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Protecting Living Traditions - Inventory of Living Traditions

Basel carnival, Swiss graphic design, Hornussen (an article on this sport can be found on page 13) and the Vevey grape harvest festival are some of the practices that feature on the current "Inventory of Living Traditions in Switzerland".

All traditions that appear in the Inventory share the following three features:

- they are still practiced in Switzerland.
- they are an integral part of our cultural diversity and identity.
- they change and evolve.

It is precisely these three aspects that enable living traditions (or intangible cultural heritage, as they are also known) to connect one generation to next generations and to foster exchange. Take, for example, the Zibelmärit, the traditional onion market in Bern. Every year, young and old, city and country dwellers, locals and visitors come together to enjoy this festive event.

Background

Living traditions are our intangible cultural heritage. To stress the importance it gives to these traditions, Switzerland acceded to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (16 October 2008). In doing so, Switzerland pledged to compile

and periodically update an inventory of the living traditions found on its territory.

Aims

The "Inventory of Living Traditions in Switzerland" seeks to be representative of the intangible cultural heritage found across the country. It helps to:

- make the public more aware of the importance of practicing and passing on living traditions;
- generate greater recognition for the bearers and practitioners of living traditions;
- lay the groundwork for further initiatives and partnerships that seek to uphold the practice of living traditions.

Procedure

The federal authorities and the cantons shared the inventorying responsibilities. While the cantons oversaw the content (identifying and documenting living traditions in their territory), the federal authorities acted as coordinator. The



selection procedure for the first edition of the Inventory (2011/2012) was as follows:

1. Each canton collected suggestions for traditions that were deemed suitable for inclusion.
2. A committee made up of staff from the cantonal offices for culture, federal representatives and assorted experts compiled a shortlist of candidates for inclusion on the inventory and submitted their choice to the cantons for approval.
3. In autumn 2012, the Confederation published the "Inventory of Living Traditions in Switzerland" on a designated website: www.living-traditions.ch.

The inventory, which documents each entry with articles, photos and videos, will be revised and updated on a periodic basis.

