



18 December 2020

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Intangible cultural heritage: the practices of construction workshops (*Bauhütten*) added to the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices**

**On 18 December 2020, the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage inscribed the practices of construction workshops (*Bauhütten*) on its Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. The nomination was submitted by 18 construction workshops from five European countries.**

The full title of the nomination was 'The craft techniques and customary practices of cathedral workshops, or *Bauhütten*, in Europe: know-how, transmission, development of knowledge and innovation.' A total of 18 workshops in Austria, France, Germany, Norway, and Switzerland came together to nominate the work of construction workshops for inscription on the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. 'The biggest advantage of construction workshops is that restoration work is continually carried out by a team that has a very close bond with the building in question that knows its sensitive points inside out,' said Andreas Hindemann, chief architect at Basel Minster. 'We are absolutely thrilled by this positive outcome and the associated recognition of our work,' he added.

The nomination was submitted by Aachen Cathedral Workshop, the State Cathedral Workshop in Bamberg, the Basel Minster Workshop Foundation, Dresden Zwinger Workshop (the only secular workshop in the group), Freiburg Minster Workshop, Cologne Cathedral Workshop, New Cathedral Workshop Linz an der Donau, Church Workshop Lübeck, Mainz Cathedral Workshop, State Cathedral Workshop Passau, State Cathedral Workshop Regensburg, Holy Cross Minster Workshop in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Westphalian Cathedral Workshop at St Maria zur Wiese in Soest, Cathedral of Our Lady of Strasbourg Workshop Foundation, Nidaros Cathedral Workshop in Trondheim, Ulm Minster Workshop, St Stephen's Cathedral Workshop in Vienna, and Xanten Cathedral Workshop.

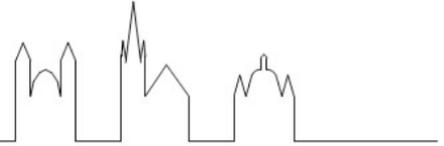
Criteria for recognition by UNESCO as good safeguarding practices include these practices being recognised by the community as being an active part of its cultural heritage and providing the community with a sense of identity, the development of measures to keep the practice alive, and exemplary, potentially cross-border co-operation.

### **THE PATH TO INSCRIPTION ON THE UNESCO REGISTER**

The nomination process began in 2015 when Ulm Minster Workshop submitted an application to be included on the German Nationwide Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the Cathedral of Our Lady of Strasbourg Workshop Foundation applied for inclusion on the Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in France. In June 2017, the Cathedral of Our Lady of Strasbourg Workshop Foundation was included on the French National List of Traditional Cultural Expression. The corresponding German application (which had subsequently been joined by Cologne and

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Freiburg) was approved in March 2018 when the three were included in the German Nationwide Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The international nomination process was kick-started by the so-called 'Declaration of Erfurt' in September 2017: delegates at the annual conference of the *europäische Vereinigung der Dombaumeister, Münsterbaumeister und Hüttenmeister e. V.* (European Association of Cathedral Architects, Minster Architects, and Workshop Masters) agreed to support an international nomination. 'We are very well connected within the association, and we wanted to use these connections in a worthwhile way, to publicise them, and to raise awareness of what makes our workshops so special,' says Yvonne Faller, chief minster architect in Freiburg and deputy chair of the association. Starting in November 2017, a number of meetings were held to prepare the nomination, which was eventually submitted in Paris by a 15-strong delegation on 6 February 2019. Some 18 months later, the process has now ended with the inscription of these special construction workshops on the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

## WHAT MAKES THESE WORKSHOPS SO SPECIAL?

Cathedral and minster workshops (*Bauhütten*) are multidisciplinary in nature: such workshops employ a wide variety of people ranging from apprentices and journeypersons to workshop masters, minster architects, and cathedral architects. They transmit the knowledge and skills of a wide variety of trades, train people who are just starting out in these trades, keep festivals and rituals alive, document their work, and are ambassadors to the outside world. Some workshops also include archivists, art historians, communication officers, and commercial staff. Construction workshops essentially see themselves as centres of expertise for all things to do with stone. 'We have such a diverse team: the art historian works closely with the stonemason, the restorer works hand in hand with the geologist in order to study and understand the stone structure and come up with optimum ways to conserve it,' explains Eric Fischer, director of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Strasbourg Workshop Foundation. Moreover, in recent decades, public relations has become a considerable part of the workshop's remit in order to keep patrons and the public in general informed of the importance of conserving the buildings in question and to strengthen the bond between the public and the workshop. At institutional level, a variety of different bodies are responsible for the workshops: some are managed by municipalities, others by Church bodies, states, foundations, or associations.

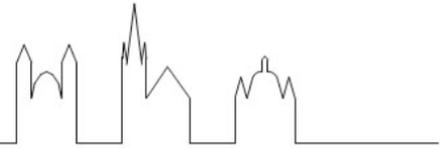
## CONSTRUCTION WORKSHOPS FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE PRESENT DAY

Since the Middle Ages, construction workshops have been set up on the construction sites of cathedrals and major churches in Europe. Then and now, these workshops are situated directly alongside their respective church buildings and bring together people from a wide variety of trades who work closely on the building and preserve their knowledge by handing it down from generation to generation.

In addition, since the Late Middle Ages, there have been close links between the various workshops across the continent, allowing for the emergence of a network that spanned not only regions, but also countries, and empires. Two cathedral workshops (Strasbourg and Freiburg) have existed continuously since the Middle Ages, while others were closed down and re-established in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g. Basel) or were set up for the first time (e.g. Dresden). The motivation to set up each and every one of these workshops was to conserve, develop, or build (in the case of Linz) cathedrals, large churches, or major buildings.

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To this day, these workshops together constitute a lively, international network of communication and people who are devoted to the research, documentation, and transmission of knowledge and, above all, the conservation of cathedrals and major buildings. 'International exchange between these workshops has long been par for the course. We work closely with each other and openly share our expertise and experience. We have no professional secrets from each other and do not see each other as competitors, but as colleagues from whom we can learn,' says Peter Füssenich, chief architect at Cologne Cathedral.

## PHOTOS

Photos for print and digital use attached. Credits: Claudia Tabori.

