



ESU-Information

ESU congratulates Germany on its recognition of the fairground culture



It is with great pleasure and sincere appreciation that the European Showmen's Union congratulates German showmen and showwomen on the inclusion of 'Showmen's culture at fairgrounds in Germany' in the National Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This distinction not only honours a centuries-old tradition, but also highlights the immense cultural, social and economic significance of fairground culture – in Germany and throughout Europe.

The decision by the German UNESCO Commission represents a milestone. It recognises a living cultural form that has been cultivated for over 1,200 years and is today upheld by around 5,600 showmen's families. Year after year, fairgrounds delight around 200 million visitors in Germany with their unique blend of tradition and innovation.

Yet this recognition extends far beyond national borders. Fairgrounds are a living expression of European culture. They are places where people from all walks of life come together – regardless of social status, religion or age. In an increasingly digitalised world, they create physical spaces for community, interaction and the forging of identity.

A multifaceted European cultural heritage

The ESU emphasises that, with this inclusion, Germany is part of a growing European movement: in countries such as France, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Ireland and the Netherlands, fairground culture has already been included in national registers of intangible cultural heritage. This broad recognition highlights the diversity of regional variations – from traditional neighbourhood fairgrounds to large fairgrounds – and, at the same time, their shared cultural DNA.

A significant step for the entire European fairground industry was taken in December 2024: the vibrant fairground culture in Belgium and France was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

This international recognition marked a historic moment. It highlighted that fairgrounds are not merely national traditions, but a shared European cultural heritage of global significance. The inclusion also demonstrated that this cultural form is considered worthy of protection, identity-forming and sustainable.

A mandate for the future

For the ESU, the inclusion of German fairground culture is both an honour and a responsibility. It sends a strong signal to politicians and society to create the necessary framework conditions to safeguard this culture for the long term. Fairgrounds need space, planning certainty and social recognition to ensure they are preserved for future generations.

At the same time, this recognition opens up new prospects for enhanced European cooperation. The exchange of best practices, joint initiatives and greater visibility at an international level can help to further strengthen the culture of fairgrounds.

Europe's living heritage

The ESU sees the current developments as a decisive step towards widespread European recognition of the living fairground culture. Germany is now visibly joining a community of countries that have recognised the value of this tradition.

Fairgrounds are vibrant places of joy, diversity and togetherness. They connect the past, present and future – and bring Europe's cultural richness to life in a unique way.

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