

REPORT ON THE 5TH IOV YOUTH CONGRESS- MYSLENICE, POLAND

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Introduction:

The 5th IOV Youth congress took place in Mysłenice, Poland, from July 13- 16, 2017, with 20 participants from countries such as Hungary, Belarus, Vietnam, Bahrain, Syria, Guatemala, Senegal and Austria, at the Malopolska School Of Hospitality. Participants spent a week in a flurry of cultural exchange, teaching one another about stories and aspects of their heritage close to their hearts. Presenters gave away paintings, demonstrated dances and played traditional instruments, while dressed in their country's national costumes.

The conference was directed by Mr. Pitor Szewczyk, along with a team of volunteers and some IOV alumni. It was launched with a speech by the President of the IOV, Ali Khalifa, as well as the mayor of Myslenice.

Also, the congress was held in conjunction with the Malopolska Festival, a much anticipated event in Poland, filled with food, dance and stalls teemed with local artisanal products. Dance groups came from Kenya, Pakistan, Peru, Paraguay, Brazil, Armenia, Bulgaria and Poland. Moreover, the festival/congress organizers provided food and accommodation for all participants.

Polish press (television and radio) paid special attention to the event and interviewed the IOV president several times. Along with that, the top cultural officials in the city attended the opening ceremony and held banquets, which the president attended.

Activities:

Throughout the congress, youth participants presented topics under the theme of *Folk Fusion* and educated one other about unique festivals in their country, art and music, the soap industry, embroidery and more. Examples include, The Busho Festival in Hungary, an overview

of Senegalese Culture, Vietnamese painting, the Aleppo Soap Industry and the importance of storytelling. They led workshops on crafts like Hungarian dance and souvenirs and discussed topics crucial to the IOV Youth's development, which mainly focused on defining Intangible Cultural Heritage, setting long and short term goals for the Youth Commission and creating rhizomes and multi-cultural squares that showcase each participant's unique background. Moreover, Luba Pergova and Joanna Dziadowiec moderated all of the workshops and steered the discussion towards setting an agenda for the next IOV Youth Commission. Other guest lecturers spoke about Polish Ballroom Dancing and "The Preservation of You", which looks at the heart of how we define ourselves.

Highlights

Network: One of the key goals set by the congress was to create a stronger and more in depth network for the organization. This included:

- 1- An academic database, with all professors in the field of folk art and culture listed.
- 2- A practitioner's database, organized according to profession. Therefore anytime you wanted to hold an event related to a particular craft, you had a wealth of contacts at your fingertips.

Participants also suggested that there be more resources available to each national section, to encourage them to be more active and to give them the tools needed to hold successful conferences and events.

Some of the goals set:

- 1- Stronger network: social media pages and the blog need to be updated regularly and encourage interactivity.
- 2- IOV Youth can establish small awards in events to encourage further participation and award scholars and artists.
- 3- Partnership with AFS and UNESCO to extend the current database access.
- 4- Create a guide for each national section on how to spread awareness of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- 5- Marketing products by local artisans and creating more projects for them.
- 6- Produce a youth music album/ record label, with different artist contributions.
- 7- Stay connected to encourage participants to attend future congress events.
- 8- Developing an app and a YouTube channel.

Elections

At the final day of the congress, a general assembly was held to nominate and elect a new Youth Commission Board. Oyuna Baldakova, the previous Vice Chair of Communications led this portion of the congress and along with Luba Pergova, opened up the voting for vacant positions on the IOV Youth's Facebook page. She noted that this round of elections had the highest online participation rate in the history of the congress.

The page was alive with voters from around the world. Due to the enthusiasm of the participants and the number of people interested in a single post, the Syrian delegate suggested including more than one person in each job position to create a stronger team and to encourage those who want to join. The previous commission discussed her proposal and agreed. Thus most vacancies were filled by two people, creating a Vice Chair and Deputy Chair. The only one chair

that remained unfilled was the Vice Chair of Practitioners, later taken by a delegate from Hungary and agreed upon by the current elected board.

Results and the new board:

Chair of the IOV Youth Commission (Luba Pergova), Secretary General and Deputy (Van Ha and Minh Phuc), Vice Chair of Academics (Joanna Dziadowiec), Vice Chair and Deputy of Publications (Shereen Rafea and Maria Nagy), Vice Chair of Practitioners (Vanda Anna Illes), Vice Chair and Deputy of Communications (Herry Sipun and Amsatou Diop), Vice Chair Special Projects and Deputy (Boushra Dabbagh and Olga Yanushkevich)

Strengths and Weaknesses:

The congress was a successful mix of lectures and workshops, which encourages the participants to move around and interact with one another and produce art projects. This is a strong format that is good to repeat. However the schedule needed better planning of breaks throughout the day. For example, with the concert, the day would stretch from 9:30 am- 9:30 pm, with only one lunch break. This makes it difficult to focus on all the activities planned throughout the day. The workshop of Polish dolls added a perfect local touch to the schedule and this was crucial to educate the congress on the host country. Overall, IOV Youth is showing great progress and we hope that the next board continues to add to the path laid out in 2007 and onwards.

Impressions of Bahraini delegates:

This was our first meeting with the IOV Youth. Therefore, it was an exciting opportunity to get to know the ways in which Bahraini youth can directly contribute to the organization and

join the existing efforts. We were impressed by the wide variety of projects we heard about from around the world, including art, music, dance, festivals and customs. Throughout that the week we spent with delegates from the different countries mentioned, we lived in an atmosphere where cultures mixed together in a brilliant way. The world, which looked so big before, seemed a little bit smaller and more connected after that week. Furthermore any differences each person had, made them unique in the congress and attracted attention.

Other participants eagerly asked questions about Bahrain, about our dress, customs, and stories and expressed an interest in visiting our country. This warmed our hearts and in turn we asked them question about Senegal, Guatemala, Hungary, Belarus and more. We gave a presentation on story telling in Bahrain and actively participated in the workshops.

At the end, we set goals along with other congress members and joined the commission. We will work towards creating publications for IOV Youth, which will carry our names on them and have a distinct Bahraini vibe in it. This was in addition to writing down the phone numbers and contact information of most of the other delegates. We aim to keep in touch and create a productive and viable network.

Poland

This country, with its vibrant greenery and friendly citizens was a great destination. What stood out during our trip was the hospitality and hard work of the volunteers, many of whom were teenagers. They worked day and night to ensure that the conference runs smoothly and that we are comfortable and happy. Moreover, some of them were very knowledgeable about the history of their country, for example Mr. Ali's guide Tomas, was a great tour guide and taught us

a lot about Poland. Therefore, this inspired us to be a stronger team, when we host others in Bahrain and gave us ideas on what to offer future IOV guests.

Conclusion

The 5th Youth Congress was an informative and interactive conference, which added to our knowledge and helped us gain experience in the field of event management, networking, project development and more. We hope that other members of Folk Culture can experience this congress in the future and become active members of the IOV. This will bring to life one of the core goals set out in the IOV plan 2020, which was to involve more youth in the organization.