

Amateurs' folklore groups in Serbia: situation, problems and perspectives at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st Century

- Overview of research results -

Note: This overview of research results was created by researchers ONLY for non-Serbian speakers to grasp the current situation and perspectives of folklore amateurism in Serbia. It is not intended for citation. For publication details and citation see official study: [Kulturno – umetnička društva u Srbiji: stanje, izazovi i perspektive na početku treće decenije 21. veka](#) or contact us via e-mail: masha@zaprokul.org.rs & marijana.milankov@zaprokul.org.rs

Introduction: Background, Theoretical frame, Methodology.

The word amateur comes from the Latin *amator* – the one who loves. The word entered Serbian via the French word *l' amateur*, meaning the same as in Latin. However, amateurs' associations were and still are the first instance for many established professional artists. The one who loves some arts can pursue personal interests as an amateur.

Amateurs are active in various forms of artistic creativity: fine arts, drama, literature, performing arts, film, photography, etc. Most of the amateurs' groups in Serbia are amateurs' folklore groups. Therefore, research was focused on them.

Although some amateurs' associations, including amateurs' folklore groups, were formed in the early 20th century, amateurism in Serbia and former Yugoslavia blossomed after the 2nd World War, when Yugoslavia became a socialist republic. Education, including cultural participation as a vehicle of informal education, was a cultural policy goal because uneducated and insufficiently exposed to cultural contents workers could not sufficiently contribute to developing a new society (see: Dimić, 1988). Hence, measures included building the infrastructure (local, often in villages, cultural centers) and networks of amateurs' groups (associations of local cultural and artistic societies on a regional level, networked on the level of republics and Yugoslav federal units).

Amateurism became a significant force in the workers' movement throughout the decades. Companies and factories supported their workers in pursuing artistic interests (see: Stojković, 1984). Also, helping amateurs was a part of cultural policy orientated towards rural development (see: Đukić, 2010). On a practical level, folklore amateurs were promoted by regional and republics networks, who organized festivals, reviews, and competitions. Such events manifested attempts of folklore groups to position themselves as “keepers of traditions,” which was supported by rigorous juries who insisted on “proper ways of displaying traditions” (see: Rihtman – Auguštin, 1971, 1978)

However, at the beginning of the 21st century, the transition towards a new cultural system brought significant challenges for amateurism. Without any preparations, amateurs' groups and their associations were switched to the operation mode of NGOs, which formally they are but for decades were supported by local governments and companies on no-questions-asked principle because of their role in the socio-cultural life of the communities.

Our hypotheses derive from two primary components of amateurs' folklore groups' work:

- They are often the only organizations enabling locals in small, predominantly rural communities to participate in cultural life actively. As such, they are creating idiocultures that allow carrying on and enriching cultural capital.
- Their work focuses on folklore, focusing on performing traditions of Serbian people and nationalities living in Serbia. As such, they may be seen as intangible cultural heritage bearers.

The formulation of this hypothesis primarily draws from contemporary folkloristic theories. Foremost, Ben Amos shifted the focus from "lore" to "folk" and defined folklore as "artistic communication in small groups" (see: Ben Amos 1971). A significant implication is that folk can be any group (e.g., family, workers in the factory, street gangs, football clubs, etc.). In this line, Fine (1979) developed the concept of idioculture, which consists of a shared system of knowledge, beliefs, behavior, and customs to which group members may refer in their interactions. Not all members may know each other in these groups, but they all understand the core of traditions. Abrahams (1982) emphasized that performances, as a way to communicate folklore, imply recognition of producing and reception competencies. Producing competencies allow performers to use genres as forms and use standard references in channeling their artistic endeavors. In contrast, reception competencies will enable the audience to connect their previous knowledge and experiences with the experience of being at the performance.

Performing arts are among the areas of intangible cultural heritage expressions. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2019) noted that present days' words might be understood as a form of ICH safeguarding only if they meet specific criteria: the phrase originates from the local community that performs it; the community feels it as its own; knowledge and skills needed for the expression as practiced a century ago are researched in-depth with particular attention to the contexts; community agrees that key elements of tradition are preserved in "new" face. If the present-day expression does not meet these criteria, it cannot be seen as a practice contributing to ICH safeguarding. Eminent ethnologist, ethnomusicologist, and choreographer Olivera Vasic (in private conversation with Vukanovic) have expressed doubts on this matter, mainly reflecting on competitions that include performances of children groups because, traditionally, children were not dancing *kolo* (ICH element enlisted at UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage).

The methodological approach to researching the work of amateurs' folklore groups in Serbia consisted of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

The quantitative segment consisted of an electronic survey and interviews with key informants. Altogether, 160 amateurs' folklore groups from all regions in Serbia responded to a study, and 22% of all amateurs' associations were registered in the updated Institute for Cultural Development Studies database. The survey questionnaire consisted of 56 questions in the following sections: basic information about the group and membership; employees

and associates; budget and financing; space and equipment; repertoire; public performances; cooperation; weaknesses; opportunities; the importance of amateurism; and suggestions for improvements of the position in the cultural system.

The qualitative segment was based on interviews with key stakeholders. Altogether 15 key informants were interviewed: representatives of amateurs' folklore groups from Serbia (Bačka Topola, Beograd, Bor, Valjevo, Jagodina (village-based group), Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Stara Pazova, Šabac), coordinators of amateurs' folklore groups in two cities (Kruševac and Smederevo), representatives of two associations/umbrella organizations (Association of Artistic Amateurs of Vojvodina, based in Novi Sad, and Association of Folklore Ensembles of Serbia, based in Kraljevo), as well as representatives of the Association of Traditional Dances' Choreographers of Serbia (which gathers individual choreographers and is a representative association in culture in the area of researching, documenting, safeguarding and promoting intangible cultural heritage).

Key informants' interviews were based on a semi-structured questionnaire addressing the working methods and creation of repertoire; perceptions of folklore; practical challenges; good practices; and suggestions for improving the position of amateurism in cultural policy.

Research relevance lies in postulates of the cultural policy defined in the Republic of Serbia's *Law on Culture* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 72/09, 13/16, 30/16 - ispravka, 6/20, 47/21, 78/21). Article 6 defines public interest in the domain of culture. It includes discovering, creating, researching, safeguarding, and representing Serbian culture and cultures of national minorities in Serbia; creating conditions for preservation, safeguarding, enriching, and promoting cultural heritage; supporting amateurs' creativity. Cultural activities defined in Article 8 include music and performing arts. Organization of cultural programs like exhibitions, lectures, and workshops aimed to promote and safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of Serbia.

Law on Culture in Article 72 defines amateurism in culture and arts as "activities of individuals and groups who are creating and performing arts without material compensation." According to this article, the Law on associations regulates the work of amateurs' groups and the networks they create. In line with the *Law on Culture*, our project aimed to establish facts on the current position of amateurs' folklore groups in Serbia, the problems they face, the opportunities they perceive, and perspectives of strategic planning for the future of this vital segment of cultural activism.

Results are intended to contribute to cultural policy improvements regarding active cultural participation in liaison with safeguarding cultural heritage.

Key findings:

Motivation to join the group:

Representatives of amateurs' folklore groups were asked to rank (according to the importance of the reason) 5 reasons why members decided to join the group and why parents decided to enroll their children in the group. In both cases, the most important reason for children and adults is their interest in folklore (equalized to dances, music, and songs). However, the differences between the two groups are for the following reasons. While adults are more frequently as the second reason named socialization, children are more interested in physical activity. Socialization is a third primary reason for children; among adults, it is performing in front of an audience. Finally, both children and adults named traveling as the fourth reason. Performing in front of an audience is the least important reason for children, while for adults, it is physical activity.

Key informants' observations align with this ranking, though socialization is more elaborated in their answers.

Membership:

Questions of membership included estimates of the total number of members of all generations; age structure; and structure within sections (dance, instrumental music, singing, etc.).

Results show that the majority of amateurs' folklore groups are small groups, up to 100 members (24,5% of groups reported membership up to 49 persons of all generations, while 35,3% reported total members from 50 to 99 persons of all ages). Key informants noted the fluidity of younger members due to studying in larger university centers.

Regarding the age structure, most groups that responded to the survey reported children aged 8 to 12 years (33% of groups) and teenagers (31%).

In 43,4% of groups that estimated total number of members below 50, the majority are in the dance section, while this section is most numerous in 33% of groups with more than 100 members. The dance section is most numerous in 23,5% of groups that estimated total membership between 50 and 100 persons.

Employees and associates:

As human resources are crucial for the successful operation of organizations, key questions were types of engagement, educational level of employees and associates in sections, and the need for permanent education.

Most people in amateurs' folklore groups are volunteers (engaged without financial compensation). In two-thirds of groups, artistic directors are volunteers, while one-fifth of groups are employed. In half of the amateurs' folklore groups, creative associates working with the sections are volunteers. Half of the groups are contracted, while only 7% of amateurs' folklore groups are employed permanently.

Accompanists, choreographers, and chiefs of orchestras are often contracted. In 49% of groups, accompanists are employed, while in 42% of groups, they are volunteers. Choreographers and chiefs of orchestras are in half of groups volunteers, while in a third of groups, they are contracted.

Accounting agencies most often trust financial administration.

Many amateurs' folklore groups, both in the survey and in interviews, reported at least one employee. They are often employees of a local cultural center in charge of folklore. Also, many groups said multi-tasking, i.e., one person has more than one task (e.g., the artistic director works as an associate in a section or with a specific age group within an area).

In terms of education, most artistic associates in dance sections still need to be formally educated in performing arts, but they do have large amateur experience as dancers and choreographers. In other areas (vocal, instrumental, and choir), artistic associates mainly completed studies at arts faculties. It is important to note that possibilities for formal musical education are minimal because of the small number of music schools and faculties and almost not existing in choreography and ethno-choreography.

Most amateurs' folklore groups (85,9% of those who responded to the survey) think permanent education is needed. Most important is permanent education in musicology and choreography. In addition, almost all amateurs' folklore groups are registered as NGOs; the second on the list is education in project writing and reporting, so they can be more successful on various calls for supporting creativity and ICH safeguarding. Also important is education in marketing, fundraising, and digital technologies.

Regarding education in musicology and choreography, two associations of amateurs' folklore groups (Association of amateur artists of Vojvodina and Association of Folklore Ensembles of Serbia), as well as the Association of Traditional Dance Choreographers of Serbia (representative association in the area of ICH safeguarding) annually organize seminars and training in which lecturers and trainers are established professionals in ethnology, ethnomusicology, and choreography.

Regarding education, many representatives of amateurs' folklore groups (both submitting comments in the survey and interviews) expressed the need for licensing because artistic directors and associates must have skills in working with members, especially children. For example, the Association of Traditional Dance Choreographers of Serbia currently issues licenses to their members (according to education level and experience). Still, these licenses serve the purpose of achieving the social status of independent professionals in culture. Hence, respondents agree that associations should develop educational programs that may be registered as official curriculum(s) per the Law on National Frame of Qualifications.

Budget and financing

Finances are critical for an organization's operations. Also, financing activities are an essential instrument for implementing public policies. As the work of amateurs' folklore associations corresponds with cultural policy, firstly, we analyzed financial support for amateurs' folklore groups by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry for Supporting Villages (level of the Republic) and by the Secretariat for Culture, Information, and Relations with Religious Communities of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (regional level). Annual calls for support projects in culture from public funds organized by these two bodies were analyzed in the span of 3 years before the research (2019 – 2021).

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia annually organizes calls for projects in the following areas (relevant to the work of amateurs' folklore groups):

- Artistic dance, ballet, folk dance, and contemporary dance;
- Music creativity (creation, production, and interpretation);
- The creativity of children and youth and for children;
- Creativity and cultural activities of national minorities;
- Discovering, collecting, researching, documenting, evaluating, protecting, safeguarding, representing, and managing intangible cultural heritage elements.

Amateurs' folklore groups mainly apply projects in the area of artistic dance, ballet, folk dance, and contemporary dance (in the observed period, their proposals were 36% to 63% of the total number of applications), but lesser in the area of music creativity (from 8% to 12% of an unlimited number of applications in the observed period). In safeguarding ICH, projects proposed by amateurs' folklore groups participate in an average of 18.5% of the total number of applications. On the call for supporting the creation of national minorities, projects proposed by amateurs' folklore groups were 17 to 20% of the total number of applications in the observed period. The smallest percentage of the projects proposed by these groups are applied on the call for supporting projects of children and youth and for children; in the observed period, these projects were just around 5% of the total number of applications on this call.

The Ministry of Culture also annually organizes a call, "Towns in Focus," aimed to improve cultural infrastructure on a local level. Only local self-governments are eligible to apply. The results of this call indicate venues and facilities at the disposal of amateurs' folklore groups.

The Ministry for Supporting Villages, established after the 2020 elections, launched two initiatives relevant to the work of amateurs' folklore groups: a call entitled "Miholjski Susreti Sela" ("Early Autumn Meets-Up of Villages") and a call for the purchase of vans. Only local self-governments are eligible to apply at both calls. While the first call resonated well (961 villages from 68 cities and municipalities competed in presenting their culture, sports, schools, and general well-being in towns), the last call became more known in 2022 (when this research was in its final stage).

On the level of Province, the Secretariat for Culture, Information, and Relations with Religious Communities of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina annually organizes calls for projects in the following areas (relevant to the work of amateurs' folklore groups):

- Contemporary creativity – music;
- Contemporary creativity – performing arts;
- The traditional invention of Serbs in Vojvodina and the region;
- Cultural and artistic expressions important for national minorities – national communities in Vojvodina;
- Protection and safeguarding of the cultural heritage of AP Vojvodina.

Regarding these calls, it is essential to note that organizations and local institutions from AP Vojvodina and (in the case of traditional creativity of Serbs) from other parts of the Balkans (from which many Serbs in Vojvodina originate) are eligible to apply. In the observed period, the percentage of projects in the total number of applications proposed on the call for supporting contemporary creativity - music raised to 9% among all applied projects in 2021. In modern invention–performing arts, the application rate of amateurs' folklore groups is marginal, and in an observed period, not one project proposed by amateurs' folklore groups received support. In the experimental period, the percentage of projects proposed by amateurs' folklore groups on the call for projects of traditional creativity of Serbs decreased from 48% in the total number of applied projects on this call in 2019 to 38% in 2021. However, the percentage of allocated funds is the same as in 2019 – 39%. Projects proposed by amateurs' folklore groups on the call for support of creativity and artistic expressions of national minorities – national communities (including ICH safeguarding) in the observed period were constantly around 38% of the total number of applications. Participation of amateurs' folklore groups on the call for supporting projects aiming to protect and safeguard the cultural heritage of AP Vojvodina is marginal.

Responding to a survey, almost 90% of amateurs' folklore groups reported public funds allocated by local self-governments as a significant source of income. Following are self-generated incomes (membership fees, sold tickets, etc.) written by 71,3% of amateurs' folklore groups. Donations (reported by 57,4% of groups) and sponsorship (reported by 40,9%) are also sources. Support provided by the Ministry of Culture was reported by 22,6% of groups, while 20% of amateurs' folklore groups said that public funds allocated by AP Vojvodina are sources of income.

Regarding the support from local self-governments, three models are distinguishable:

- regular financing (in two cities most important groups became institutions, while in one municipality, permission is given via cultural centers);
- the annual call for projects with a clear line of financing for amateurism;
- the yearly call for projects in which amateurs' groups are treated as any other NGO.

Informants from cities and municipalities in which amateurs' groups are treated as any other NGO reported less support than those in which groups are regularly financed, or local self-government has a unique line for financially supporting amateurs. This is important to note because many amateurs' folklore groups were founded in the 20th century and lacked project writing/proposing skills.

Membership fees, the second most frequent source of income, are among 62% of amateurs' folklore groups formed roughly according to the general economic situation in the

municipality or the city. 25,7% of groups do not charge membership fees (which was often explained by the intention to attract fellow citizens, most notably youth). 7,6% of groups charge membership by fees charged by sports clubs in the city, while 4,8% charge an amount that enables the group to conduct its operations.

Regarding membership fees, 83% of amateurs' folklore groups charging membership reported an internal discount policy (e.g., children, elderly, family discount, etc.)

Space and equipment

The issue of space available to amateurs' folklore groups to practice and perform relates to the state of cultural infrastructure in the city or municipality. In recent years some cities invested in the reconstruction of cultural centers in villages, while in some, it is still a work in progress. The Ministry of Culture's annual call, "Towns in Focus," also contributed towards infrastructure improvements benefiting the work of amateurs.

80% of amateurs' folklore groups in the survey reported having space to rehearse. Among them, 62% said that the room is provided by local self-government without charge, 12% are paying rent, and 9% of groups in the area. Three-quarters of groups reported that the space includes a wardrobe (space to store costumes and accessories). In addition, 70% said the play consists of changing rooms, while 60% said they also have offices.

Venues to perform in local communities are free for 70,3% of amateurs' folklore groups, while 13,6% of groups pay a full fee for renting the venue for their concerts. 11,9% of groups are renting the venues for concerts at reduced prices.

Almost all amateurs' folklore groups (94% of those who responded to the survey) reported possessing funds for costumes. In addition, 56% said they own musical instruments, while 49% reported holding computers. Other equipments (sound systems, video equipment, etc.) are reported in smaller percentages.

Owning costumes is essential for articulating the repertoire of the group because of intentions to accurately represent the folklore of a specific region. Here it is important to note that performances of amateurs' folklore groups are often a rare opportunity for people to see traditional costumes and accessories outside museums.

Repertoire and choreographies

Practicing old and developing new choreographies is the most crucial segment of amateurs' folklore groups' annual work. "Folklore schools" are dedicated to helping children learn basic steps and rhythm. Youth groups and adults are perceived as primers for developing new choreographies because new choreography is a condition for participating in competitions. On current repertoires are ten choreographies of youth ensembles, nine choreographies of adults' choirs, 5 of veterans' costumes, and 5 of children's ensembles.

According to interviewed informants, repertoires are often based on estimates of artistic associates in which choreographies are best practiced. Such information is supported by responses given in the survey (71,3% of amateurs' folklore groups).

In 55,8% of amateurs' folklore groups, artistic associates and executive board consult members in the creation of repertoire. In the repertoire design, 38,8% of groups consult with cultural professionals, most notably ethnomusicologists and established choreographers.

Regarding the issues of intellectual property and copyright (regulated by the Law on Intellectual Property and Copyright), 38% of groups reported full respect for authors' rights. In contrast, the same percentage of groups understand that their repertoire is based on folk culture as part of intangible cultural heritage, which we all have the right to use and practice.

From the perspective of ICH safeguarding, critical is the issue of so-called "folklore from the source" and "stylized folklore," the former relating to "indigenous" forms of expressions and later relating to choreographed folklore. Either way, informants are aware that even if they practice so-called "folklore from the source," it is somewhat stylized and modified compared to traditional performances 50 or 100 years ago because nowadays, performances are staged. Researching in villages, and observing how villagers dance, is the primary source, while materials kept in museums and archives are named secondary sources in creating choreographies. Groups performing so-called "stylized folklore" mostly base their choreographies on the work of eminent choreographers like Branko Markovic.

Almost 40% of amateurs' folklore groups base their repertoire on dances, music, and songs from their local communities. Moreover, 57% of the group's repertoire includes dances, music, and songs from different regions in Serbia, most often Šumadija, Pomoravlje (both in Central Serbia), Niš, Leskovac, and Vranje (Southern Serbia). In contrast, dances from other regions in Serbia are rarer. Three years before the research, 32,3% of groups performed dances, music, and songs from abroad. Most often, it is the case of groups formed by members of national minorities who cherish the traditions of their nations (e.g., Slovaks, Romanians, Hungarians, etc.). Still, some Serbian groups' dances, music, and songs originate from other areas where Serbs live, like former Yugoslav republics Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro.

The problem in performing repertoire for many amateurs' groups is musicians. In many (more minor) municipalities, just a few musicians live. As they try to make a living from their music, rehearsing and performing with amateurs' folklore groups is secondary to their agendas.

Performances

For many amateurs performing in front of the audience is "a crown" of their (annual) work. However, the number of public performances was drastically reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown from March until June 2020. Medial for 2018 and 2019 shows that most amateurs' folklore groups have 5 to 6 concerts in their municipalities/cities. In the Balkans, they perform twice a year and have two concerts in other European countries. Intercontinental tours are rare; just three times were organized in 2018 – 2020.

Most amateurs' folklore groups (54%) are not creating annual performance plans but deciding on performances regarding the invitations and financial situation. 43% of groups are planning arrangements according to participation at festivals in previous years, but just

7% are planning their performances according to the annual calendar of festivals' organizers. One-fifth of amateurs' folklore groups' plan of performances is included in the group's yearly working plan.

Many festivals in Serbia are competitions. Three years before the research, 66,7% of groups participated. Interviewed representatives of amateurs' folklore associations agree that matches are important because they motivate groups to innovate their work. Other 33,3% of amateurs' folklore groups responding to the survey are reserved. Informants representing the groups not participating in competitions justify their decisions by lack of clear criteria, transparent decision-making, and general skepticism towards organizing festivals (same people in juries, possible machinations, etc.). Also, many believe that children primarily should not compete. One informant thinks that competitions should be organized on levels where the working conditions of amateurs' groups are similar (e.g., neighboring municipalities). Still, on a broader level (e.g., AP Vojvodina), the festival should be a review promoting multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue. Such opinion draws on the system developed by the Association of Arts Amateurs in Vojvodina (formerly Association of Amateurs in AP Vojvodina) in which primer instances are competitions on the municipal level; the best groups then qualify for zones' rounds (4 zones representing groups of counties); the best groups in zones' competitions then compete on the provincial level. Finally, the best groups in the province qualify for the Republic competition.

Cooperation

Achieving a group's goals requires cooperation with other stakeholders. The primer question regarding collaboration was focused on identifying stakeholders with whom amateurs' folklore groups most frequently cooperate. Almost all (99%) of the groups that responded to the survey reported cooperation with local self-governments. 85% of groups regularly cooperate with local cultural institutions. 80% collaborate with local tourism organizations, while 78% cooperate with other local NGOs. Less than 50% of amateurs' folklore groups cooperate with stakeholders like various organizations in the diaspora, the Ministry of Culture, the Association of Arts Amateurs in Vojvodina, representative associations in culture, and others.

Regarding the quality and continuity of cooperation, an average of 60% of amateurs' folklore groups reported that they established successful and continuous collaboration with other similar groups in Serbia and the diaspora. Furthermore, 40% of amateurs' folklore groups reported satisfaction with collaborating with primary and secondary schools, folklore groups in their municipalities, local cultural institutions, and local self-government. In addition, 43% reported good collaboration with the Ministry of Culture.

Associations/umbrella organizations

More than half (56,2%) of amateurs' folklore groups reported that their group is a national and international association member. The most frequently named associations are the International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts office in Serbia (CIOFF Serbia); Federation of International Dance Festivals (FIDAF Serbia); International

Organization of Folk Art (IOF); International Dance Council (CID UNESCO); Association of Traditional Dance Choreographers (UKNIS); Association of Folklore Ensembles of Serbia; Serbian Amateurs' Association; and Association of Arts Amateurs in Vojvodina. Membership in other associations is less reported.

The system for supporting amateurism in the 1970s included umbrella organizations: Serbian Amateurs' Association on the level of the Republic and two provinces' umbrella organizations: Vojvodina Amateurs' Association and Kosovo and Metohija Amateurs' Association. In the early 2000s, amateurs groups and their umbrella organizations were switched from almost institutions to NGOs. However, Serbian Amateurs' Association was not ready to transform its work into a contemporary umbrella organization. In contrast, Kosovo and Metohija Amateurs' Association could not do so due to the political situation in this province. By the 2010s Vojvodina Amateurs' Association succeeded in its transformation into a contemporary umbrella organization, maintaining the transparent system of competitions, which many amateurs' groups in Serbia (not just folklore but also amateurs' theatres and other groups) recognize as a good-practice example. In the lack of a similarly transformed organization in central Serbia and responding to the need to have an umbrella organization that would provide support for the groups and organizes festivals and events, dozens of amateurs' folklore groups from Central Serbia 2019 formed the Association of Folklore Ensembles of Serbia. However, many groups are still skeptical of the new developments due to the lack of clear policy regarding amateurism in the Republic of Serbia while emphasizing the need for a republic umbrella organization.

Problems and priorities

In the survey, we offered the problems amateur folklore groups in Serbia face in their work. They were asked to rank the list so that 1 was the biggest problem and 10 was the last urgent problem. The biggest problem is the need for clearer policy towards amateurism in Serbia and the strategic framework for its development. The second biggest problem is the need for local strategic planning for amateurism development. Regarding these issues, highly ranked systems need to be more developed for evaluating intangible cultural heritage and consistent approaches of local self-governments in supporting amateurism. Highly rated problems are an insufficient representation of folklore in media and the practical inexistence of the Serbian Amateurs' Association. Less ranked problems are the lack of platforms, basing cooperation among amateurs' folklore groups only on personal contacts, recognizing performances abroad as forms of cultural diplomacy, and collaboration with cultural institutions. The last significant problem is training programs for amateurs' folklore groups' representatives on project writing and reporting.

Relating to the list of problems, representatives of amateurs' folklore groups were asked to write (as an open-form question) what they think about priority courses of action. According to the frequency of replies, the priority is to establish a system of stable financial support which corresponds with models described in the section on local financial support (traditional financing and fine line of annual calls for projects for amateurs' groups). The law on amateurism is the second mentioned priority. Strategic planning of amateurism development on the level of the republic and local self-governances is the third priority,

followed by ensuring adequate space for groups by local self-governments and creating media campaigns to promote amateurs' work on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Finally, permanent education of amateurs group's artistic associates is the sixth most frequently mentioned priority.

Importance of amateurism

Why amateurism is essential is a question posed in the survey and interviews with key informants—in the survey, representatives of amateurs' folklore groups emphasized the role of amateurism in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage; then artistic education for all generations; followed by the opinion that by performing abroad, amateurs' folklore groups are cultural ambassadors of their kind.

Enabling children, adults, and veterans to participate in the socio-cultural life of their communities actively is ranked less in the survey. However, the interviewed key informants emphasized this dimension of amateur groups' work as the most important. The majority of them emphasized the critical importance of amateurs' folklore groups in sustaining the villages:

With amateur folklore groups, the villages would live because something would be offered as a creative activity for the youth.

Conclusion

Repertoires and distinctions of the so-called "folklore from the source" and so-called "stylized folklore" are putting doubts in amateurs' folklore groups' pretensions to be "keepers of traditions," a term referring to ICH bearers and guardians. Although almost 40% of amateurs' folklore groups are focused on dances, music, and songs from their communities, most perform dances, songs, and music from other regions in Serbia. Some are performing and music traditions of Serbs originating from or still living in former Yugoslavia regions. Performing on stage significantly departs from traditional performances in church yards, village junctions, and holy places for specific occasions. Also, competitions organized on an age basis somewhat contradict traditional expressions.

However, the results of our research on membership and motivation for joining amateurs' folklore groups prove that they are often small groups of enthusiasts (of all generations) interested in traditional culture. Socialization is also an important factor, though mild variations are notable between children and adults (socialization is ranked as 2nd motivating factor in the group of adults and 3rd in the group of children). Key informants emphasized social dimensions of amateurs' folklore groups, especially in villages, in terms of intergenerational mixings (getting together before and after rehearsals) and traveling to perform outside municipalities as additions to strengthening the cohesion of generations and creation of new memories for the lifetime, which include elaborations of sequences during the folklore performances (how the version went, what were the "mistakes" in choreography, are some "mistakes" in choreography improvements, etc.) In such ways producing performances and communicating folklore to the audience while maintaining

intergenerational exchange within the group enables the existence of *idiocultures* that enhance cultural capital and enrich local lore.

Law on Culture is the primary cultural policy instrument. It enables strategic planning of cultural development, including support for amateurs' creativity regardless of the nature of cultural and artistic activities (music, performing arts, or safeguarding cultural heritage).

Data on mechanisms for providing financial support by the Republic of Serbia (via the Ministry of Culture), the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (via the Secretariat for Culture, Information, and Relations with Religious Communities), and local self-governments show recognition of amateurs' folklore groups as essential stakeholders in regional cultural development. However, the amounts are determined by overall budgets, which are on the Republic level relatively small (ca. 0,7% of the Republic of Serbia's total budget), whereas, on a local level, it depends on the economic strength of the municipality (even if the city plans to spend for example 5% of its incomes on culture, the amount may be small because payments are small).

Both representatives of amateurs' folklore groups that responded to the survey and critical informants agree on the existence of support. Still, they emphasized the need to recognize amateurism as a strategically important area of cultural policy (in terms of cultural participation, contemporary creativity, and protecting and safeguarding cultural heritage). This implies the following areas of policy interventions:

- They are establishing a network of amateur folklore groups. Although over 90% of amateurs' folklore groups cooperate, cooperation mainly relies on personal contacts. Hence, representatives of amateurs' folklore groups (as comments in the questionnaire and key informants) emphasize the need for the system to develop communication strategically. Models created in cities Smederevo and Kruševac, as well as in municipalities Stara Pazova and Kula, and within the Association of Arts Amateurs in Vojvodina, should be considered.
- Considerations of models of financial support. Research indicated that providing financial support by traditional financing or annual calls for projects with a memorable line for amateurism is more effective than yearly calls for all NGOs in the municipality. Models developed in cities Smederevo and Kruševac, as well as in municipalities Stara Pazova and Kula, should be considered.
- Mechanisms of permanent education (ethnomusicology, ethnochoreology, ethnology, project writing, and pedagogy). Local coordination bodies may organize it in cooperation with umbrella organizations. Important, would-be curriculum creation accredited by the Law on National Frame of Competences. Accordingly, a system of licensing artistic associates' would-be established.
- Intellectual Property and Copyright issues must be clearly defined in potential Law on amateurism.

References in this overview:

Note: Only some of the literature is listed below!

Abrahams, R. (1982). "O izvedbi i oko nje". *Narodna umjetnost* br. 18. str. 75 - 85

Ben Amos, D. (1971). "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context." *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 84, No. 331, Toward New Perspectives in Folklore (Jan. - Mar. 1971), pp. 3-15

Dimić Lj. (1988). *Agitprop kultura. Agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945 – 1952*. Beograd: Izdavačka radna organizacija "Rad"

Đukić, V. (2010). *Država i kultura. Studije savremene kulturne politike*. Beograd: Institut za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju, Fakultet Dramskih Umetnosti

Fine, G. A. (1979). Small Groups and Culture Creation: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams. *American Sociological Review* Vol. 44, No. 5 (Oct. 1979), pp. 733-745

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (2019) „Agents of transformation: The role of museums in a changing world, “Keynote lecture at 14th Congress of the Societé International d’ Ethnologie et Folklore, Santiago de Compostella

Rihtman-Auguštin, D. (1971). "Položaj tradicionalne kulture u suvremenom društvu". *Narodna umjetnost*, 8 (1), 3-16. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/39549>

Rihtman-Auguštin, D. (1978). "Folklor, folklorizam i suvremena publika". *Etnološka tribina*, 7-8 (1), 21-28. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/80008>

Stojković, B. (1984). *Radnička kulturno – umetnička društva u Beogradu*. Kultura – istraživanja br. 5. Zavod za proučavanje kulturnog razvitka