

Press Release

Registration of Clubbing Culture in the Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Brussels-Capital Region

The Brussels By Night Federation, supported by the Brussels Night Council, has submitted an application for the registration of clubbing culture in the inventory of the intangible cultural heritage of the Brussels-Capital Region.

→ What is it about?

Clubbing is a social and cultural practice that involves going to a nightclub, a place specially designed for entertainment, listening to music, dancing, and interacting with others. Clubbing typically involves amplified DJ sets, live performances, light shows, a dance floor, and a festive atmosphere to create an immersive sensory experience.

Clubbing is often associated with urban culture, youth, and electronic music, although it can encompass a wide variety of musical genres and styles and bring together people of all ages.

While clubbing is a transient festive activity, it historically emerges as a lasting and evolving cultural phenomenon that has had a significant impact on popular culture, art in all its forms, and social life in many regions of the world, particularly in Brussels. Clubbing culture—or club culture—refers to the set of practices, values, and social norms surrounding the phenomenon of clubbing, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary for its existence.

Why is it Brussels' intangible cultural heritage?

As a social and cultural practice, clubbing reflects the cultural, musical, and social trends of each era. It plays an important role in the construction of individual and collective identity, providing participants with a platform for self-expression, artistic expression, and a means to connect with others in an environment conducive to informal encounters.

A fertile ground for creativity and innovation, clubbing culture continually gives rise to new trends, music styles, and modes of interaction, thereby contributing to the evolution and diversity not only of this culture but also of society as a whole. Dance, music, fashion, artistic creation, protest claims, political resistance, as well as the development of communities contribute to the cultural and social heritage of clubbing, from the emergence of dance music in the 1970s to today. Clubbing has helped shape our societies to become more than just entertainment activities but true cultural and social vectors. Its living and dynamic nature means its history is continually evolving, as new musical styles emerge, new venues appear, and clubbers' tastes and expectations evolve. Clubbing remains a dynamic expression of contemporary culture, in constant transformation.

Clubbing culture is often associated with specific groups or subcultures that have formed around music, dance, and the nightlife experience. These communities share values such as individual freedom and autonomy and are organized around principles of non-violence, musical diversity, tolerance, and inclusion. They share common cultural references, codes, and lifestyles related to clubbing, strengthening their cultural identity and sense of belonging.

Passed down from generation to generation through direct experience and participation, but also, and above all, through clubber communities and all documentation (archives, documentaries, films, articles, etc.) referring to it, it has an undeniable value in Brussels today.

As an integral part of the creative and cultural industries sector, clubbing culture requires professional expertise and technical knowledge related to the creation, production, and dissemination of cultural goods and services necessary for its existence. The Brussels-Capital Region shines both nationally and internationally through its club culture, the artistic talents that emerge there, and the quality of its clubbing scene.

Why register it in the regional heritage inventory?

The request is mainly motivated by a desire to recognize its cultural heritage and its contribution to the Brussels identity.

Often publicized for the issues it faces and undervalued, clubbing deserves, on the one hand, appreciation for its cultural, social, and economic aspects for the Brussels-Capital Region and its inhabitants, as well as for all the professions, knowledge, and skills necessary for its existence.

Clubs, as traditionally known and which have allowed club culture to develop and exist, are now threatened by various factors. By recognizing the value of clubs and their culture for society, we can work to raise awareness of their social and cultural vocation, the importance of archiving and documentation, as well as the need to broaden knowledge about them, and thus better meet the needs of sustainable, secure, and inclusive management.