

## **Press Release**

### **International Gathering in Madrid Celebrating Transhumance as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Madrid, [22-10-2024] – This weekend (19–21 October), representatives from FAO, IYRP (International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026) and 13 countries convened in Madrid to work on the Safeguard Plan of Transhumance as Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO and to support the expansion to new countries.

This meeting aimed also to honour the longstanding tradition of the Transhumance Festival, which began in 1994 and typically features a flock of sheep passing through the heart of Madrid. This year's festival held particular significance for three reasons: to continue the legacy of Jesús "Susó" Garzón, to celebrate 30 years of the festival, and to commemorate the first year following the expansion of Transhumance as Intangible Cultural of UNESCO, led by Spain.

The Transhumance Festival provided an important platform for representatives from Ministries of Culture, Bearing Communities and transhumant shepherds from Albania, Andorra, Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Turkey. Their participation underscored the transnational essence of the event.

Unfortunately, the festival could not take place due to restrictions on livestock movement following outbreaks of blue tongue disease in nearby areas. However, the international meeting among the representatives from the 13 countries proceeded, thanks to the support of the Community of Madrid, which recognized the importance of Transhumance and its safeguarding plan across these nations.

The gathering in Madrid highlights the significance of an expanded international initiative aimed at fostering collaborations and common projects, not only within the framework of UNESCO but extending also far beyond.

Participants enjoyed the warm hospitality of the Community of Madrid, as well as a performance by the folk group from Cantabria, which traditionally accompanies the Transhumance Festival. They also had the opportunity to exchange experiences with shepherds from various nationalities and savour the rich local traditional cuisine. On Sunday, attendees visited several Cañadas Reales in the Community of Madrid, where they appreciated the stunning landscapes, native livestock breeds and the challenges to preserve them.

For three days, Madrid has showcased its potential as an international capital of Transhumance, leaving participants inspired and eager to see this vibrant tradition thrive in the heart of the city and therefore meeting again next year, together with representatives the Carpathian Countries and all others in the third wave of the UNESCO nomination file.

A great thank you to all participants and supporters for making this event possible!!!!

