



Regierung der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens
Isabelle Weykmans
Ministerin für Kultur, Beschäftigung und Tourismus

Press Release

30.11.2016

Joint press release by the Ministers for Culture for the German-speaking Community in Belgium, Ms Isabelle Weykmans, the Flemish Community, Mr Sven Gatz, the French-speaking Community of Belgium, Ms Alda Greoli, and the Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region, in charge of intangible cultural heritage, Mr Rudi Vervoort.

UNESCO recognises beer in Belgium as intangible cultural heritage

Today, in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), UNESCO decided that Belgian beer culture deserved a place on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Ministers Isabelle Weykmans, Alda Greoli, and Sven Gatz, each in charge of Culture in the German-speaking, French, and Flemish Communities in Belgium respectively, and Rudi Vervoort, Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region, in charge of intangible cultural heritage, are delighted with UNESCO's positive news.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines intangible cultural heritage as all "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity".

The German-speaking Community submitted the application to UNESCO on behalf of Belgium. This was done with support from the brewers' organisations, beer tasting associations, beer promoters, specialised NGOs, and educational institutions. It took a year and a half to evaluate the application. The dossier underwent a strict selection procedure.

Beer culture is experienced all over the country. There are breweries, beer tasting associations, museums, courses and classes, events, festivals, restaurants, and pubs in every province that contribute to the creativity and diversity of the Belgian beer landscape. Various practices even have local origins. For example, Lambic beers were and still are brewed in Brussels and the Pajottenland, using a process of spontaneous fermentation. Saison beers are brewed primarily in Wallonia, "Oud Bruin" beers are brewed primarily in West Flanders, while washed-rind cheeses ripened with beer originated in abbeys like Chimay. Moreover, there are clearly distinguishable flavour patterns that differ from region to region.

Beer is also brewed in our neighbouring countries. But it is the unparalleled diversity of the art of brewing and the intensity of the beer culture, as a part of our daily lives and at festivals in our country, that make this beer culture a part of the identity and the cultural heritage of the entire country.

What the members of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage liked especially were the measures to protect the beer culture, such as the development and provision of professional training courses, the

promotion of the beer culture, and the establishment of a monitoring centre to safeguard the diversity of the art of brewing and its valuation in Belgium. The UNESCO Committee especially appreciated the fact that a great deal of attention in Belgian beer culture goes to combating excessive alcohol consumption and that adapted measures are used to address a constantly changing society, which safeguards the viability of beer culture in the long term.

The UNESCO recognition is an important moral boost for the beer culture in our country, and a reward for the efforts made by all those in Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels, and the German-speaking Community to keep this rich beer culture alive.

Isabelle Weykmans, Deputy Minister-President of the German-speaking Community, Minister for Culture, Employment, and Tourism:

"The UNESCO recognition is the pinnacle of the work done by countless beer brewers, beer lovers, beer promoters, and zythologists who have lifted our beer culture to such a level that it is worth protecting. This recognition will give Belgian beer culture even more gloss and attitude around the world. I am particularly pleased that the German-speaking Community, despite being the smallest Community in the country, was able to make such an important contribution to the recognition of a culture that is a part of our identity and of which we all should be and are proud of."

Sven Gatz, Flemish Minister for Culture, Media, Youth, and Brussels:

"We have a suitable beer for every occasion. We drink beer as a thirst-quencher after an exhilarating walk, during a friendly evening in the local pub, or as part of our gastronomy. We love our beer and appreciate the endless diversity within it, something that cannot be equalled anywhere else in the world. In Belgium, beer does not have to give way to wine or other drinks in terms of quality and diversity. I am very pleased, both as Minister for Culture and as a hobby brewer, that UNESCO has recognised the creativity and diversity of our beer culture."

Alda Greoli, Deputy President of the French-speaking Community/Federation Wallonia-Brussels, and Minister for Culture and Children:

"Beer culture means so much more than just appreciating the product 'beer' in all its varieties. It includes the social habits, rituals, traditions, and the special knowledge and skills of individuals, groups of people, and even entire communities. An exceptional characteristic is that this culture has been handed down from generation to generation since time immemorial, and contributes to a communal identity. This has resulted in a beer culture that is characterised by an explosion of artisanal creativity and love for the brewing craft."

Rudi Vervoort, Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region:

"The beer culture is something Belgians are proud of, something that has been a part of our society since time immemorial, and which has garnered international appreciation. I hope that this recognition will contribute to encouraging Belgians to share our beer culture throughout the world with even more pride."

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This press release can also be found in the online press room (www.dgkulturerbe.be/pressroom) in other languages, as can photo and film materials, as well as the entire UNESCO dossier.

Invitation

The official announcement will take place today at 3 p.m. in Het Brouwershuis/Maison des Brasseurs on the Grote Markt/Grand Place in Brussels in the presence of the Ministers for Culture, brewers, and beer tasters. At that occasion we will also be toasting this wonderful news with several of our excellent Belgian beers. You are most welcome.

For more information:

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Office of the Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region (Rudi Vervoort),
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For questions concerning the UNESCO Conventions, or intangible cultural heritage in general:

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For questions concerning beer, the brewing process, and breweries:

Belgian Brewers, Jean-Louis van de Perre, chairman,
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For questions concerning beer tastings and zythology:

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For all other questions:

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