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# *Intangible cultural heritage of Poland and Belarus in media messages (identification of threats)<sup>1</sup>*

*Niematerialne dziedzictwo kulturowe Polski i Białorusi  
w przekazach medialnych (identyfikacja zagrożeń)*

## Introduction

Promotion is an important factor in the protection of intangible cultural heritage, as stated in, among others, paragraph 2.3 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter the Convention): “Safeguarding’ means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the (...) promotion (...)” (Convention... 2003: 6). It is also mentioned in paragraph 105.a of the Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention:

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1 The present article was written as a part of the scholarship programme of the Polish Commission of UNESCO (decision no. 186/E/2023), in the project entitled “Niematerialne dziedzictwo kulturowe Białorusi i Polski w przekazie medialnym (analiza porównawcza i rekomendacje)” [Intangible Heritage of Poland and Belarus in Media Messages. Comparative Analysis and Recommendations], supervised by Katarzyna Smyk PhD, professor at the Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Institute of Cultural Studies at the University of Maria Curie-Skłodowska in Lublin.

States Parties shall endeavour, by all appropriate means, to keep the public informed about the importance of intangible cultural heritage and the dangers threatening it, as well as about the activities carried out in pursuance of the Convention. To this end, States Parties are encouraged to: support media campaigns and the broadcasting of intangible cultural heritage using all forms of media (Operational Directives... 2022: 63).

It should be noted that the UNESCO pays much attention to the media, not only in the context of protecting intangible cultural heritage: the 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference, held in 1976, witnessed the establishment of the Commission for the Study of Communication Problems; in 1996–2001, promoting the free flow of information and developing communication became an element of the official UNESCO strategy; nowadays the directives of the organization include supporting the development of the media and freedom of expression (Michałowska 2020: 409–411, 417–432). It may therefore be surmised that research on media messages regarding intangible cultural heritage is potentially significant.

The article aims to identify threats to intangible cultural heritage generated by the media, which can be used to develop recommendations for a code of ethics for journalists and other individuals working with intangible cultural heritage in the media field. It offers not only the perspective of a researcher, but also that of a journalist who has been writing about intangible cultural heritage issues for the Belarusian media since 2012.

The examples analysed are media messages describing annual rituals, which often feature on national lists of intangible cultural heritage, constituting ca. 30% of all entries in Poland (the *Krajowa* list) and ca. 24% in Belarus (the *Dzyarzhauny* list). Elements associated with annual rituals (Elements Belarus; Elements Poland) are also a substantial part of both countries' contribution to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, compiled by the UNESCO. Moreover, it may be argued that the example of annual rituals ought to be representative and useful also for the protection of other elements of intangible cultural heritage.

An investigation of press materials was completed between May 2023 and January 2024. The total number of press materials analysed was forty; to acquire additional information, the author of the present work also conducted expert interviews with the director of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, Hubert Czachowski (on 29 November 2023), and with the creator of the Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Belarus, Alla Stashkevich (on 24 October 2023), currently employed at the European Humanities University in Vilnius. On 9 December 2023, the author has also participated in an online class on ethics in the protection of intangible cultural heritage, taught by Alla Stashkevich to freelance participants and the students of the

European Humanities University. The class and the interviews were recorded and archived by the author along with the analysed press materials.

It should be emphasised that the media not only generate potential threats for elements of intangible cultural heritage, but also help popularise them in the society, reinforce attachment to native cultural heritage and increase its appreciation in bearer communities, since “media interest and attractiveness, and the resultant popularisation and promotion of certain phenomena have a significant impact on the process of defining one’s status within a given society and its culture” (Paprot 2016: 299).<sup>2</sup> An often overlooked fact is that media materials may also be used to monitor elements of intangible cultural heritage (cf. Smyk 2020; Marmysh 2020: 323; Góral, Kopiec 2023). As Hubert Czachowski stated in an expert interview,<sup>3</sup> the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń has actively used media materials to monitor the custom of *chodzenie z kozą* – “walking with a goat”, a carnival tradition in Kuyavia.

Threats to intangible cultural heritage have often been described in academic literature and documents issued by organisations involved in its protection. Paragraph 10 of UNESCO’s Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter Ethical Principles) informs: “Communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals should play a significant role in determining what constitutes **threats to their intangible cultural heritage** including the decontextualization, commodification and misrepresentation of it (...)” (Ethical Principles 2022:144; original emphasis). Ideally, it is the bearers that ought to recognise, characterise and evaluate threats. An analysis of the emic evaluation of media statements provided by the bearers would, however, exceed the scope of this article, which presents the etic perspective of an outsider researcher.

In her examination of the potential threats posed by inscribing elements of Belarusian intangible cultural heritage on the national register, Tatsiana Marmysh adds to the set outlined in the Ethical Principles, listing: the development of a model of national culture by expanding the register, commodification and commercialisation, decontextualisation, inventing tradition, rivalry between regions, and a distorted understanding of the issue of authenticity (Marmysh 2020).

Katarzyna Smyk identifies three groups of threats to intangible cultural heritage: „Group I – threats generated by social, economical, political and cultural processes; group II – threats contingent on the attitude of the bearers; group III – the negative influence of external actors; and group IV – natural factors” (Smyk 2023:54). Within this framework, most threats caused by the media fall into group III, since they stem from the negative influence of external actors. However, they also contribute to

2 All citations from non-English language sources have been translated solely for the purpose of the present article.

3 Recorded by A. Leshkevich in Toruń, 29 Nov. 2023.

globalisation (which Smyk categorises as a socio-economical and political threat) and to some threats contingent on the attitude of the bearers.

In the present article, threats to intangible cultural heritage generated by the media are categorised into three groups with regard to the subject responsible:

1. threats caused by the inappropriate behaviour of the producers of media materials;
2. threats resulting from the content of media messages;
3. threats resulting from media promotion.

Due to spatial constraints, the article focuses primarily on threats in the second category, while categories one and three are only illustrated with singular examples. It must also be noted that the classification is fuzzy: categories may overlap, intersect and occur in tandem.

### **Threats caused by the inappropriate behaviour of the producers of media materials**

The example that illustrates this category is associated with the springtime ritual of Juraŭski Karahod organised for the feast of St. George in the village of Pahost in Zhytkavichy district. The custom was added to the international List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2019, but had been relatively well-known in Belarus even earlier, not least because of the patronage it received from journalist Regina Hamzovich, who is also an expert in intangible cultural heritage. On her initiative, the ritual became the first element to be registered on the national list of intangible cultural heritage in Belarus;<sup>4</sup> the female bearers of the custom included the cordial and hospitable Katsyaryna Panchenya, who welcomed all contact (she passed away in 2023). Juraŭski Karahod consists of processions around the village and in the fields, done by the women of the 'Mizhrechcha' ensemble, once led by Panchenya. As part of the ceremony, three men carry ritual objects; the main performers of the ritual usually number around a dozen, and are followed by other residents of the village and the crowd of visitors. In some years, the visiting journalists were more numerous than the performers, and the villagers struggled to see the proceedings from behind the backs of the media crew. Reporters would at times move to the middle of the procession in the field in order to snap the best photo or get the most attractive footage, even though the custom dictates that the men carrying ritual objects be the only people present there. The situation was also mentioned by expert Alla Stashkevich, who regarded it as a violation of the Ethical Principles.<sup>5</sup> The document

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4 The Council affiliated with the Belarusian Ministry of Culture took the decision to inscribe the custom on the list in 2004, even before Belarus officially ratified the Convention (in 2006); *de iure*, the inscription was made in 2007, following a resolution by the Council of Ministers.

5 Recorded during online classes, 9 Dec. 2023.

was drafted with the assumption that it would foster a more respectful attitude towards intangible cultural heritage, also in the context of media activity (Schreiber 2020: 606). Similar situations nevertheless occur in Poland as well: Danuta Cholewa, for instance, mentions the overabundance of documentary crews filming during the Shrovetide event of *wodzenie niedźwiedzia* – “leading the bear”, in Silesia (Cholewa 2016: 201); the author of the present work was similarly unable to see the new-year practice of *jukace*, the carollers, turning back from the bridge over Soła, owing to the many media crews present at the location.<sup>6</sup>

Paragraph 5 of the Ethical Principles stipulates that “[c]ustomary practices governing access to intangible cultural heritage should be fully respected, even where these may limit broader public access” (Ethical Principles 2022: 144). Examples of such customary practices include forbidding men to participate in certain rituals believed to be meant for women, or *vice versa*. In many cases, however, communities do not have any customary practices regarding access to intangible cultural heritage, which are then created as time goes by. Stashkevich believes that, aside from the Ethical Principles, the dedicated code of ethics for journalists working with intangible cultural heritage, another potential means to prevent such situations might be community protocol developed by each group of bearers for their own purposes with the help of experts, to define the conditions for allowing intangible cultural heritage to be accessible to outsiders.<sup>7</sup> The optimal conditions for any given community would be largely dependent on specific local circumstances, e.g. in the case of the pre-Lent custom of burying *Dzied* [Grandfather] (holding a funeral for a puppet; a part of the *Maslenitsa* rites held in a private household) observed in Haradok district in Belarus, four journalists are enough to constitute a crowd,<sup>8</sup> but the same number present during *Maslenitsa* celebrations in the streets (as is the custom i.a. in the village of Tonyezh in Lyelchytsy district) would hardly be a problem. Sławomir Ratajski emphasises that “actors involved in activities aimed at promotion and popularisation ought to respect the local customs, especially ones that contain an element of mystery or *sacrum*” (Ratajski 2015: 18; original emphasis).

### Threats resulting from the content of media messages

In many of the analysed press articles, information on elements of intangible cultural heritage was provided with no context: it was probably assumed that the readers of local press would be familiar with, for instance, the topic of masked carollers; the details of operation of the national list of intangible cultural heritage or the UNESCO

<sup>6</sup> Author’s own field notes, 1 Jan. 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Recorded during an online conversation on 24 Oct. 2023 and online classes on 9 Dec. 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Author’s own field notes, 24 Feb. 2014.

Convention are never explained in the articles. Materials published in nationwide dailies and periodicals would potentially need even more contextual information, since the high degree of urbanisation in both Poland and Belarus means that the majority of the population knows very little about rural culture and intangible cultural heritage. Regrettably, the same may be said of journalists, as exemplified by one article found on the internet news site *Rzeczpospolita* (rp.pl), in which *zapustnicy* [Shrovetide revellers] were referred to as *kapustnicy* ['cabbagers'] (*Kapustnik...* 2017). It may be surmised that the journalist responsible for that publication was not familiar with the term *zapusty* [Shrovetide] or the celebrations associated therewith.

In press materials, the national register of intangible cultural heritage is sometimes confused with the UNESCO lists. Many texts suggest that if the national lists are kept in accordance with the UNESCO Convention, they automatically receive the patronage of that international organisation. In such cases it would be helpful to add expert commentaries to familiarise the recipients of the media with the role of the Convention and the difference between the national and international lists of intangible cultural heritage. Otherwise, there is a danger of misrepresentation of heritage, which may result in its decontextualisation.

Questions about the provenance of rituals are sometimes asked in Belarusian press, yet the answers provided differ greatly from the opinions of specialist. In 2016, internet news site Media-Polesye published an article entitled *З юбілеем, “Конікі”: Давыд-Гарадоцкім “Конікам” – сто гадоў!* [Congratulations on the jubilee, “Koniki”: “Koniki” from David-Haradok turn one hundred years old!] (Bazar 2016), which alleged that the roots of the carolling custom of *Koniki* practised in David-Haradok were associated with a halt of the tsarist army during the Great War. To justify this claim, the article cited statements by older residents of the town. Such unreflective acceptance of oral history is criticised on the official website of the list of intangible cultural heritage:

The director of the local historical museum in David-Haradok, Mikalai Pavlovich Brazovsky, referring to the recollections of his father, believes that the tradition of carolling with *koniki* dates back to 1916 and the Great War, when Cossacks stationed behind the front line went carolling with a horse, thus creating the figure of a mounted rider. Perhaps the design originated from that time, and it became tradition to dress the rider in a uniform. Generally speaking, though, carolling with a horse or a mare (and not with a goat) is a practice typical for Polesians. It played a central role in carolling not only in David-Haradok, but also in the neighbouring villages (Tradysyya 2020).

Nearly every resident of the Zabłocie district of Żywiec (or, indeed, the town itself) knows the legend connecting the *jukace* carollers to the story of driving out Swedish forces during the Swedish invasion known as the Deluge, when the people of Zabłocie helped King John Casimir scare the enemy away by cracking their whips by the bridge over the river Soła (which used to be the boundary between Zabłocie and

Żywiec, and remains the symbolical border between districts of Żywiec town). The author of the present work heard the story at least three times during the New Year's evening, from several *jukace*.<sup>9</sup> The legend is unmindfully repeated in the media (SILESIA FLESZ TVS 2024), even though scholars offer a very different explanation for the origins of the custom (Sychowska 2018: 161).



**Fig. 1.** *Jukace* from Zabłocie (Żywiec) against the backdrop of the bridge which, as legend has it, they are not allowed to cross. Photo by A. Leshkevich (2024).

In all probability, if the journalists had asked experts for their opinion, the history of the abovementioned custom would be presented in a more accurate fashion. However, few of the analysed press materials include statements by experts or the bearers of intangible cultural heritage, containing only the narratives of the author (or the editor). Such a way of presenting journalistic material contradicts the Ethical Principles (paragraph 1), according to which “[c]ommunities, groups and, where applicable, individuals should have the primary role in safeguarding their own intangible cultural heritage” (Ethical Principles 2022: 143). As Czachowski admitted in the expert interview,<sup>10</sup> it would be good if contemporary researchers studying annual rituals focused not only on classical ethnographic description, but also on why people choose to participate in such events. One may also apply this piece of advice to the work of journalists and encourage them to give voice to the bearers of intangible

<sup>9</sup> Author's own field notes, 31 Dec. 2023 and 1 Jan. 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Recorded in Toruń, 29 Nov. 2023.

cultural heritage. Otherwise, the media might contribute to increasing the danger of excluding the bearer community from safeguarding efforts (cf. Smyk 2023a: 63). Smyk also believes that press materials whose authors consulted the bearers of the heritage and the employees of local cultural institutions (acting as experts) are good for promoting intangible cultural heritage (Smyk 2016: 121, 129). These do not necessarily have to include direct statements from the bearers; they may just as well make use of the textual and audio-visual documentation created by them (cf. Smyk 2023b: 44; Cholewa 2016: 202).

In Belarusian press, elements of intangible cultural heritage are sometimes judged and evaluated. In the case of the *Koniki* carolling custom in David-Haradok in Stolin District, the ones that have come under much criticism are the new types of costumes and masks<sup>11</sup> gradually replacing traditional characters, which became the reason for rejecting the application to inscribe the custom on the national list of intangible cultural heritage in 2010. Ultimately, another application was filed in 2019 and the custom got on the list (*de iure* in 2020), yet the official website of the inventory of intangible cultural heritage informs of the following threats to the element: "The use of masks of contemporary characters to replace traditional masks whose significance is unclear to today's youth and children. The decline of traditional characters may be stopped if efforts are undertaken to explain Belarusian mythology and the symbolism of Christmas masks" (Tradytsyya... 2020). However, the example of Kuyavia indicates that this approach may not always be effective: during the annual review of Shrovetide groups in Lubraniec, museum employees always get on stage to talk about the symbolism of the characters "walking with a goat", yet the participants (most of whom are teenagers or youngsters) waiting for their turn to perform, are focused on the upcoming show and rarely listen to the speeches with attention.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the introduction of new characters is important for the residents of David-Haradok and positively valued by them, as evidenced by the following press material:

Irina Kroh [a resident of David-Haradok] claims that the costumes [of carollers] have changed greatly in the last ten years, and for the better. 'If before there was only Death, Baba Yaga or the Devil, now they [the costumes] are much more modern. We take the characters from movies that are relevant today...' (Kir'yanov 2016).

According to paragraph 6 of the Ethical Principles, "[e]ach community, group or individual should assess the value of its own intangible cultural heritage and this intangible

11 A classification of the new types of masks in David-Haradok may be found in one of the author's earlier publications on the carolling custom: (1) inspired by the mass culture of the USSR and post-Soviet states; (2) inspired by fairy tales and world fiction literature; (3) inspired by Western mass culture; (4) inspired by the broadly understood culture of the East, most probably adapted through the mass culture of Western or post-Soviet countries (Leshkevich 2023).

12 Author's own field notes, 21 Feb. 2023.



Fig. 2. One of the *Koniki* carolling groups in David-Haradok. Photo by A. Leshkevich (2017).

cultural heritage should **not be subject to external judgments of value or worth**. Paragraph 8 of the Ethical Principles asserts that “[t]he **dynamic and living nature of intangible cultural heritage** should be continuously respected. Authenticity and exclusivity should not constitute concerns and obstacles in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage” (Ethical Principles... 2022:144; original emphasis). Paragraph 10, already cited above, stipulates that it is the bearers that must assess potential threats to their heritage. The dangers of using the criterion of authenticity for expanding the Belarusian national inventory of intangible cultural heritage has been recognised by Marmysh, who emphasises that it also goes against the principles of the Convention (Marmysh 2020: 322–323). Smyk accentuates that “the heritage protected with the instruments of the 2003 UNESCO Convention ought to be living, and thus change in terms of content, function, as well as form. It is therefore necessary for the bearers to set boundary conditions that would allow them to determine when changes in heritage are too far-reaching and tradition is in danger of being lost” (Smyk 2023: 59–60). If a local community has an evaluative approach to tradition, “the knowledge acquired and the lifestyle shaped in line with traditional models prevent it from passively accepting foreign manifestations of mass culture while depreciating one’s own” (Czerwińska 2016: 44).

## Threats resulting from media promotion

The customs under scrutiny are influenced by popular culture promoted by the media. In her analysis of the introduction of American pop-culture characters into Shrovetide groups in Greater Poland, Aleksandra Paprot emphasises that it is the media "that propagate popular culture and shape cultural models" (Paprot 2016: 299). This influence is sometimes moderated by institutional authority; Krystyna Pawłowska, for instance, explains the introduction of mass-culture characters and the traditional image of Shrovetide bands in Kuyavia becoming more colourful with the defining influence of the annual Shrovetide Group Procession along the streets of Włocławek (Pawłowska 2014, 29). In her view, the event may even affect groups that had never participated in it, since their members acknowledge the high status of costumes used during the celebration (Pawłowska 2009, 31). The author of the present work is of the opinion that this transformative influence of the Procession is bolstered by the media coverage of the event: reports from the Procession in Włocławek constitute a significant percentage of the analysed press materials referring to the custom of "walking with a goat" in Kuyavia. However, irrespective of the effects of mass culture, globalisation, media and other external factors, one would be inclined to agree with Regina Bendix and Alicja Soćko-Mucha that "heritage does not constitute a ready-made, fixed formula, but rather a process, a cultural practice, a heritagisation" (Soćko-Mucha 2023: 46, after Bendix 2009), which in this case would mean that the need for change would arise within carolling groups regardless.

Promotion of intangible cultural heritage might lead to a significant increase in tourism, which could negatively affect the heritage itself – a threat that has long been discussed in relevant literature (Sivokhin 2013: 96; Ratajski 2015: 18, 22; Czerwińska 2016: 50; Kosmala 2016: 98–99; Machowska 2016; Smyk 2023: 59 and others). The advocated approach should be to develop mechanisms for and degrees of outsider access to intangible heritage that would suit the bearer community – in accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO documents stipulating that tourism should be managed in a sustainable way (Operational Directives... 2022: 67). Paragraph 102e of the Operational Directives states: "All parties are encouraged to take particular care to ensure that awareness-raising actions [in connection with intangible heritage] will not: (...) lead to over-commercialization or to unsustainable tourism that may put at risk the intangible cultural heritage concerned" (Operational Directives... 2022: 62). The entire Chapter VI.2.3 of the Operational Directives is dedicated to the impact of tourism on the development of intangible cultural heritage (Operational Directives... 2022: 90).

The impact of increased tourist traffic on Belarusian intangible heritage may be exemplified by the *Tsary* carolling ritual practiced in Semezhevo in Kapyl district, which was the first Belarusian element to be inscribed into a UNESCO list of intangible heritage (it was added to the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2009), and was subsequently promoted by the Belarusian media. The resulting



**Fig. 3.** *Tsary* carollers in Semezhevo surrounded by tourists and journalists. Photo by A. Leshkevich (2019).

popularity of the *Tsary* rite led to an increase in the number of tourists attending the event. When a bus carrying forty people willing to see the spectacle pulled up in the village, it quickly turned out that such a large group would not be able to fit into the house in which the rite was held. The carollers felt the pressure of having visitors, believing that they had to keep them interested. A solution was offered by local cultural managers: the first spectacle, before the carollers go about the village, is now presented on the front steps of the community centre. This change does not disturb the later parts of the ritual.<sup>13</sup>

It should be remembered that the States Parties of the UNESCO Convention are responsible for making sure that all tourist activity is carried out in a way that respects intangible cultural heritage – in accordance with Article 187 of the Operational Directives:

States Parties shall endeavour to ensure that any activities related to tourism, whether undertaken by the States or by public or private bodies, demonstrate all due respect to safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage present in their territories and to the rights, aspirations and wishes of the communities, groups and individuals concerned therewith” (Operational Directives... 2022: 90).

The solution introduced in Semezhevo by employees of a state cultural institution is therefore accordant with the Operational Directives.

<sup>13</sup> Author’s own field notes, 13 Jan. 2019 (the performance was added earlier, yet the author was unable to ascertain the exact year). The researcher and blogger Zmicier Skvarcheuski finds it doubtful that the increase in tourist traffic was the only reason for incorporating a performance on the front steps of the community centre into the custom. He also reports that the carolling is sometimes started later, if the village is expecting some tourists to come; a practice he assesses unfavourably (Skvarcheuski 2024).

## Conclusions

The media are among the factors that could potentially pose a threat to intangible cultural heritage, and have been identified as such in UNESCO documents and relevant literature. It should, however, be remembered that the media not only generate threats, but also play a more beneficial role: they facilitate the promotion of intangible cultural heritage within and without the bearer community, while media materials may be used as a source for monitoring elements of intangible cultural heritage. Threats to intangible cultural heritage generated by the media can be categorised into three groups with regard to the subject responsible: (1) threats caused by the inappropriate behaviour of the producers of media materials; (2) threats resulting from the content of media messages; (3) threats resulting from media promotion.

The analysis conducted led to the conclusion that the principal threat to intangible cultural heritage that stems from the functioning of the media in general and the content of media messages in particular, is the misrepresentation of heritage. All of the examples discussed herein (providing information on elements of intangible cultural heritage without any context; confusing the national registers of intangible cultural heritage with the UNESCO lists; attempting to trace the origins of rituals; not including statements from the bearers of intangible cultural heritage or experts thereon; judging the value of elements of intangible cultural heritage) have a clear connection to this very issue. Some of the examples additionally illustrate such threats as excluding the bearer community from the protection measures and judging intangible cultural heritage in terms of its authenticity, which is in clear contradiction with the Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Threats resulting from media promotion include the promotion of models known from popular culture, sometimes moderated by institutional authority, as well as a significant increase in tourist traffic. The advocated approach should be to develop mechanisms for and degrees of outsider access to intangible heritage that would suit the bearer community – in accordance with the provisions of the Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Threats arising from the inappropriate behaviour of the producers of media materials may be exemplified by the conduct of journalists who disturb local communities during rituals. There is also the delicate issue of disallowing men from participating in rituals regarded as meant for women (and the other way around), which causes problems for media workers (men or women, depending on the situation), sometimes preventing them from performing their assigned tasks. The opinion of the intangible cultural heritage bearer community must come first in dealing with such issues.

In the future, the results of analyses identifying threats to intangible cultural heritage may be used to develop recommendations for a code of ethics for journalists and

other individuals working with intangible cultural heritage in the media field. It should, however, be noted that the hierarchy of dangers may vary for different elements of intangible cultural heritage, and that all the parties involved (the media, experts, the bearers) should execute particular caution in this respect, and be ready to communicate any problem that may arise.

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## Summary

The article aims to identify threats to intangible cultural heritage generated by the media, which can be used to develop recommendations for a code of ethics for journalists and other individuals working with intangible cultural heritage in the media field. The media is one of the factors potentially threatening intangible cultural heritage as identified in UNESCO documents and research papers. Threats to intangible cultural heritage generated by the media can be categorised into three groups with regard to the subject responsible: 1) threats caused by the inappropriate behaviour of the producers of media materials; 2) threats resulting from the content of media messages; 3) threats resulting from media promotion. The examples analysed are media messages describing annual rituals. The present work offers not only the perspective of a researcher, but also that of a journalist who has been writing about intangible cultural heritage issues for the Belarusian media since 2012.

**Keywords:** intangible cultural heritage, Poland, Belarus, media, annual rites

## Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja zagrożeń dla niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego związanych z mediami, co w dalszej perspektywie może posłużyć do wypracowania rekomendacji dla kodeksu etycznego dziennikarzy i innych jednostek pracujących z niematerialnym dziedzictwem kulturowym w polu medialnym. Media są jednym z czynników potencjalnie zagrażających

niematerialnemu dziedzictwu kulturowemu, identyfikowanych w dokumentach UNESCO i w literaturze przedmiotu. Tworzone przez media zagrożenia dla niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego dają się usystematyzować w trzy grupy ze względu na podmiot działania: 1) zagrożenia spowodowane niewłaściwym zachowaniem wytwórców materiałów medialnych; 2) zagrożenia wynikające z treści przekazu medialnego; 3) zagrożenia będące skutkiem promocji medialnej. Przeanalizowane zostały przekazy medialne opisujące obrzędy doroczne. Niniejszy tekst pisany jest nie tylko z pozycji badaczki, ale również dziennikarki, która od 2012 r. pisze o zagadnieniach związanych z niematerialnym dziedzictwem kulturowym dla białoruskich mediów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** niematerialne dziedzictwo kulturowe, Białoruś, Polska, media, obrzędy doroczne

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