



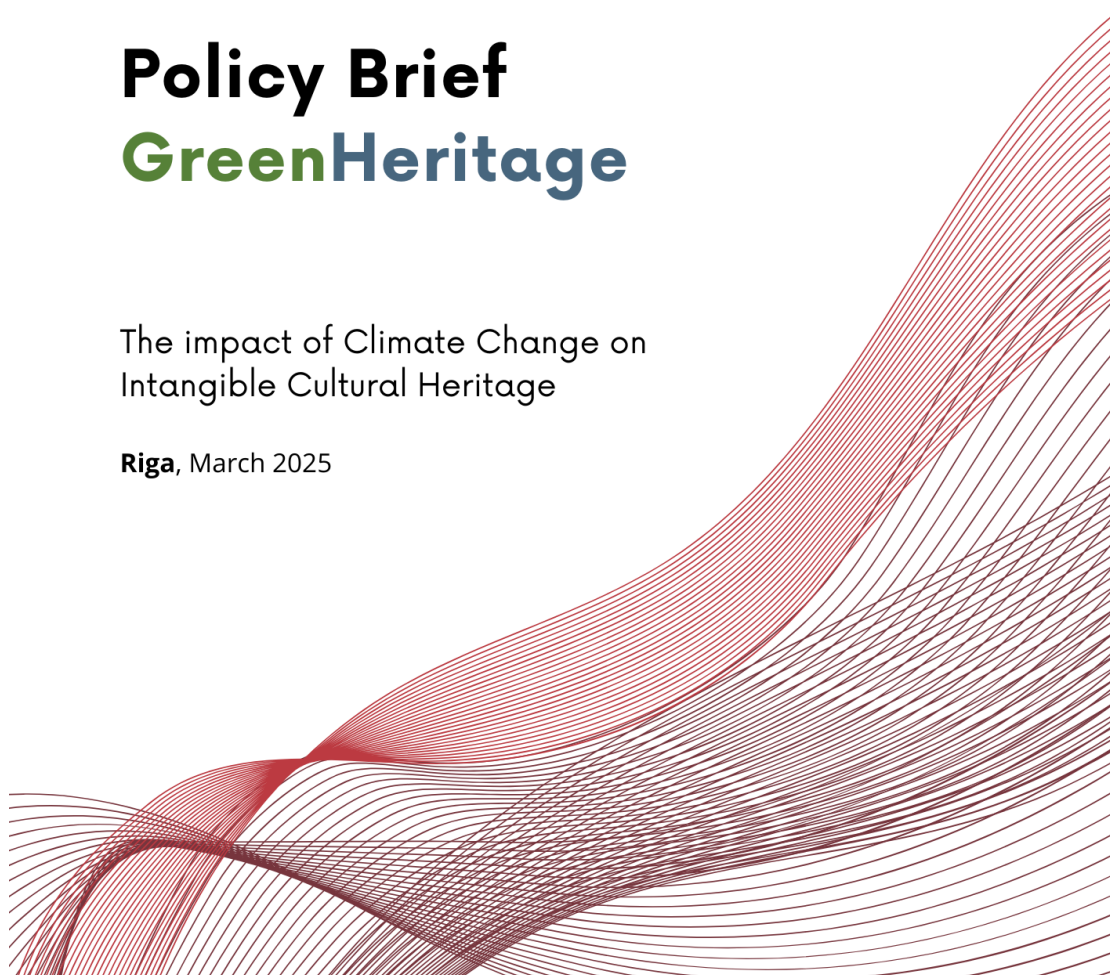
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Policy Brief

GreenHeritage

The impact of Climate Change on
Intangible Cultural Heritage

Riga, March 2025





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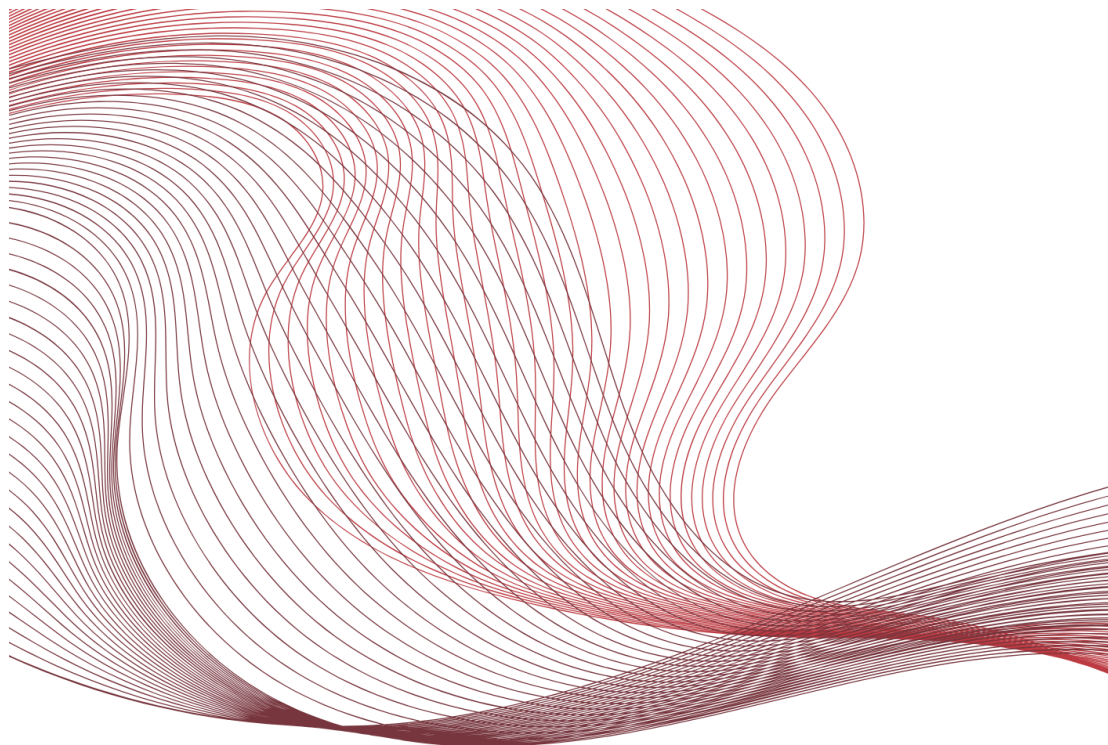
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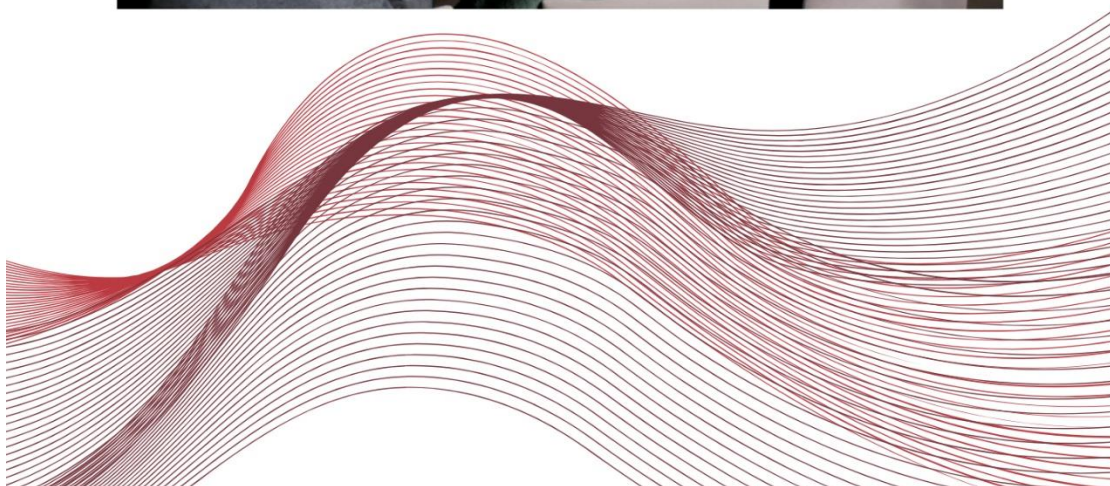
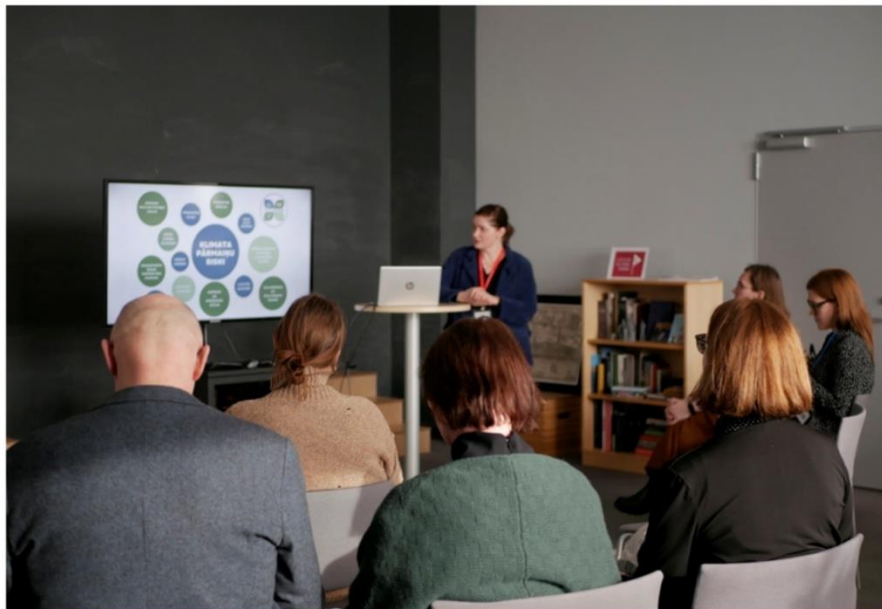
1 - THE GREENHERITAGE PROJECT

The European GreenHeritage project, started in December 2022, aims at **developing a holistic, innovative, and inclusive approach to address the direct and indirect impacts of Climate Change on Intangible Cultural Heritage**. Therefore, it seeks innovative tools and methodologies capable of promoting adaptive and systemic approaches to better manage climate change issues and effects. It also wants to represent an urgent reminder that this issue is extremely present and timely, affecting both directly and indirectly all aspects of Europe's heritage.

It is co-founded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ programme and implemented in **five European countries (Belgium, Greece, Italy, Latvia, and Spain)** by the following consortium: CNR - Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche-Leader (IT); CUEBC - Centro Universitario Europeo per i Beni Culturali (IT); CMCC - Fondazione Centro Euromediterraneo sui Cambiamenti Climatici (IT); FSMLR - Fundación Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico (ES); ReadLab P.C. - Research Innovation and Development Lab (GR); ILFA LU - Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia (LV); UAEGEAN - University of the Aegean (GR); - International (BE), ELORIS S.A. - Research, Education, Innovation and Development Company of the North Aegean Region (GR); ALLI - Athens Lifelong Learning Institute (GR).

1 - THE GREENHERITAGE PROJECT

One of the challenges of the project is to suggest and promote policies enabling to address the needs derived by climate change, that policymakers can consider in the design or adaptation of policies from both national and EU levels. To address this challenge, GreenHeritage is developing, among other activities, **five policy roundtables**, leading to **five policy briefs** and a **final handbook** on the impact of Climate Change on Intangible Cultural Heritage at the national and EU level, including key findings of the project and the final recommendations for policy change.



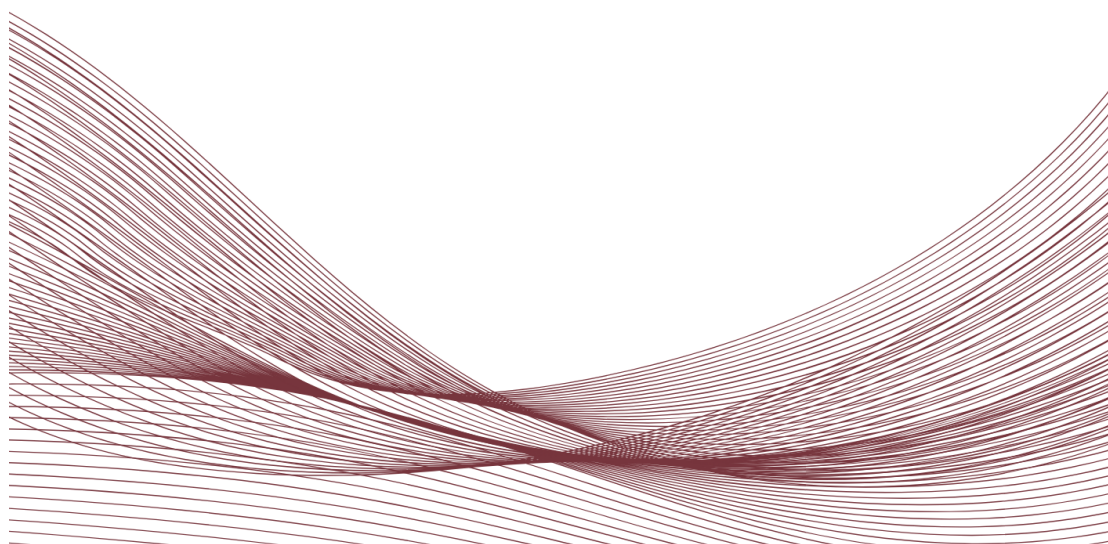


2 - IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CASE STUDIES IN LATVIA AND EUROPE

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is a critical component of cultural diversity and sustainable development, encompassing practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills passed down through generations. Unlike tangible cultural heritage, ICH is dynamic, continually evolving and reshaped by the environment, history, and social structures. Its preservation and adaption are essential to maintain cultural identity and foster resilience in the face of global challenges, particularly climate change (CC) which, by disrupting traditional weather patterns, biodiversity, and land use, threatens the survival of cultural practices and knowledge systems that have evolved in harmony with these environments.

To deepen the analysis of the interactions between CC and ICH and to consequently propose actions to protect it in a changing climate, several stakeholders with diverse skills and backgrounds gathered in **Riga on 6-7 March 2025**, at the National Library of Latvia, as part of the **Policy Round Table organised by ILFA** in the framework of the GreenHeritage project. The discussion led to the specific recommendations to foster collaborative efforts on this matter that are contained in this Policy Brief.

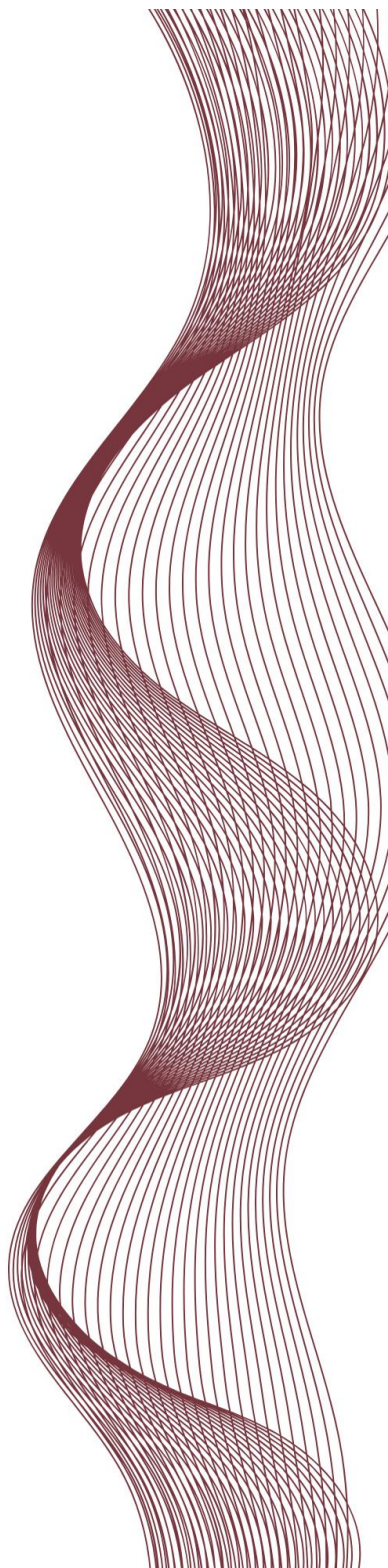
Within the Policy Roundtable, the impacts of **climate change** on specific manifestations of **ICH in Latvia and beyond** and the **adaptation measures** being implemented have been discussed.



2 - IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CASE STUDIES IN LATVIA AND EUROPE

Presentations and conversations mainly focused on the Latvian case study, Lamprey Fishing and Preparation Skills in Carnikava (CS11). In this historical village, located at the mouth of the Gauja River, lamprey and salmon fishing has played a major role to its economic development, the origin of local fishing traditions, specific vocabulary and beliefs. Due to this specialization, Carnikava has been considered Latvia's "lamprey capital" at least since the beginning of the 20th century. In the 21st century, realizing the value of these traditional skills and knowledge, the local community and municipality have promoted the preservation and recognition of this custom.

The tradition of river lamprey fishing is directly related to the population sustainability of this agnathan. Based on the impact of CC, the following interlinked issues have been identified:

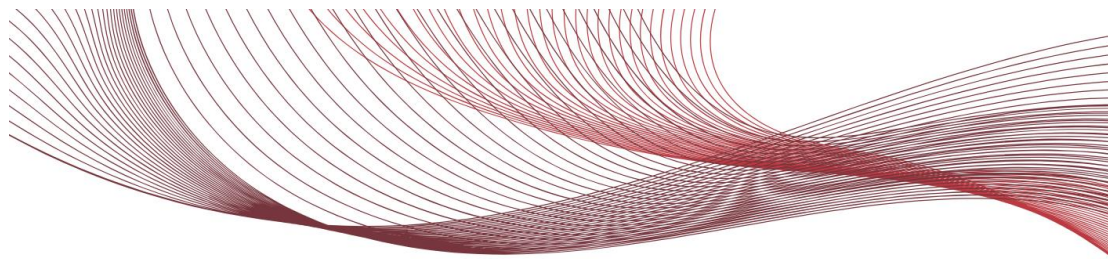




2 - IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CASE STUDIES IN LATVIA AND EUROPE

- 1) Loss of seasonal sea ice, a pressing issue identified in community interviews.
- 2) Changes in the distribution and behaviour of animal species. The loss of seasonal sea ice results in grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) remaining in the Gulf of Riga year-round, including during the winter lamprey fishing season. The seals have adapted to feeding on lampreys caught in nets. While the changed behaviour of seals currently affects lamprey fishing tradition, it does not significantly impact the overall lamprey population.
- 3) Altered freeze/thaw cycles that severely hamper or limit lamprey fishing. Seasons have shifted by two months and weather forecasting methods, once relied upon by fishermen, no longer correspond to reality. Biologists regard these altered freeze/thaw cycles, together with the early start of the spring flood season and the effects these elements have on lamprey migration towards unsuitable locations for spawning periods, to be one of the most serious threats to lamprey population.
- 4) Rising air temperatures and extended water tourism season, which potentially disrupts lamprey migration.





Furthermore, other specific, **diverse manifestations of ICH across Europe** were examined to showcase the impact of climate change on cultural traditions:

- CS1 Puffin Harvesting and Hunting (Denmark)
- CS2 Alpinism (France, Italy, Switzerland)
- CS3 Wine Culture in Germany
- CS5 Mandras (Paddocks) of Lemnos (Greece)
- CS8 Festival of the Ceri / Race of the Ceri- Gubbio (Italy)
- CS12 Skating on Natural Ice (Netherlands)
- CS14 Valencian Paella, “the Art of Uniting and Sharing” (Spain)

After the insights given on these case studies, and **interactive session** has started among the stakeholders. A group of 25 people, consisting of representatives of different stakeholders’ groups, following the Quadruple Helix Model (government and local policy-makers, representatives of research institutions, members of the business sector and of civil society) participated to discuss the nexus between climate change and intangible cultural heritage and to collect actionable and concrete recommendations during the fifth Policy Roundtable.



Through the methodology of the World Café, an interactive discussion was established to address possible initiatives to protect all traditions, knowledge, and celebrations under a changing climate. The debate resulted into the formulation of **16 recommendations**, grouped in four specific clusters: 1) Stakeholder Cooperation and Policymaking, 2) Strategic Action on Adaptation, 3) Awareness-Raising, 4) Education.

3 – THE TARGET AUDIENCE

The policy brief is the result of collaboration between different stakeholders, who bring together diverse skills, backgrounds, and experiences. This process has led to a series of recommendations designed to inform decision-making processes in this area on local, national, and European level. Nonetheless, the policy brief can be for a general audience as well in order to raise awareness on the need for raising initiatives on the nexus between CC and ICH.



Due to their involvement in both the implementation of the policies and the identification of emerging needs and new initiatives, stakeholders from various sectors of the Quadruple Helix Model are included in the target audience as well.

The Policy Roundtable and the recommendations it led highlighted the importance of bottom-up and community driven initiatives, integrated and multisectoral strategies and actions, combined with awareness-raising activities, education programmes, and a more steering role of the policymakers, evidencing the importance of collaborative and concerted efforts for a sustainable and climate-resilience ICH management.

4 – RECOMMENDATIONS

The following 16 key recommendations are aimed at identifying and promoting concrete strategies and actions for ICH protection under a changing climate. They can be divided into four clusters:

Stakeholder Cooperation and Policymaking

- 1 Actively involve local communities in strategic planning and public consultation processes.** Given that ICH communities are often the first to experience the impacts of CC, representatives of ICH communities should be involved in the policy-making process alongside representatives of environmental organisations and scientists.
- 2 Strengthen cooperation** between researchers, ICH communities, and policymakers.
- 3 A cultural thread** should be identified **and integrated into CC strategies** and planning documents in order to contribute to the strengthening of the role of culture in CC.
- 4 Ensure the availability of funding** for ICH adaptation initiatives, particularly at the European level.

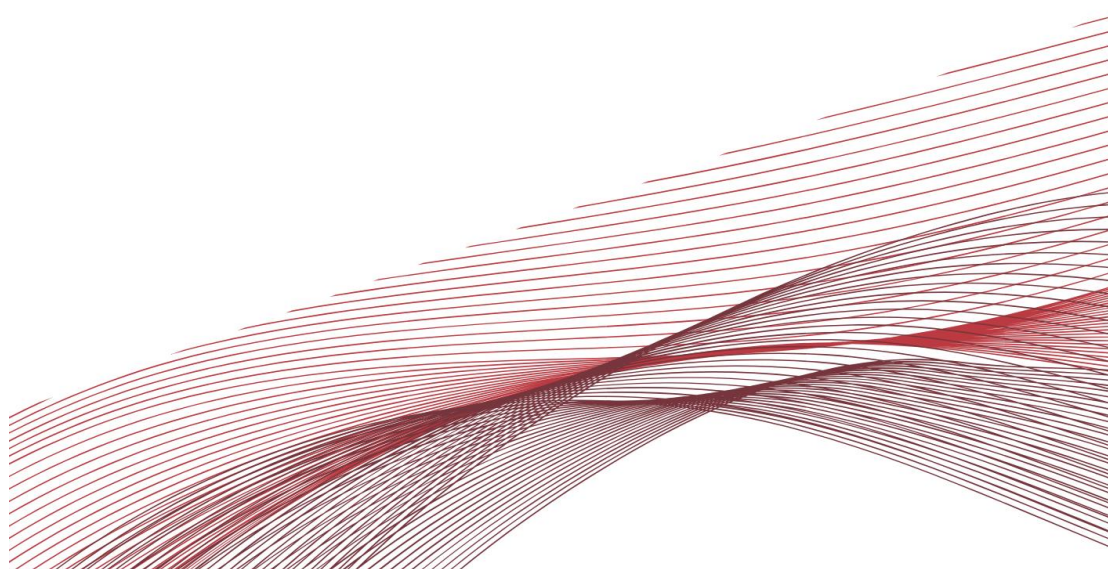


4 – RECOMMENDATIONS



Strategic Action on Adaptation

- 5** Develop **local action plans for the ICH sector** in accordance with national strategies.
- 6** Utilize **existing CC analysis tools** and models **to assess potential risks** and design ICH action plans.
- 7** Develop **multi-level adaptation strategies** addressing both existing and emerging CC risks in **local ICH communities**.
- 8** Create **targeted adaptation tactics** based on local CC risks and integrated in ICH sector documents.



4 – RECOMMENDATIONS

Awareness-raising

- 9** Engage scientists and the media in long-term, ongoing communication to explain CC in accessible language for the public.
- 10** Combat information silos on ICH and CC by conducting targeted awareness-raising campaigns for the general public.
- 11** Strengthen opinion leaders in the public sphere explaining the interaction between ICH and CC.
- 12** Promote awareness, documentation, and dissemination of ICH knowledge, enhancing the role of ICH in building society's resilience to CC impacts.
- 13** Share and highlight examples of good practices on ICH and CC topics through various communication channels

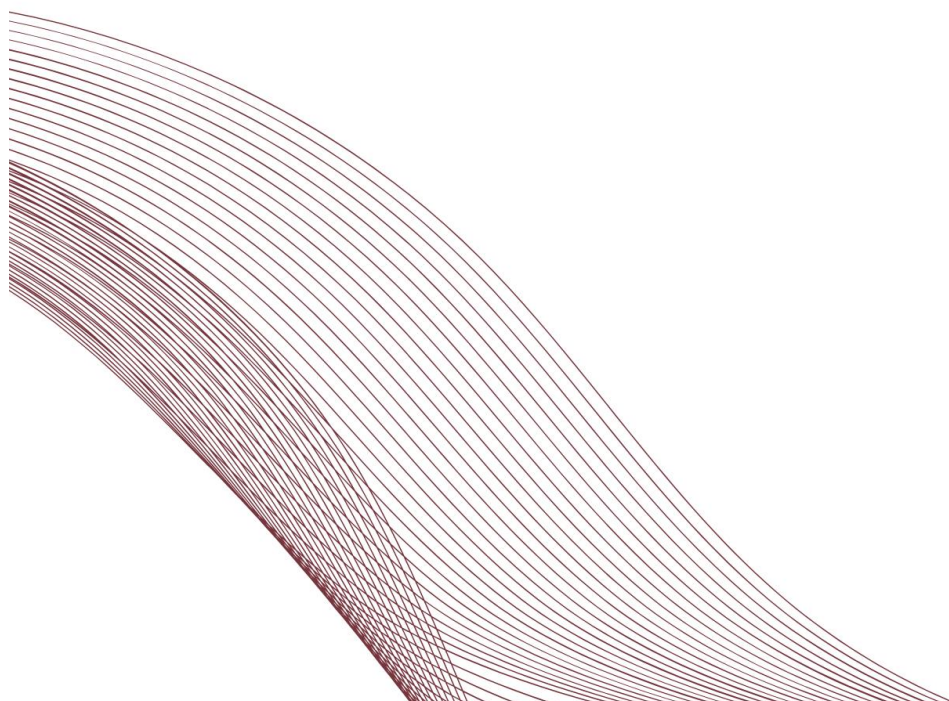


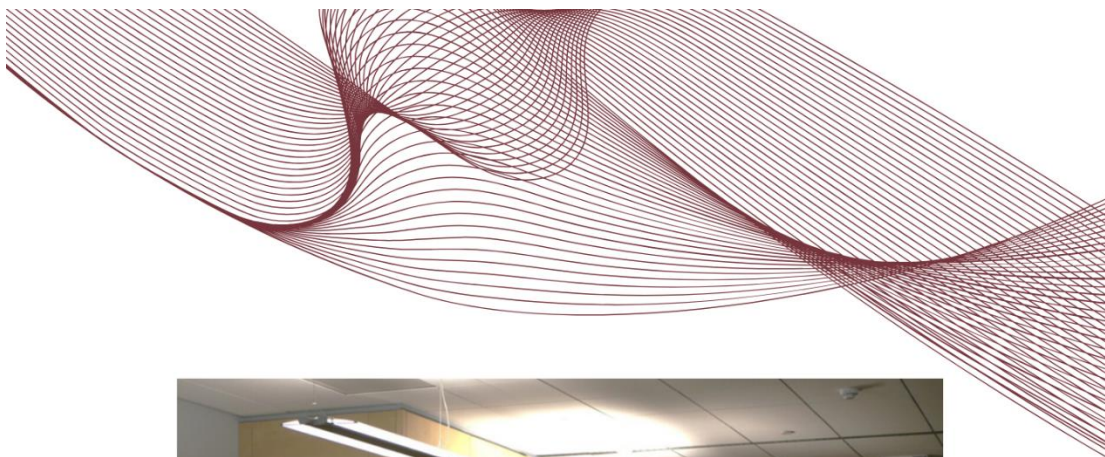
4 – RECOMMENDATIONS



Education

- 14** **Integrate outdoor education principles in schools, focusing on ICH and CC issues**, and providing practical skills for resilience in the age of CC based in ICH.
- 15** **Expand the presence of environmental topics beyond formal education** (e.g., eco-schools approach) to encourage practical engagement with ICH learning and CC adaptation.
- 16** **Foster a culture of slower, more conscious living**, drawing on traditional knowledge and skills to inspire more sustainable lifestyles.

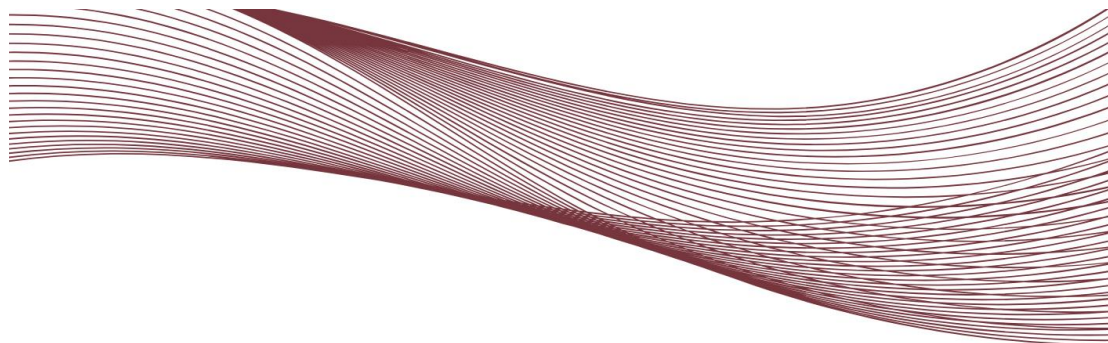




Thanks!

Photos by Zaiga Pleiko

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