
TORRES VEDRAS CARNIVAL SAFEGUARDING PLAN - INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

1. Context and Justification

The Torres Vedras Carnival is known as the "most Portuguese Carnival in Portugal" and stands out for its social and political satire, the originality of its allegorical floats and its strong popular participation. The Carnival is a reference to the identity of the local community, through which a sense of collective belonging is affirmed, visible in the community participation and involvement that helps reinforce social cohesion. However, it faces challenges such as globalisation, loss of interest amongst younger generations and the need for sustainable management of the event.

2. Risks and/or threats to Torres Vedras Carnival:

- **Cultural globalisation:** there is a tendency to homogenise cultural practices, replacing local traditions with standardised global entertainment. The dimension of spectacle and commercialisation can take precedence over manifestations of local culture and the primacy of community relations, the acquisition of standardised masks by young people to the detriment of individual creation; the purchase of low cost carnival products in online shops; the predominance of Brazilian carnival music over other genres.
- **Massification:** the excessive number of visitors could undermine the authenticity of the festival and lead to the local community distancing itself from a massified Carnival, or result in participants losing their spontaneity and increasingly intervene solely as spectators.
- **Disinterest and/or disconnection of the younger generations:** the younger generations seem to associate the Carnival solely with night-time entertainment, since they are not involved in the event's traditional moments (arrival/enthronement of the kings, parades or the burial) and/or the production of the masks themselves.

3. General Objectives

It is necessary to guarantee the intergenerational transmission of the festival through implementation of safeguarding measures, that will preserve traditional elements, while ensuring that it remains a living heritage.

The safeguarding plan defines a set of actions and/or good practices that reflect the concerns and wishes of the local community regarding the risks that the festival currently faces, which were identified in the sessions with festival participants.

The contributions embodied in this safeguarding plan are based on the suggestions made in the debate sessions and proposals made by Promotorres EM (the event's organiser) and the Centre for Arts and Creativity (a centre that focuses its content and activities around the carnival). The Municipality of Torres Vedras is committed to adopting the measures set out in this Carnival Safeguarding Plan as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Concerns about the preservation of the environment and sustainability are increasingly relevant for the carnival's organisation, which has been introducing new environmental practices and continuing its waste management strategy. As a result, several of the actions proposed herein are already being implemented.

Other proposals have been discussed for several years, resulting from the evaluation conducted annually, before and after the event, between the Carnival organisers and carnival associations, masked groups, spontaneous floats, music and percussion groups, security, emergency services and public health bodies. A consensus is needed between the various organisations to identify the best approaches for tackling the challenges that the carnival currently faces, promoting synergies between the festival's traditional elements and new solutions. Many proposals are being studied and should be implemented over the short or medium term.

4. General guidelines for safeguarding and enhancing Torres Vedras Carnival

- Safeguarding the most traditional elements of the Torres Vedras Carnival as an expression of Portuguese popular culture.
- Promote intergenerational transmission of the knowledge and practices associated with the festival.
- Raise the awareness of the local community and visitors to the importance of the festival as intangible cultural heritage.
- Foster social criticism, humour and creativity, an intrinsic characteristics of the Carnival, through Carnival literature in terms of the production of satirical texts and plastic, scenic and performative expression, and the production of masks and satirical costumes and/or sculptures.
- Safeguard and publicise the documentary and artistic heritage related to the Torres Vedras Carnival and promote access through digital platforms.
- Safeguard the local community's memories of the Torres Vedras Carnival as a collective heritage, by recording protagonists' testimonies.
- Ensure sustainable management, respecting social, cultural and environmental values.

5. Strategic Axes

The safeguarding plan focuses on four main axes:

- 1) Infrastructure and resources**
- 2) Documentation, inventorying and national and international dissemination**
- 3) Transmission and education**
- 4) Sustainable practices**

1) Infrastructure and resources

There are two entities that assume an important role in Torres Vedras Carnival, one of which is responsible for safeguarding heritage and the other for organising and producing the event: the Centre for Arts and Creativity (CAC) and Promotorres E.M., respectively.

Centre for Arts and Creativity (CAC):

The CAC's main responsibility is to enhance and safeguard Torres Vedras Carnival as intangible cultural heritage. It was inaugurated in 2021 and its mission is to preserve and publicise the artistic and cultural heritage of Carnival, stimulate artistic practices and enhance the local cultural offer. It also promotes study and research into Carnival, the mask, humour and satire. Further information: [Centre for Arts and Creativity - Torres Vedras](#)

Promotorres, Municipal Company:

Promotorres is responsible for producing the Carnival event, ensuring the definition of the venue, programme, logistics (security, cleaning, structures, transport), communication and raising sponsorship. It also manages the construction of the allegorical floats, financial support for participating groups, licensing, insurance and human resources, in conjunction with the City Council and other organisations. Further information: [Torres Vedras Carnival](#)

Safeguarding measures:

- Increasing investment in safety and logistical measures, with annual evaluations and adjustments, as necessary. Promotorres makes an annual investment of €170,000 in safety and security, with around 1,500 professionals involved; Co-operation with the police force (PSP), Fire Brigade and Red Cross, installation of video surveillance cameras.

- Study the possibility of expanding the route of the Parade in the city centre while maintaining its main characteristics, such as spontaneity and proximity between participants and the public (a parade "without barriers or seating sections").
- Implement temporary measures to guarantee better circulation and safety conditions and, if necessary, limit capacity. To this end, it is necessary to promote discussion of this issue between participants, organisers, political decision-makers and the security authorities in order to define medium-term solutions.
- Study the possibility of and/or increase the financial support given to masked groups, encouraging participants to value and invest in the creativity of their masks and costumes.
- Define artistic criteria to increase the creative quality of the allegorical floats, which are not limited to the theme and budget, but emphasise creativity, new artistic languages and the use of recyclable materials, that are less harmful to the environment. This measure can be developed by the organisation in conjunction with the Centre for Arts and Creativity.
- Develop a cultural tourism strategy that promotes the Carnival as a cultural event and not just as a festivity, channelling this target audience to the city and the Centre for Arts and Creativity throughout the year. This measure can be developed by the organisation in conjunction with the Centre for Arts and Creativity.

2) Documentation, inventorying and national and international dissemination:

Torres Vedras Carnival has been registered in the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage since 2022. This was the first national safeguarding measure.

The CAC is conducting various actions to research, document, record and publicise the Torres Vedras Carnival, in particular:

- Safeguarding, documenting and publicising the documentary and artistic heritage related to Torres Vedras Carnival;
- Safeguarding the community's memories of Torres Vedras Carnival as a collective heritage through the audiovisual recording of the testimonies of its protagonists;
- Establishing national and international partnerships and/or networks with universities, museums and arts centres, contributing to the study and dissemination of Carnival;
- Promote the study and research into Carnivals (in particular the Carnival as a universal festival, the mask, humour, satire and Carnival arts).
- Promoting exhibitions and educational service activities related to the Carnival;

- Organising national and international meetings and conferences on Carnivals and Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- Promoting exchanges between artists through artistic residencies, fostering the development of artistic practices and creativity.

Safeguarding measures:

- Support and develop artistic expressions that allow for the rejuvenation of the plastic languages of the decorative and performative elements of Torres Vedras Carnival, encouraging close relationships with carnival agents and the local community;
- Continue to preserve the history and memory of Torres Vedras Carnival by identifying, collecting, conserving, inventorying and researching documents/objects linked to the local carnival;
- Continue to document and preserve the Torres Vedras Carnival through inventorying and safeguarding of carnival practices, such as the processes of creating allegorical floats and costumes, valuing artisanal work.
- Continue to value the study of testimonies and oral memory of the local carnival as a collective heritage, creating a repository of memories of Torres Vedras Carnival through interviews with personalities/key players from the local community;
- Involve the local community, especially carnival associations and masked groups, in reflecting on the various dimensions of Torres Vedras Carnival, increasing their empowerment as active agents and guardians of this heritage.
- Supporting research projects on the history, evolution and social impact of Torres Vedras Carnival.

3) Transmission and education:

- Since the late 1990s, thousands of children and young people have taken part in the School Parade, representing creches, kindergartens and primary schools in the Municipality of Torres Vedras. The design and execution of the masks, alluding to the annual Carnival theme, express the creativity of the schools and their teachers, with direct involvement of parents and students.
- The Carnival Kings also travel to schools in the municipality, spreading the tradition associated with the key traditional elements of Torres Vedras Carnival.

- Since its opening, the Centre for Arts and Creativity has held exhibitions alluding to the history and unique characteristics of Torres Vedras Carnival, as well as its relationship with other carnivals, and organises educational activities in schools, senior citizen homes and for families. The Centre for Arts and Creativity hosted the European Heritage Days in 2021, promoting debate sessions on threats to Carnival, raising awareness among the community of its value and safeguarding.

Safeguarding measures:

- Integrate the Carnival into local school curricula, emphasising its historical and cultural value.
- Organise workshops to teach traditional techniques, such as creating allegorical floats and making masks and costumes.
- Promote youth volunteering programmes during the Carnival, encouraging community involvement.
- Promote training involving the new generations, especially young people, through the carnival arts (illustration, sculpture, creative and humorous writing, music, creative sewing, etc.).

4) Sustainable Practices:

Sustainability has been a growing concern for Promotorres in organising the Carnival:

- In 2013, the theme of "Recycling" appealed to participants' environmental responsibility;
- In 2017 by joining the Valorsul Eco Event, which encourages proper waste management;
- Since 2018, the City Council and, since 2020, SMAS, have been carrying out information campaigns in bars and restaurants, handing out bags for selective waste disposal;
- Also since 2018, through Novo Verde, and since 2023, through ValorSul, awareness-raising activities have been carried out during the event, including the presence of backpackers in direct contact with participants;
- In 2020, the event joined the "Loving the Planet" movement, promoting the reuse of materials and presenting ecological floats.
- Also in 2020, it associated itself with the European Green Capital - Lisbon, having held a parade (Royal Embassy) in the Portuguese capital, with hundreds of participants and a float dedicated to the theme;
- In the various editions of the Carnival, environmental awareness has included good practice guides and the introduction of the reusable cup, sold at the event;

- Since 2023, the reusable cup has been the exclusive cup at all concession food and drink outlets and has also been included within the 16,000 event kits on sale;
- In the last edition (2024), 13 tonnes of waste were recycled, a record that reflects the continuous improvement towards sustainability.
- The revenue resulting from the selective waste collection referred to in the previous point is donated by Promotorres to a local institution.

Safeguarding measures:

- Monitor capacity and safeguard traditions to avoid massification and de-characterisation.
- Reduce waste and promote recycling and the use of reusable materials.
- Raise the awareness of participants and visitors to good environmental and social practices.
- Promote educational activities in schools on sustainable environmental practices and alternatives to the use of plastic and other toxic products, in particular the use of masks and costumes.
- Promote the use of recycled and more sustainable materials in the production of floats and monuments.
- Evaluate the impact of the measures adopted by the organisation in terms of sustainable practices.

As part of this application, Torres Vedras City Council and the community present a **Declaration of Sustainable Tourism Principles**, which guides the event in responsible practices.

6. Agents Involved

- Local Community: Cultural associations, participants and residents of Torres Vedras.
- Local Institutions: Torres Vedras City Council, schools, cultural centres and museums.
- Artists and Craftsmen: Creators of the allegorical floats/monuments, seamstresses and musicians.
- National Government and UNESCO: Technical and financial support and internationalisation.
- Academics and researchers: Universities and cultural heritage research centres.

7. Monitoring Measures

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- Annual reports on the implementation of planned actions and the state of conservation of practices.
 - Surveys of the local community and tourists to assess the cultural and social impact of the Carnival.
 - Periodic review and updating of the safeguarding plan to respond to new challenges.