

UNESCO Conventions in The Netherlands

Wouter Turkenburg, October 2009

The CIER, the Centre for Intellectual Property Rights, an institution of the Utrecht University in the Netherlands, organized a conference on the position of intellectual property rights with regards to the documentation of intangible cultural heritage on the 9th of January 2009. Representatives of UNESCO Netherlands, representatives of the cultural field of both in The Netherlands and in the former colonies (Indonesia), and some twenty lawyers and jurists were present to shine lights on the matters.

The conference on the 9th of January came to the attention of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Welfare and led to a follow up meeting. This meeting was called Vision Meeting Cultural Diversity and took place on the 9th of April 2009 in The Hague. The aim of the meeting was to investigate the possibilities the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the CCD could offer to the future policy of the UNESCO.

At the moment of the meeting on the 9th of April 2009, the Dutch government had not yet ratified the CCD. Rumors were that this might take place in the fall. One of the explanations or rather excuses for late ratification, was that The Netherlands is a Kingdom of which the Antilles are a part and that the delay was due to their slow decision making.

Present at the vision meeting were representatives of the CIER, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the permanent representative of The Netherlands in the UNESCO, a representative of UNESCO The Netherlands and various representatives from the cultural institutions in The Netherlands of which I am one.

Central issue is the question how The Netherlands can contribute to the international policy on cultural diversity. To my opinion The Netherlands is mind split at three levels: 1: under-estimating the CCD, 2: over-estimating its own role as 'progressive' forward thinking country with a successful immigrant policy; 3: the incapacity to deal with blunt right wing pressure. Also in this regard, there is the special decision making culture in The Netherlands: poldermodel. First all voices must be heard, than coalitions have to agree on co-operation, and a principal disdain and mistrust toward a strong centralistic power.

Mr. Bas ter Haar PR, the permanent representative, delegate, (in Dutch: Permanente Vertegenwoordiger) of The Netherlands in the UNESCO, Paris stated that there is a lack of clear division in the discussion between culture and arts. Some countries use the abuse of fundamental human rights as outings of cultural diversity. In The Netherlands, he stated there is a awful lot of experience with cultural diversity but there is a lack of capacity to bring this to the international attention.

All present agreed that there is a great need to determinate indicators that can determinate what is meant with cultural diversity. CD is hard to measure and the obligation of reporting on cultural diversity as stated in article 9 of the CCD is seen as an important one. The fear is that reporting

becomes a goal in itself without leading to real improvements. Reporting should mainly be used for internal usage and improvement of the cultural policy.

Ever since the Vision Meeting Mr. Vincent Wintermans of UNESCO The Netherlands informs the participants about the proceedings around the CCD. He sends reports of the 2nd Conference of Parties of the Convention, the IFCCD and the implementation of the CCD. In the messaging the whereabouts of the operational Guidelines play a central role.

Wouter Turkenburg
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P.S. In the week the World Forum on Music took place in Tunis, the Dutch government ratified the Convention Cultural Diversity. In January 2010 the ratification will be presented to the UNESCO in Paris.