation of Lemkos around the world. We are deeply convinced that new technologies make discovering of their cultural heritage a lot easier. This model should serve for purposes of taking care of the regional culture of people scattered all around the world, living in various social and national environments. Working at integrating this one ethnographic group will allow the cultural heritage of this part of the Carpathian mountains to be preserved.

We also address the President of the Republic of Poland to initiate the drafting of a **Resolution of the Polish Parliament** which would denounce and/or abrogate the actions of the past communist system towards Ukrainians and their subgroups from the Lemkivshchyna, Bojkivshchyna, Nadsania, Kholmshchyna and Pidlashya regions of Poland, including the most tragic and wide known action 'Vistula'.

70 years have passed since those dramatic events and fall-outs of those actions still determine the position of Ukrainians in Poland nowadays. Losses in wealth and estates of persons and legal entities have not been repaired to the present day because of a lack of reprivatization bill. The postulated Resolution would be a moral compensation and would remove the mark of guilt put on our group in Communist times (1947 – 1989).

We call upon the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and the Polish State Party

to initiate appropriate steps to look into the links of the Wooden Churches of Southern Małopolska WH Property with the intangible heritage of the Lemko people with a view to

- strengthening the intangible culture of the Lemko people through appropriate programs; and
- potential inscription of (elements of) the Lemko culture in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity according to the 2005 UNESCO Convention.

Krakow, 1 July 2017