



International Amateur Radio Union Region 1



**2017 General Conference – Landshut, Germany
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Subject	Morse code, an intangible cultural heritage		
Society	VERON	Country:	The Netherlands
Committee:	C3	Paper number:	LA17_C3_40
Author:	Remy Denker, PA3AGF		

1. Introduction

This paper calls for attention of member societies to the decision made by the IARU Region 1 General Conference, Sun City 2011, to safeguard Morse code as an intangible cultural heritage.

2. Background

At the IARU Region1 General Conference 2011 in Sun City it was decided that each member society would try to get Morse code placed on the list of national intangible cultural heritages. This decision, as proposed in paper SC11_C3_32, was approved unanimously. So far only Belgium, Germany (carried out by the IKM; Interessengruppe Kulturerbe Morsetelegraphie) and The Netherlands have succeeded.

For that reason, it is requested that more societies once more look for the opportunity to get Morse code on their national list of heritages.

3. Keypoints and proposal

Becoming an Intangible Heritage would be an adequate honour for Morse code and could gain the popularity even in modern times.

Up to now, after six years, only 3 member societies have succeeded in getting Morse code on the national list of intangible cultural heritage.

To this end it is proposed that a significant majority of IARU-Region 1 member societies starts or continues negotiations on a national level.

This proposal is supported by UBA and DARC.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended to continue the initiative within IARU-Region 1 to get Morse code on different national lists of heritage.

Furthermore, it is highly recommended in tasking IARU to request UNESCO for establishing Morse code as an intangible heritage.

Appendix 1 gives a description of the Dutch experiences.

Appendix 2 gives a description of the Belgian experiences

Appendix 3 gives a description of the German experiences and some suggestions.

The Dutch experience in obtaining the status *"Morse code an Intangible Cultural Heritage"*

1. Introduction

At the IARU Region 1 conference in South-Africa (2011), it was agreed that steps would be taken to get Morse code registered as an Intangible Cultural Heritage at UNESCO. Recognition at this level would mean that Morse code is accepted as a worldwide heritage.

In the meantime, the other two IARU Regions have expressed the same desire.

VERON was told it needs a recognition by the Dutch Government before it can be carried forward at UNESCO level.

2. Work to be carried out

The Dutch Government has delegated this procedure to the Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed in Nederland (KIEN). KIEN assists local (Dutch) traditions to be registered as a Dutch Intangible Cultural Heritage. When VERON put in a request to get this nomination, it was initially not accepted as Morse code was not seen as a Dutch tradition.

It took quite some discussions to get the request accepted. Finally, the art to communicate via manually performed Morse code telegraphy was accepted, because it is in compliance with the respective definition of Article 2 point 2 of the UNESCO Convention for the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH).

A set of forms had to be filled with the following subjects:

- Background and history of the tradition
 - Bottlenecks in sustaining the tradition
 - Action in sustaining the tradition
 - What has been achieved / what has not been achieved
 - Which actions will be taken to make sure it will be achieved
- In view of this it should be noted that it is important to indicate how the tradition will be and can be passed on to the next generation.

Progress will be monitored every two years. If you don't comply to their standards one can lose the registration.

In 2015 VERON was granted the nomination, so VERON is very proud that Morse code has been accepted as a heritage in The Netherlands. As far as we know, VERON is the first society who got this accomplished.



From that moment, onwards we are allowed to carry the following sign at our website and PR material.

4. How to carry it forward towards a UNESCO nomination?

KIEN is busy setting standards for heritages to be carried forward towards a UNESCO nomination. At the time of writing it is not yet known to which standards to comply.

KIEN has to get their request accepted by the Department of Cultural affairs, followed by an acceptance by the Ministry of Welfare. In the end representatives of this ministry have to support the proposal at the UNESCO meeting which takes place every two years.

To increase the chances for acceptance by UNESCO, it is advised to carry it forward as a multinational nomination. This implies that the proposal needs to be supported by other national institutes hence radio societies requested to contact their national institutes to get Morse code accepted as a heritage. As a prerequisite to be able to support a multinational UNESCO nomination, the Morse code telegraphy has to be included in the official national register of a participating country. But only those countries may file a nomination to UNESCO which are so called States Parties of the respective Convention. It is advisable to consult the homepage of UNESCO under: www.unesco.org/culture/ich

The step between the national recognition and a UNESCO recognition requires a lot of work. In view of the fact that a multinational nomination is preferred by UNESCO, VERON has been in contact with the UBA and DARC and it has been decided that the three societies will go ahead along this path. VERON will take the lead in this process.

Where DARC is mentioned it must be said that DARC has given permission to a group of German ex-maritime radio telegraphists called IKM (Interessengruppe Kulturerbe Morsetelegrafie) to represent them in this context. Both groups, DARC and IKM now consolidated work together under the name AKM (Arbeitskreis Kulturerbe Morsetelegrafie). In the meantime, KIEN has been informed about the cooperation between VERON, UBA and AKM and is willing to support a multinational proposal.

AKM has decided to contact the German UNESCO representative and has asked the IARU Region 1 president to write a declaration in which Morse code and the heritage is explained. This declaration can be found under Appendix A. It may be used by any IARU member society. Furthermore, the president of Region 1 is requested to discuss this topic with the IARU president with the objective to discuss it with the presidents of Region 2 and 3.

5. Request for support

Although VERON, UBA and AKM are now carrying it forward, the IARU Region 1 societies are kindly requested to start discussions with their government with the objective to get the Morse code awarded as a national heritage. In most countries, the governments have appointed a national UNESCO-Commission to deal with all heritage matters, especially for issues which in the first step have to be dealt with on the national level. The more national registrations exist, the better we stand in view of a multinational nomination and the acceptance by UNESCO.

For further information please contact:

Remy F.G. Denker PA3AGF,
President of the VERON,
E: voorzitter@veron.nl,
M: +3143512456.



International Amateur Radio Union Region 1
 Europe, Middle East, Africa and Northern Asia Founded 1950
 Hares Cottage, Woolston, Church Stretton, SY6 6QD, England
 Tel: +44 1694 781 666 E-mail: president@iaru-r1.org

To: The national UNESCO-Commissions of States Parties of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The International Amateur Radio Union has since 1925 been the worldwide federation of national amateur radio member societies. Currently it has a membership of some 170 countries throughout the world. The Amateur Radio Service is regulated by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which is a specialized agency of the United Nations Organization.

In the early 20th century, the Maritime and the Amateur Radio Services were the first users of the newly discovered radio waves. From the very beginning, the Amateur Radio Service utilized Morse Code, which had been used for many decades previously for land-line communication. After 1999, the ITU discontinued Morse code telegraphy for any professional or commercial services, but this communication mode continues to be extensively used by radio amateurs on a voluntary basis.

The knowledge and skill to communicate by manually generating Morse code telegraphy, which became an international standard in 1865, is in danger of decreasing. Our members' societies wish to continue to utilize Morse code telegraphy in future years, not only because it is a very efficient form of radio communication for low-power transmissions, but also in order to safeguard this Intangible Cultural Heritage for coming generations.

Based on a proposal of the Amateur Radio Societies of Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands the art to communicate via Morse code already is included in the national registers of these countries. Morse Code as an intangible heritage would seem to fully comply with the criteria in Article 2 (2) of the relevant UNESCO Convention.

In view of the fact that:

- Morse code telegraphy is a heritage which has been used universally in all countries of the world,
- although Morse Code carries the name of its inventor in the USA, a German national converted the original complicated alphabet into the form which since 1865 is administered by the ITU,
- this basic system is converted for the use of special characters in various languages (e.g. Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, Russian/Cyrillic ...),
- in some countries, communication via Morse code telegraphy is historically connected to important events (England, Italy, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Tanzania, USA ...),

.....it is clear that the cultural impact of Morse Code cannot be attributed to a specific or single

country.

The worldwide community of radio amateurs, as the last group able to safeguard the cultural heritage of Morse code, follows detailed international and national rules and regulations. Additionally, it follows a very strict code of honour which is in full accordance with the requirement of the Operational Directives (No. 102(c) of the relevant Convention which reads:

102. All parties are encouraged to take particular care to ensure that awareness raising actions will not:

(c) contribute to justifying any form of political, social, ethnic, religious, linguistic or gender-based discrimination

Morse code telegraphy was the foundation on which several international organizations were able to fulfil their obligations. As examples, this was the case for:

- International Maritime Organization – IMO
- International Civil Aviation Organization – ICAO
- International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities – IALA
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – IFRC
- International Amateur Radio Union – IARU

Considering the above, the IARU therefore recommends

- that Morse code telegraphy be included in the national registers of Intangible Heritage,
- that support should be provided so as to have Morse code telegraphy nominated and accepted by UNESCO for the inclusion in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

For the International Amateur Radio Union Region 1

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. F. B. centi', is written over a horizontal line.

President

February 2017



How UBA managed Morse code to be listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in Belgium

1. Introduction

After the resolution was approved during the Conference in Sun City (2011) to try to put the Morse code on the UNESCO list as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), the board of the UBA decided in 2012 to go for it. We contacted the Belgian government for more information.

We were confronted with the fact that Belgium has three different language communities (Flemish, French and German) and each community requires a set of documents in their own language. We started in 2013 with the Flemish community.

2. Flemish community

To be approved on the Flemish list of ICH, you need to prove that your organisation is taking action to preserve the item you want to put on the list. All those actions need to be registered on a website. (See <http://www.immaterieelerfgoed.be/Detail/wat/179>).

To do so we could use the expertise of an organisation specialised in preservation of scientific, technical and industrial cultural heritage, called ETWIE (see www.etwie.be).

In 2013, we started this project. We registered our usual activities as radio amateur (QSOs, Contests, lessons, demonstrations, etc.). The jury decided that these activities were not enough to be put on the list of ICH. The jury commented that we needed to more efforts towards the public. The national press became aware of our request at the ICH.

We prepared an action to be held in the period of the yearly “day of cultural heritage” (3rd Sunday in April). Different local clubs joined together preparing this day (24 April 2014). On 10 places, we did the same kind of activities:

- Writing a brochure about Morse (for the public). 10 000 copies were printed and distributed during 2014 and 2015). This was also sponsored by the organisation who guided us through the proces (ETWIE).
- An exhibition about the history and meaning of the Morse code

- Activities for children (building a Morse keyer with buzzer which they can use to play “see battle” in CW).
- Activating 10 special callsigns (OS1xM) and QSO were awarded with a diploma. That month we made 21 587 QSOs and 603 diplomas were delivered (with the 10 stations).
- During the day our 10 stations were situated on places where activities of public interest was organized (Museum, Castles, Atlantic Wall, etc.)



All those activities were announced and commented in the National media (papers, radio, TV). Based on these activities we manage to be placed on the list of ICH in Flanders in December 2014.

Now we need still to prove that we are active to preserve the Morse code, also to the great public on a long-term base. So, all activities need to be mentioned on the website of ICH. Many local clubs are doing this kind of activity now on a regular base. This was/is also a trigger for our local clubs to get more involved in the cultural activities in their community.

3. Other communities

In 2015, we introduced a demand to the French and German community based on the experience we had in Flanders. This resulted in the recognition by the German community in 2016. The recognition by the French community is pending.

Jacques Verleijen, ON4AVJ

Project Coordinator Morse ICH for the Flemish community



Arbeitskreis Kulturerbe Morsetelegrafie (AKM) (Working group for the cultural heritage of Morse code telegraphy)

Norbert Gabriel
Langgasse 123 b
D-67454 Hassloch, Germany
E-mail: Norbert.Gabriel@t-online.de
Phone: +4963249235935
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Our experience in succeeding to have Morse code included in the Intangible Cultural Heritage list of Germany.

Germany became a State Party member (*) of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Convention in 2013. In that year, the German UNESCO-Commission published a comprehensive application questionnaire which was based on the one UNESCO had published earlier. With this information at hand, DARC (German Amateur Radio Club) and a group of former maritime radio officers jointly succeeded to have the 'Art to communicate via Morse code telegraphy' added to the German Intangible Cultural Heritage inventory list. This same consolidated working group is now striving for international recognition by UNESCO. The complete documentation (in German language) may be viewed at www.doese-apprt.de/draft/kerbeakm.html

Our information includes documents of support we received from:

- 6 national amateur radio clubs which specifically deal with Morse code telegraphy (CW)
- 2 maritime radio clubs
- 1 maritime radio museum
- 1 school for maritime and amateur radio training
- 1 society for the history of radio communication

In the first year of operation the German UNESCO-Commission accepted 26 out of 90 applications for inclusion, ours among them. The following years brought an even greater number of applications. It is therefore recommended to get an early start before a big rush might be on in your country.

1. Suggestions on how to proceed

Before contacting any official government agency responsible for cultural matters, find out if radio clubs exist, which may have an interest in ICH and CW. This would most likely be maritime radio operator organizations. Radio societies dealing with the history of radio communication may be interested to participate as well. Then as a group contact any official governmental agency and ask for support and help to proceed further. This first step is only available by a country on its own.

Later in the process two or more countries may join as a group for international recognition. Good advice would always be to inform yourself about UNESCO's Convention of ICH to get a feeling for the questions which you will have to deal with. This first step of national recognition of course only makes sense, if your country is a member of the ICH Convention, which you can easily find out on the homepage of UNESCO(*).

As a second step a country may nominate an ICH to UNESCO for international recognition. UNESCO will give priority to multinational files and files from States with the fewest elements inscribed in the Representative List. Since in Belgium, The Netherlands and in Germany CW already is included in the national registers, interest groups of these countries have started negotiations to strive for a multinational UNESCO nomination. The participation of more countries would support our common goal to have Morse code telegraphy officially recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. Such recognition in turn may lead to national and international financial support for safeguarding measures. Contrary to the situation in The Netherlands and Belgium we in Germany do not have to regularly demonstrate how we safeguard our heritage.

In 2013 DARC has supplied the IARU-Region 1 President with comprehensive information on the topic. Although the documents which at that time were distributed to Region 1 member societies mainly dealt with UNESCO nomination procedures for Morse code telegraphy, they are worth reading. The complete documentation is still accessible on the home page www.doese-apprt.de/ikmi/ikmiliste.html

On behalf of the Arbeitskreis Kulturerbe Morsetelegrafie
Norbert Gabriel (DJ7ZY)

(*)

In 2003 UNESCO for the first time introduces a

'Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage'

'Convention pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel'

At present (in early 2017) the Convention is in force among 142 member States (called '*States Parties*'). On the homepage of UNESCO <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/> they are listed under subsections *Convention - Governance - States Parties*.

A recognition of an Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) by UNESCO is expressed in three ways:

- inclusion of an ICH in the Representative List of ICH (see Article 16 of the Convention),
or

- the same type of an ICH but such which is *in Need of Urgent Safeguarding*' (see Article 17 of the Convention)
- inclusion of ICH activities which in a more general sense reflect the principles and objectives of the whole Convention (see Article 18 of the Convention)

In any case, before the States Parties may file a nomination of an ICH at UNESCO, they have to preselect applications emerging from their territories and draw up a national inventory (see Articles 11/12 of the Convention). This national recognition is the first step an ICH has to reach. The selection process of member State Parties differs from country to country. But in every State Party there is one governmental agency responsible for the handling of culture. Very often the government has transferred this task to the national UNESCO-Commission.