

# Action Plan for Intangible Cultural Heritage for 2024-2028



### Cover photos:

The Nordic clinker boat tradition is Finland's first multinational item on the UNESCO list.

Photo: Juha Karikoski, CC BY-SA 4.0

There is a lot of intangible heritage associated with harvesting.

Photo: Ia Ahonen | vastavalo.net

Traditional handcrafts take new forms over time. The tractor is covered with crocheted patches.

Photo: Oulaisten Valovoima ry, CC BY-SA 4.0

Traditional saunahealer at her work.

Photo: Ville Kurki, CC BY-SA 4.0

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Photo: Sonja Lahtinen, CC BY-SA 4.0



Bathing in the sauna and winter swimming are traditions beloved by many.

Photo: Saarni Säilynoja, CC BY-SA



A Demoscene workshop at the Finnish Museum of Games at Vapriikki in Tampere.

# FOREWORD

Intangible cultural heritage, or living heritage, surrounds all of us everywhere. It is present in everyday practices and celebrations, oral traditions and food culture, craftsmanship and performing arts. Nature and our understanding of the world and the universe are also associated with traditional knowledge and skills that we safeguard together. Different kinds of traditions are passed down from generation to generation, developing and changing with changes in society.

Living cultural heritage forms part of identities and a sense of rootedness, through which we become part of different communities. In order for traditions to be kept alive and develop further, they must be meaningful to the communities that bear them. Familiarity with different traditions also helps us to understand and respect other cultures. This is especially important in this era of international mobility and rapid technical and digital development.

The Action Plan for Intangible Cultural Heritage for 2024-2028 determines the directions of work for the coming years. With help of the plan, we want to highlight the importance of intangible cultural heritage, or living heritage, in society, especially its role as a factor that unites communities, strengthens identity and promotes well-being. At the same time, we highlight the work that has been done for the benefit of intangible cultural heritage during the last decade since Finland became a member of the UNESCO 2003 Convention in 2013. The plan outlines Finland's intended route forwards over the next four years in collaboration with numerous stakeholders.

We hope that the action plan will inspire stakeholders to work actively with living heritage. For many stakeholders, it may mean recognising intangible cultural heritage as part of their own work and creating new networks to develop ways to use and safeguard intangible cultural heritage, or living heritage.

**Tiina Merisalo**

Director General

The Finnish Heritage Agency



Yarn braiding during the Helsinga Medieval Day.



The Mölkky game has gained much popularity in recent decades.

# INTRODUCTION

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>1</sup> was adopted in 2003. The importance of the Convention has been widely recognised around the world, and 182 countries have already ratified the Convention (as of Jan. 2024). In Finland, the Convention was ratified in 2013. Finland is a State Party to the Convention, and the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the implementation and reporting on the Convention to UNESCO. The Finnish Heritage Agency is responsible for the implementation of the Convention at national level.

In addition to the text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the implementation is guided by the Operational Directives<sup>2</sup> that are drawn up by UNESCO together with the State Parties to the Convention and updated regularly. The Convention and Operational Directives provide a framework for implementation, but at the same time leave plenty of room for manoeuvre for the implementation of the Convention at national level. The Ethical principles for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage<sup>3</sup> elaborate on the basic principles of the Convention.

Periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention are regularly submitted to UNESCO. Finland's first periodic report<sup>4</sup> was prepared during 2021. The 250-page report submitted to UNESCO provides an extensive overview of the state of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in Finland. The periodic report was prepared by the Finnish Heritage Agency, supported by the Centre for Cultural Policy Research - Cupore. The report is based on research work and extensive consultations with communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and various institutions<sup>5</sup> regarding the measures being taken to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in Finland. The reporting process opened up a lot of new views and perspectives on potential measures that could support the transmission and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Finland. The plan was drawn up based on the periodic report therefore provides information on the state of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in Finland and opens up the role of stakeholders working in the broad field of intangible cultural heritage. It is indicated in the action plan which sections of the periodic report provide more detailed background information on different aspects of the plan.

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1 <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

2 Operational Directives for the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/directives>.

3 <https://ich.unesco.org/en/ethics-and-ich-00866>.

4 Finnish Heritage Agency, Periodic report of the implementation of the UNESCO 2003 report. (16.2.2022), <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/en/article/periodic-report-sent-to-unesco>.

5 A total of 206 persons/organisations responded to four different surveys of the Finnish Heritage Agency, and 188 people participated in nine workshops. Furthermore, 74 municipalities answered a survey.

Photo: Shami Armon, CC BY-SA 4.0



The Challah bread is an important traditional food in Jewish culture.

Photo: Lauri Oino, CC BY-SA 4.0



The Kaustinen fiddle tradition was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2021.



This action plan covers the years 2024–2028. It replaces the Plan for National Implementation of the 2003 Convention<sup>6</sup> drawn up by the Finnish Heritage Agency in 2015 on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture and related action Plans of Action for the years 2016–2018<sup>7</sup> and 2019–2022<sup>8</sup>. The action plan describes the principles of national implementation of the Convention, key actors and their tasks. The plan outlines the work on the implementation of the Convention in Finland and defines the targets and activities for the period 2023–2028. The plan will be updated if necessary. Furthermore, the Advisory Group of Intangible Cultural Heritage has participated in the preparation of the plan. More than 80 organizations and individuals commented on the draft of the action plan through the otakantaa.fi service.

## What is intangible cultural heritage?

**The UNESCO Convention defines intangible cultural heritage (ICH) as practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. The term intangible cultural heritage is used alongside the term living heritage.**

**Intangible or living heritage includes, for example, celebrations and rituals, oral traditions, performing arts, traditional craftsmanship, food traditions, games, and knowledge, skills and practices concerning nature and the universe. The Convention recognises all these fields as ICH domains. Furthermore, many kinds of safeguarding practices related to them, especially regarding the traditions practised today, are also included.**

**The concept of intangible cultural heritage is used in this action plan in accordance with the definition provided in the UNESCO Convention. At the same time, it should be noted that the concept and its scope are being discussed continuously, leaving space and opportunities to challenge and define the concept of intangible cultural heritage differently in other contexts. It is also worth remembering that everyone has the right to step outside the boundaries of the generally accepted definition of cultural heritage.**

living  
HERITAGE

6 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/national-plan-2015.pdf>.

7 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/Aineettoman-kulttuuriperinnon-toimenpideohjelma-2016-2018.pdf>.

8 [https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/Toimenpideohjelma\\_EN.pdf](https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/Toimenpideohjelma_EN.pdf).

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION IN FINLAND

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has been being implemented in Finland for more than a decade. There is no separate legislation on intangible cultural heritage in Finland. However, several spheres regulated by law include intangible cultural heritage related to, for example, human life in the environment and nature, participation in associated activities, cultural heritage, linguistic and cultural rights, and accessibility of culture. It is important to note that intangible cultural heritage is deeply integrated in Finnish society and its organisational structures. The Finnish Constitution also states that cultural heritage is the responsibility of everyone.

Since the Convention has been in force, the concept of intangible cultural heritage has become more and more familiar and has been integrated in recent years, for example, in the amendments to the Museums Act (314/2019)<sup>9</sup> and the Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government (166/2019)<sup>10</sup>. The Government Resolution for the Cultural Heritage Strategy 2023–2030<sup>11</sup>, addresses cultural heritage holistically for the first time in Finland. Cultural heritage is everywhere and it is a part of everyone's life. Cultural heritage can be tangible, intangible or digital, or it can be related to a cultural or natural environment. The aim is that cultural heritage is highly valued and that protecting and fostering it is a collective

The focus of the implementation of the Convention is on national coordination, inventorying of living heritage, and international cooperation. The coordination work strengthens networking among different parties and living heritage communities, increases awareness of living heritage and its meanings, and emphasises its role in education and training. The work on living heritage has strong connections with the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. In order to achieve the sustainable development goals, even closer cooperation with public bodies, the private sector and civil society is needed.

Awareness of intangible cultural heritage and media attention to it have been steadily increasing in Finland since the beginning of the implementation of the Convention. The National Inventory of Living Heritage and nominations to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity have played an important role in this process. International cooperation in the field is active. Work related to intangible cultural heritage is also carried out within the framework of implementation of other international conventions and as part of the work of different organisations. In the future, it is important to emphasise these connections and find more synergies.

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9 <https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2019/en20190314.pdf>.

10 <https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2019/en20190166.pdf>.

11 [https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164728/VN\\_2023\\_21.pdf?sequence=1](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164728/VN_2023_21.pdf?sequence=1).

The field of intangible cultural heritage is very broad. In Finland, there are numerous stakeholders participating in safeguarding living heritage at national, regional and local levels, and not all of them necessarily identify themselves as actors in the field yet. Thousands of different NGOs with their local associations and other civil society stakeholders are involved in the practice, safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage. A wide network of museums, archives, libraries, educational and other institutions also take part in transmitting and documenting heritage. Most of these institutions and organisations receive public funding. Municipalities also play an important role in this work.

The importance of communities has not yet been realised to its full potential in accordance with the spirit of the UNESCO Convention in work to safeguard intangible cultural heritage. In order to overcome this challenge, awareness of living heritage and the skills needed for safeguarding must be increased. Civil society plays a significant role in raising awareness and developing capacities for safeguarding. NGOs can act as partners in early childhood education, cultural heritage education organised in schools and educational institutions. The key objective is for all stakeholders to pay more attention to community development and consider cultural diversity in all its forms more than at present.

Photo: Kuppari-Kaisu, CC BY-SA 4.0



Maidens blessing the harvest through song during the Whitsunday festival in Ritvala. The festival has been celebrated for centuries.



Baking is living tradition in our day-to-day lives.



More than 30,000 people throughout Finland are involved in volunteer fire brigade activities. Rescue-related expertise is transferred from one generation to the next.

# 1 CULTURAL HERITAGE AS THE BASIS OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage obliges its State Parties to strengthen awareness of the importance of living heritage in society at different levels, both nationally and locally. This entails identification, recognition, promotion and enhancement of different forms of intangible cultural heritage in different ways, for instance by means of informing, through formal and non-formal education and training, and by capacity building of different stakeholders active in safeguarding living heritage.

The Convention emphasises the importance of multi-faceted cooperation with various communities in order to safeguard living heritage. Living heritage skills, practises and knowledge are largely transmitted through informal learning in different communities, as well as in families. The prerequisite for the transfer is that the communities know how to practise and safeguard their intangible cultural heritage, appreciate it, and have sufficient opportunities and a desire to retain and pass down their living heritage from generation to generation. Formal education and training support the transfer of intangible cultural heritage in different ways and among different age groups, from early childhood education to higher education and in liberal adult education work.

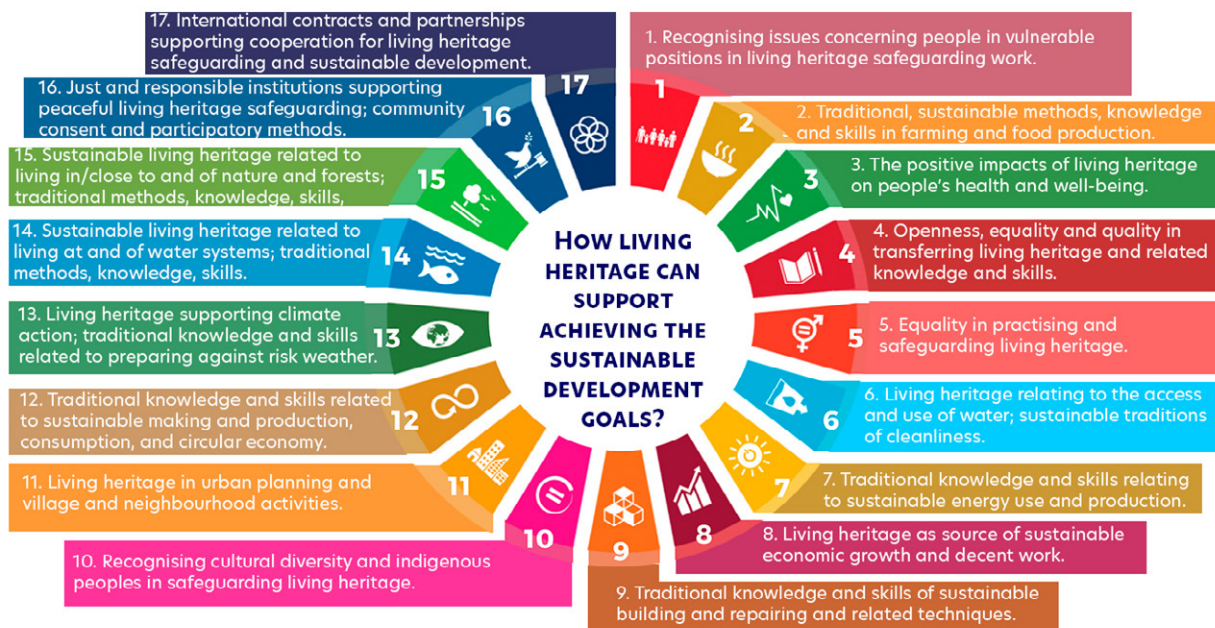
According to the results of the 2021 Cultural Heritage Barometer<sup>12</sup>, the prevailing majority (88%) of respondents consider safeguarding of cultural heritage important, and the state's financial support for entities that safeguard and manage cultural heritage is widely supported. Cultural heritage is quite unanimously regarded as a communal thing that unites people and is of personal interest. Almost two out of three respondents consider cultural heritage to be an important part of their family's past. Similarly, about two thirds of people think that taking care of cultural heritage promotes sustainable development.

## Recognition of the role and importance of culture

The UN Agenda 2030 emphasises that the issues of sustainable development and the climate crisis affect all sectors and stakeholders. In recent years, the importance of sustainable development has also grown in the process of implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. UNESCO offers many different materials and training opportunities to strengthen the sustainable development perspective in work with living heritage. UNESCO and other international organisations such as UCLG (The World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments) have strongly emphasised

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12 <https://www.museovirasto.fi/fi/palvelut-ja-ohjeet/julkaisut/kulttuuriperintobarometri> (in Finnish).



## Agenda 2030 goals and intangible cultural heritage.

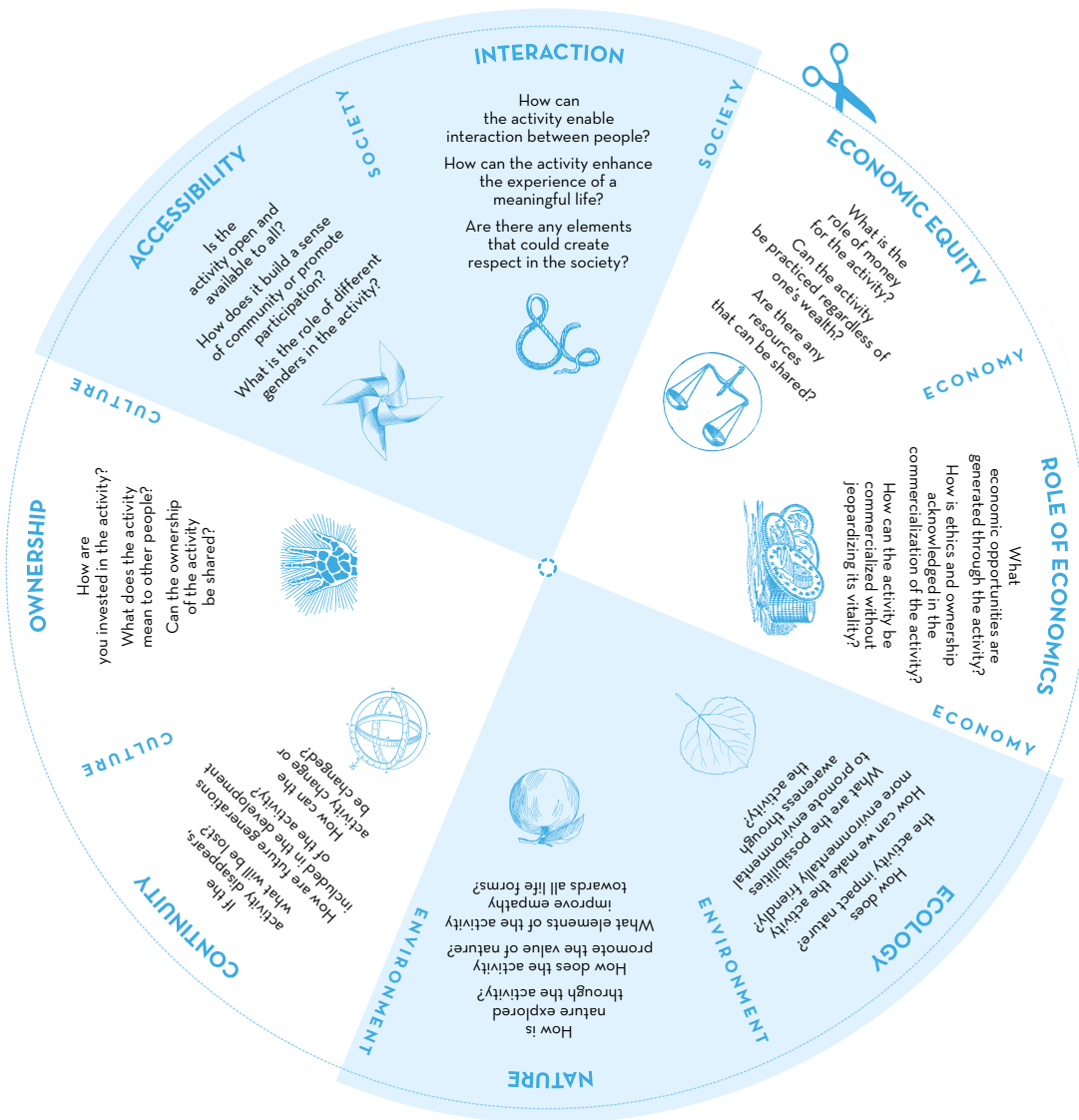
Image source: [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/eng\\_sdg\\_moment\\_culture\\_in\\_the\\_vnrs\\_flyer\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/eng_sdg_moment_culture_in_the_vnrs_flyer_final_0.pdf).

the manifold role of culture in achieving sustainability goals and developing more sustainable societies.

The Final Declaration<sup>13</sup> of the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development MONDIACULT, adopted in September 2022, stresses that culture should be understood in its broadest sense and as a common good for the whole world. The importance of culture should be recognised and it should be treated as a crucial factor enabling sustainable development. Culture should be taken into account and incorporated in various policy documents, such as strategies, plans and other development documents.

The consequences of crises such as climate change and nature loss directly impact intangible cultural heritage and communities practising it, especially in ICH related to nature. To better understand how different dimensions of sustainability (ecological, economic, social, cultural) are intertwined, there is still a need to promote awareness rising and joint learning. As intangible cultural heritage, or living heritage, is practised and transmitted in communities, it has diverse opportunities to increase and strengthen sustainable choices and lifestyles. Safeguarding of living heritage can emphasise different aspects of sustainable development, all of which are connected to each other. For example, knowledge and action models based on traditional knowledge often support the goals of sustainable development, but the practice of different forms of living heritage could also be developed so that they are not only ecologically but also socially, economically and culturally sustainable.

13 <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-world-conference-cultural-policies-and-sustainable-development-mondiacult-2022>.



**Sustainable development** has been an important focus in the Finnish Heritage Agency's work with living heritage in recent years. The Wheel Chart of Sustainability and Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>14</sup> was created in collaboration with the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike) and other partners as a tool for identifying and developing the dimensions of sustainability. The wheel, developed in 2019, has al-

Print on a thick paper, cut on the dashed line and put a split pin in the middle



14 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/en/julkaisut/wheelchart>.

ready been translated into 18 languages and has been disseminated around the world. Another tool, the Spinner of Living Heritage<sup>15</sup>, was developed for discussions among children and young people. It is already available in 16 different languages.

The international project 'LIVIND - Creative and living cultural heritage as a resource for the Northern Dimension region'<sup>16</sup> (2022-2024) coordinated by the Finnish Heritage Agency strengthens the role of intangible cultural heritage in local communities as a source for sustainable development, well-being and livelihoods.

Sustainable tourism related to living heritage has been promoted in cooperation with Visit Finland through the organisation of various webinars and workshops. In 2022, Visit Finland and the Finnish Heritage Agency published the guide 'Common Path: A Guide to the Responsible Use of Living Heritage in Tourism'.<sup>17</sup>

## Cultural heritage lives in communities

According to the surveys conducted for the periodic report on the UNESCO Convention, communities generally see intangible cultural heritage as a positive asset. Traditions are perceived as strengthening unity, well-being and social flexibility, which in turn support socially and culturally sustainable development. Many forms of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage are comparable in their effects to the effects of art and culture on well-being, which have been studied in many different projects in recent years. With some types of intangible cultural heritage, issues related to accessibility are relatively easy to solve, but others require more thought and action. A cultural offering can be considered accessible when different audiences can use it and participate in it without barriers as easily as possible.

The accessibility of culture can be improved by removing barriers to participation. Barriers can be related to the senses; communication; difficulty in understanding; attitudes; physical, social or economic factors; and deficiencies in decision-making.

Taike; the Culture for All Service, which works on issues of accessibility, diversity and equality; the Arts & Health Coordination Centre in Finland; and the national network 'Taikusydän'<sup>18</sup> produced several reports and surveys on the accessibility of culture and cultural well-being and disseminated their results. In addition to these, the results of the extensive 2022 survey<sup>19</sup>

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15 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/en/julkaisut/spinner-of-living-heritage>.

16 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/en/livind>.

17 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/en/julkaisut/common-path-a-guide-to-the-responsible-use-of-living-heritage> (in Finnish).

18 <https://taikusydan.turkuamk.fi/tietopankki/taikusydamen-julkaisut-ja-tietokortit/taikusydamen-julkaisut/> (in Finnish).

19 <https://kansalaisfoorumi.fi/julkaisu/kulttuuriharrastamisen-koetut-vaiikutukset-selvitys/>.



Photo: Eero Knaapi. Maaseudun Sivustysliiton kuva-arkisto



A variety of events and competitions are organised around chainsaw carving.

Photo: Aman Askarizad



Iranian classical music is also included on the Living Heritage wiki list.



The figurine hobby involves collecting, creating, painting and playing games with characters.



The living cultural heritage of schoolchildren involves birthday parties with friends.

conducted by the Citizens' Forum Study Centre (Sivistysliitto Kansalaisfoorumi), clearly demonstrate that cultural practices significantly affect lives of practitioners in several different areas.

The UNESCO Convention states that intangible cultural heritage is an important incentive for cultural diversity. Intangible cultural heritage creates a basis for valuing one's own and other cultures. Knowledge of different cultures, festive traditions, food cultures, performing arts, crafts or knowledge related to nature fosters understanding between different cultures.

In Finland, the Sámi, Swedish speakers, the Roma, Jews, Tatars and Karelians are considered traditional minorities. Other linguistic and cultural minorities include Ingrian Finns, Russian Finns, and more recent immigrant groups. Immigration greatly increases the diversity of society. According to Statistics Finland, in 2022, 496,000 people whose mother tongue is a foreign language lived permanently in Finland, or 8.9% of the entire population. Language plays an important role in identifying and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Different groups of people with disabilities, people belonging to different religions, sexual and gender minorities and different age groups also have their own cultural characteristics.

Living heritage can be used to foster dialogue that promotes mutual respect, conflict resolution and peace building. This means, for example, taking intangible cultural heritage into account as part of cross-sectoral development projects. Development work should consider all sectors and layers of society, including different age groups and genders, people with disabilities, different ethnic groups, indigenous peoples and members of vulnerable groups. It is also important to deal with difficult or contradictory cultural heritage as part of the work.

The aim of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Action plan to promote diversity in the field of arts and culture<sup>20</sup> (2023) is to take into account the diversity of the Finnish population in all art and culture policy planning and decision-making. With help of the programme, the Ministry will implement cultural policy goals in accordance with its strategy by means of result, goal and resource management in cooperation with administrative agencies, cultural institutions, municipalities and communities in various fields of arts and culture. In the action programme, intangible cultural heritage is identified as an important resource and a prerequisite for a rich cultural life.

Cultural diversity has been an important part of the implementation of the Convention in Finland, and several events and workshops have been held with stakeholders in the field. The 'Ambassadors of Living Heritage' project implemented in 2022-2023 by the Finnish Heritage Agency in cooperation with the Arts Promotion Center (Taite, the Culture for All Service and Globe Art Point strengthens the position of cultural diversity in work with intangible cultural heritage. Six living heritage ambassadors selected for the project held workshops with different cultural groups. Based on the workshops, new articles describing the traditions

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20 <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/165055>.

of different groups were added to the Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage. Among other, the Mexican Day of the Dead in Finland, Challah bread in the Jewish culture, and the Celebrating 'el Dieciocho' the Independence Day of Chile in Finland got their own articles.

## **Intangible cultural heritage of the Sámi people**

**Sámi culture includes Sámi languages, Sámi cultural heritage, Sámi cultural expressions, Sámi traditional knowledge, traditional Sámi activities and their modern forms of practice, as well as Sámi handicrafts and other customs and forms of culture practised by the Sámi as indigenous people. Sámi cultural heritage includes elements such as the Sámi building tradition, historical artefacts, Sámi costume, handicrafts, skills and traditions related to traditional livelihoods, place names, art, joik tradition, oral tradition, Sámi perception of landscape, traditional knowledge and language. Tangible and intangible cultural heritage are very closely related in Sámi culture. Three different Sámi languages are spoken in Finland: Northern Sámi, Inari Sámi and Skolt Sámi.**

**The Sámi have cultural self-government, which the Sámi Parliaments are responsible for. The Sámi Museum Siida in Inari is a museum of national responsibility that documents, researches and presents the cultural heritage of the Finnish Sámi people. Intangible cultural heritage of the Sámi has been supported in several projects over the years. Particular attention has been paid to ethical sustainable tourism<sup>21</sup>. As part of the implementation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, a number of events, seminars and webinars have been held in cooperation with the Sámi Parliaments. Finland, Sweden and Norway have been working together to safeguard the living cultural heritage of the Sámi for a number of years. Safeguarding measures should be negotiated and implemented with participation of stakeholders from across the entire Sámi region.**

→ Read more in the periodic report submitted to UNESCO (subchapters 13.2-15.1)<sup>22</sup>

## **Cultural heritage as the basis of sustainable society**

**Aim: Intangible cultural heritage is to be a key factor in building a sustainable future and supporting well-being.**

### **The Finnish Heritage Agency's commitments:**

- We will highlight the importance of intangible cultural heritage in society, for example by promoting well-being and inclusion through communication in multiple languages and

21 <https://samediggi.fi/en/areas-of-expertise/livelihoods-justice-and-environment/ethical-guidelines-for-sami-tourism/>.

22 [https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH\\_Periodic-Report-2022\\_final.htm](https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH_Periodic-Report-2022_final.htm).

at various events. In particular, cooperation is carried out with the representatives of the elements on the UNESCO List and elements of the National Inventory.

- In our own work, we commit to considering sustainability, responsibility and inclusion in all work with living heritage.
- We will continue our work aimed at making connections between living heritage and sustainable development visible and sharing good practices with help of projects, events and tools. We will cooperate with a multidisciplinary network of domestic and international stakeholders.
- We will continue to develop and disseminate tools created with our partners to increase the effectiveness of the practical work of stakeholders in the field (Sustainable Development Wheel, Living Heritage Spinner).
- We will collaborate with various cultural and linguistic minorities and stakeholders in the field to promote cultural diversity through events, workshops, wiki articles and project grants. We will support the Ministry of Education and Culture's action plan to promote diversity in the field of arts and culture.
- We will continue cooperation with the Sámi Parliaments to safeguard intangible cultural heritage of the Sámi together with Sweden and Norway.

Photo: Anne Ollila



Reindeer husbandry is the most visible part of Sámi culture. Its communal and cultural significance remains great, and entire families usually take part in the annual related events.

## 2 FOUNDATIONS OF SAFEGUARDING LIVING CULTURAL HERITAGE

The UNESCO Convention provides a basis for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Following the ratification of the Convention, Finland has started establishing the necessary division of responsibilities, approaches and tools. We want to work to promote and to safeguard living heritage in a community-oriented manner together with practitioners in accordance with the spirit of the Convention. However, the implementation of the Convention is the responsibility of the authorities.

### Key stakeholders of the Convention

Finland is a State Party to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the government is responsible for fulfilling the obligations imposed by the Convention. In Finland, the **Ministry of Education and Culture** is responsible for the implementation of the Convention and reporting to UNESCO.

The **Finnish Heritage Agency** is responsible for the implementation of the Convention at a national level. Its responsibilities include coordination of work related to ICH, inventorying of ICH, and international cooperation together with the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Finnish Heritage Agency is also responsible for communication related to the Convention at a national level.

The Ministry of Education and Culture designated the Finnish Heritage Agency to allocate funds for the implementation of international cultural heritage conventions. From these funds, the Finnish Heritage Agency annually distributes grants to cooperation and development projects in accordance with the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>23</sup>. The goal of the funds is to promote the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, to raise awareness and to expand the opportunities for communities to engage with the cultural heritage covered by the Convention. In recent years, more than 40 projects were supported with grants totalling EUR 456,000.

The Ministry of Education and Culture appointed a group of experts to support the work of the Finnish Heritage Agency. The third **Advisory group of intangible cultural heritage**<sup>24</sup> will run for the term 2022–2026.

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23 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/fi/artikkeli/avustukset-aineettoman-sopimuksen-yhteistyö-ja-kehittämishankkeisiin> (in Finnish).

24 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/en/sopimus-suomessa/asiiantuntijaryhmät>.



There are a few dozen barrel organ players in Finland.

The Awakening Festival brings together tens of thousands of people each year to sing hymns.



**Circles of living heritage**<sup>25</sup> support the work of the Finnish Heritage Agency on the implementation of the UNESCO Convention. Circles are multidisciplinary networks of stakeholders through which we interact with different living heritage communities, the third sector and living heritage practitioners. Circles bring together actors responsible for practising, transferring, training, researching, and documenting traditions in different fields. There are four circles directly related to the implementation of the Convention: the Crafts Circle (founded in 2015), the Nature Circle (2016), the Circle of Folk Music and Folk Dance (2016) and the Oral Tradition Circle (2018). In addition to these, in connection with the inscriptions on the UNESCO List, a Sauna Circle (2019) and a Circle of Clinker Boat Traditions (2021) were established.

Circles organise different activities, such as events, and produce various publications and tools, such as discussion cards on crafts (Käsityön äärellä)<sup>26</sup>. Circles' tasks can include, for example, raising awareness about safeguarding living heritage, passing on information about the implementation of the Convention, and encouraging inventorying of living heritage among stakeholders in their own field.

NGOs with recognised expertise in the field of intangible cultural heritage have the opportunity to apply for accreditation, allowing them to take on an advisory role, with the institutions of the UNESCO Convention. **Accredited NGOs** contribute to the implementation of the Convention from the perspective of civil society and support its implementation nationally and at UNESCO level worldwide. From Finland, the Finnish Folk Music Institute and the Finnish Crafts Organization Taito have been accredited by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. In total, there are 217 accredited NGOs worldwide (as of January 2024).

## **Inventorying provides visibility for living heritage**

Inventorying of intangible cultural heritage is an important part of the Convention and one of the few articles binding the State Parties. Inventorying promotes awareness of the existence of intangible cultural heritage and the importance of its safeguarding. In Finland, inventorying is carried out at two levels.

The participatory and always open **Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage**<sup>27</sup> offers communities a platform to present their intangible cultural heritage. The inventory was launched in 2016 and already has more than 240 articles from 400 different communities (as of January 2024). Proposals for the Wiki-inventory can be made by various communities, for example NGOs, as-

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25 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/en/sopimus-suomessa/elävän-perinnön-ringit>.

26 <https://www.taito.fi/me-olemme-taito/kasityon-aineeton-kulttuuriperinto/kasityon-elavan-perinnon-tyokaluja/>.

27 <https://wiki.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/>.



sociations, institutions or a group of individuals. Information is added to the Wiki-inventory is by the communities that practise the tradition.

The Wiki-inventory is an effective platform for raising awareness about living heritage. The site has attracted thousands of visitors: in 2022, there were 100,000 visitors from more than 150 countries. The Wiki-inventory serves as a resource for various communities, educational organisations, the media, and the general public. Information provided in the articles is also used on the educational material website maintained by the Finnish Heritage Agency, which offers toolkits for schools.

Traditions in the inventory represent celebrations, food, crafts, music and dance, performing arts, games, nature or oral traditions. Good practices, projects or methods related to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage can also be added in the inventory. The website contains information in Finnish, Swedish and English. In addition to these languages, it is possible to publish articles in any other language.

Communities can promote their elements of living heritage from the Wiki-inventory further to the **National Inventory of Living Heritage**<sup>28</sup>, which currently has 86 elements. The Ministry of Education and Culture inscribes elements on the National Inventory following nominations from the Finnish Heritage Agency. The advisory group on intangible cultural heritage supports the Agency in the preparation of nominations. In addition, nominations are also peer-reviewed. The purpose of the National Inventory is to promote recognition and visibility of the inscribed elements. Calls for this inventory are held periodically and were last held in 2017, 2019 and 2023. Elements to be proposed for nomination to UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage from Finland must already be in the National Inventory.

## UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage

**In connection with the Convention, UNESCO maintains two lists of intangible cultural heritage and a Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. With these lists, UNESCO aims to bring visibility to living heritage in different parts of the world and share good practices between countries. The most extensive is the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding highlights endangered elements. The Register of Good Safeguarding Practices presents different methods. The lists already include 730 elements from 145 countries (as of January 2024).**

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28 <https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists>.

**Finland has four elements on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: sauna culture in Finland (2020), Kaustinen fiddle playing and related practices and expressions (2021), multinational inscriptions Nordic clinker boat traditions (2021), and Knowledge, craft and skills of handmade glass production (2023).**

→ Read more in the periodic report to UNESCO (indicators 7 and 8)<sup>29</sup>

## Foundations of safeguarding living cultural heritage

**Aim: We will continue to collect and disseminate information about the living heritage covered by the UNESCO Convention as a basis for safeguarding. We will do this work together with heritage bearers and communities. More and more living heritage in Finland is the subject of documenting and safeguarding work.**

### The Finnish Heritage Agency's commitments:

- We will increase awareness of the Wiki-inventory of Living Heritage by means of communication in different languages in Finland and internationally. We will encourage different communities, including minorities, to make their own living heritage visible through the inventories. In particular, the aim is to increase the number of good practices in the inventory.
- We will work closely with circles of living heritage and other stakeholders active in the field of living heritage. We will develop cooperation with regions, municipalities and local stakeholders.
- We will support accredited NGOs in their work to promote intangible cultural heritage in Finland and in their international work.
- We will cooperate with the heritage communities of elements inscribed in UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage to develop safeguarding work. We will report to UNESCO on the safeguarding of elements as part of Finland's periodic report.
- During the action plan period, we will launch one national call for nominations to UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage lists, with a focus on good safeguarding practices.

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<sup>29</sup> [http://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH\\_Periodic-Report-2022\\_final.htm](http://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH_Periodic-Report-2022_final.htm).



To this day, volunteers collect hay on hay poles throughout Finland.

### 3 INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IS SAFEGUARDED BY A WIDE RANGE OF STAKEHOLDERS

At the core of living heritage are diverse communities in which intangible cultural heritage in its various forms is practised, safeguarded and transmitted. In Finland, a considerable number of different stakeholders participate in safeguarding. Our country has extensive and well-established structures in terms of factors such as education, research, memory institutions and cultural institutions, which in turn support the safeguarding and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. The state supports communities, associations and traditional artists in many different ways. Educational institutions are discussed separately in Chapter 4 - Education and upbringing.

#### **Non-governmental organisations**

NGOs have long and strong traditions in Finland. Organisations and their regional and local levels also play an important role in promoting intangible cultural heritage. A large proportion of the associations work with volunteers, but some also have paid employees, at least at the

level of the umbrella organisations. In addition to NGOs and associations, intangible cultural heritage is safeguarded by many local communities, such as neighbourhood groups, hobby groups and work communities. Thousands of cultural and hobby associations focus on local heritage work, performing arts, crafts and oral traditions. For example, in relation to nature, there is a wide field in which living heritage is transferred and safeguarded by, for example, nature, outdoor recreation, sports, camping, hunting and fishing organisations.

## **Memory institutions**

In Finland, elements of intangible cultural heritage are mainly documented by museums, archives and libraries. In professional memory institutions, professionals and experts in the field are responsible for documentation, but organisations, practitioners and various educational institutions also document and store materials from the living heritage related to their own activities. Almost all of these institutions and organisations receive public funding from the state, regional administration or municipalities, in the form of either operating grants or individual project grants.

The goal of the Convention is to steer the work of memory institutions to support living heritage safeguarding and its transmission to future generations. The work of museums, archives and libraries related to documentation, research and sharing of information on intangible cultural heritage is important for cultural practitioners and communities as well as society in general. This community-oriented way of working is growing, which means that communities are increasingly involved in the documentation work. Many memory institutions also actively conduct research.

The information search service Finna is home to millions of cultural and scientific materials in Finland. Hundreds of Finnish organisations such as archives, libraries and museums upload content to Finna. The search service provides access to multimedia materials, images, texts, documentation, videos and other forms of content, from all living heritage domains. The National Library of Finland maintains and develops the Finna service continuously in cooperation with archives, libraries, museums and other partners.

## **Museums**

Finnish museums document, preserve, research and display both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The involvement of visitors and different communities through varied cooperation plays an important role in museums' work. Often, museums also function as open meeting and event venues for various people, groups and communities, facilitating the versatile handling, utilisation, preservation and reflection of cultural heritage themes.

The Museums Act (314/2019) regulates professional museum activities, and intangible cultural heritage is also included in the rationale of the revised Museums Act. There are more than 300 professionally managed museums in Finland, some of which have special responsibilities. Currently, there are 32 regional responsibility museums and 18 national responsibility museums<sup>30</sup> in Finland, whose field of work is closely related to many kinds of living traditions. In addition to these, there are hundreds of non-professional museums operating in Finland, such as local museums, which work independently with local tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Awareness of intangible cultural heritage has increased in the museum field through campaigns, events, materials and training organised in cooperation with the Finnish Heritage Agency, Finnish Museums Association, Finnish Local Heritage Federation and individual museums. The renewed definition of museums<sup>31</sup> by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) also takes into account intangible cultural heritage. Understanding of the work of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is expanding and changing into methods of action that involve communities throughout the entirety of a museum's operations, from documenting and collection management to the planning and implementation of exhibitions and museum pedagogy. Work with living heritage also creates new operating methods and services for museums and opens up new cooperation opportunities.

The Network for Collections Management and Contemporary Documentation in Finland (TAKO) develops and coordinates the phenomenon-based contemporary documentation practised by museums, which often focuses on the phenomena of living heritage. Science centres and the nature centres<sup>32</sup> operated by Metsähallitus are also places for discussion of intangible cultural heritage, alongside museums.

The Finnish Heritage Agency and the Finnish Museums Association have been cooperating for several years to promote intangible cultural heritage. In 2020, a webinar related to living heritage in Nordic museums was held, attracting a total of 260 participants from 12 different countries. In 2021, two half-day long webinars were held for Finnish museum professionals on the theme of intangible cultural heritage. The workshop instructions<sup>33</sup> and inspiration cards<sup>34</sup> about the work of 40 Finnish museums offer concrete tools and approaches to living heritage in the work of museums.

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30 The nationally responsible museums are the Alvar Aalto Museum, Design Museum, Forum Marinum, Lusto - Finnish Forest Museum, Mobilia car and road museum, Postal Museum, Sámi Museum Siida, Finnish Architecture Museum, Finnish Aviation Museum, Finnish Crafts Museum, Finnish Glass Museum, Finnish Agricultural Museum Sarka, Finnish Railway Museum, Finnish Sports Museum, Finnish photography museum, Theater Museum, Technology Museum, Werstas Workers' Museum (09/2023)

31 <https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-approves-a-new-museum-definition/>.

32 <https://www.nationalparks.fi/naturecentres>.

33 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/fi/suojeleminen/muistiorganisaatiot>.

34 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/fi/julkaisut/inspiraatiokortit-museoille>.

Photo: Mervi Honkatukia



There is a variety of know-how related to the care of cattle and other domestic animals in Finland.

Photo: Arktiset aromit ry



Everyman's rights enables berry gathering anywhere in Finland.

## Archives

An extensive network of public and private archives operates in Finland. The tasks of the archives include documentation, recording and preservation, as well as transmission of information and materials for the use of communities. Living heritage is documented in archives<sup>35</sup> in the form of audio recording, videos and photographs, as well as in written form. All materials are available for the general public.

The mission of the National Archives is to ensure the preservation and availability of documents pertaining to national cultural heritage and to promote their use in research. The Sámi Archives, as part of the National Archives, are responsible for the preservation of documents related to the Sámi people and support interdisciplinary Sámi research.

Information and material related to living heritage are preserved in Finland by numerous institutions. Many private archives also offer a wide range of materials related to the topic. In addition, local archives run by volunteers also preserve, document and pass on information and materials related to living heritage. Furthermore, some museums also have archives.

## Libraries

Libraries act as information mediators open to everyone, places for learning, meeting with others and events alongside versatile information resources. Finland's library network consists of general i.e. municipal libraries, university and university of applied sciences libraries, special libraries maintained by the state or private institutions, and libraries in schools and educational institutions. Finland's library network is the most used cultural service in the country. More than 700 public libraries process about 80.4 million loans in total every year. With their services, university libraries, special libraries, educational institution libraries and the National Library offer access to information about intangible cultural heritage, research, databases and domestic and international online services that make them accessible.

Libraries play a significant role in showcasing and presenting local living heritage. Many library events are connected to local intangible cultural heritage and local communities, promoting the visibility of, for example, oral traditions such as dialects or storytelling. When it comes to promoting reading with schools and education institutions, for example, libraries work together with early childhood education, civic colleges, representatives of verbal arts,

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35 For example, the National Archives, the Center for Domestic Languages, the National Audiovisual Institute, Finnish Literature Society, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, Svenska centralarkivet, Tampere University Folklore Archive, Turku the university's History, Culture and Arts Research Archive and Yleisradio. Also, for example, the Music Archive, the Folk Music Institute and the Finnish Sports Archive document materials related to intangible cultural heritage.

local associations and organisations. At the same time, libraries lower citizens' threshold for practising, getting to know and cherishing intangible cultural heritage.

## **Other professional organisations**

In Finland, there are a large number of different cultural professional organisations, information centres for various fields of art and other institutions that present intangible cultural heritage, produce programs of events, document and transmit information and skills.

In Finland, there are a total of 28 cultural centres/venues located in regional centres and other municipalities. There are about two thousand meeting halls and, in addition to them, numerous village halls that offer opportunities for promotion of intangible cultural heritage. Each of them offers space for, for example, events, music and crafts, and gatherings of various communities.

## **Local stakeholders**

Municipalities and regional associations play an important role in safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of their regions. According to the Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government (166/2019) municipalities must promote the maintenance and use of cultural heritage and activities that support and develop local identity. Likewise, the Regional Development Act (756/2021) specifies the promotion of culture and regional identity as a task of the regional associations in particular, including as part of their regional strategy work. The regional associations support municipalities by taking into account intangible cultural heritage in their own development and planning work.

In the area of responsibility of municipalities, emphasis is placed on community culture and well-being, the smoothness of the everyday life of the municipalities, and participation in democratic activities and decision-making. In the field of tasks of municipalities, which has undergone changes, intangible cultural heritage is a versatile resource, the importance of which is highlighted in cultural and welfare services, memory institutions' tasks as discussed above, and in addition to the field of education, in the cultural functions of municipalities. Since intangible cultural heritage has numerous manifestations even within the framework of the Convention, it intersects with people's lives in many different ways, whether to do with hobbies that increase health and well-being, taking care of the environment or events that strengthen the feeling of belonging to the community.



Municipal libraries, museums and cultural centres serve as venues for various events. Municipalities cooperate closely with organisations, associations, and community stakeholders and distribute operating grants. Intangible cultural heritage is also related to promoting well-being and health, and strengthening vitality, which are key tasks of municipalities. The task of municipal committees could have been more generally aligned with the promotion of traditional work, which also includes intangible cultural heritage.

→ [Read more in the periodic report to UNESCO \(indicator 1\)](#)<sup>36</sup>

## **Intangible cultural heritage is safeguarded by a wide range of stakeholders**

**Aim:** We will ensure that work with intangible cultural heritage covers different layers of society. We will actively influence living heritage being recognised as a concept and cultural heritage work emphasising a community-oriented perspective.

### **The Finnish Heritage Agency's commitments:**

- We will work closely with NGOs on safeguarding living heritage and making it visible through, for example, lists, communication, events and projects.
- In cooperation with circles of living heritage and accredited NGOs, we will reach out to new partners for the active implementation of the Convention.
- We will cooperate with the Finnish Museums Association and regional and national responsibility museums to promote intangible cultural heritage in the work of museums by developing cooperation methods and tools, and organising events and training.
- We will continue cooperation with archives in terms of living heritage events, communication and collection work.
- We will develop cooperation with the library sector in the work of living heritage.
- We will strengthen the cooperation between municipal actors, industries and the municipal administrations within the municipality by organising events, information sessions and training. Through cooperation we will encourage municipalities to better identify living heritage as part of the municipalities' cultural activities.

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36 [https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH\\_Periodic-Report-2022\\_final.htm](https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH_Periodic-Report-2022_final.htm).

Photo: OKM / Emilia Anundi



Baking gingerbread biscuits is a Christmas tradition in many countries.

Photo: OKM / Emilia Anundi



Rag rug weaving at Taito Centre in Hyvinkää.

## 4 LIVING HERITAGE AS PART OF STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

The goal of the UNESCO Convention is that the importance of intangible cultural heritage for people and communities is recognised in society. This goal is supported in the Final Declaration of the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development MONDIACULT (2022), according to which the importance of culture should be recognised and should be taken into account and incorporated in various policy documents such as strategies, plans and other development documents.<sup>37</sup>

It is important that the participation of people and different communities in cultural heritage work is recognised. Programmes, plans and their implementation in the administrative fields of education and cultural policy, among others, should take into account the diversity of intangible cultural heritage, human rights, equality and principles of sustainable development. Every individual has the right to define their cultural identity and their participation in cultural heritage. Everyone should also have the right to place themselves outside of the jointly defined cultural heritage.

### Legislation and strategies

Following the ratification of the Convention it was determined that current legislation on cultural heritage and language, education and the environment, as well as minority rights, enables the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Finland. The Finnish Constitution states that national heritage is the responsibility of everyone (Article 20). In addition to this, it also states that the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations are provided on an equal basis, and that the Sámi as an indigenous group as well as the Roma and other groups have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture (Article 17). The law also protects the rights of those who use sign languages and those who need interpretation and translation assistance due to a disability.

However, since the beginning of the implementation of the Convention, intangible cultural heritage has started to be incorporated in various guiding documents up to the point of legislation. Municipalities play a significant role in organising cultural activities in Finland. Their sphere of activity, the content of their activities and goals are regulated by the Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government (166/2019). In the motivation for the act, intangible cultural heritage is also mentioned as part of the municipalities' sphere of activity. Living heritage is particularly relevant to supporting local identity and civic activities.

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37 [https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/10/6.MONDIACULT\\_EN\\_DRAFT%20FINAL%20DECLARATION\\_FINAL\\_1.pdf](https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/10/6.MONDIACULT_EN_DRAFT%20FINAL%20DECLARATION_FINAL_1.pdf).

The work of museums is regulated by the Museums Act (314/2019). In the related government proposal (HE 194/2018), museums are seen to be responsible for safeguarding cultural heritage and developing and promoting digital accessibility in their area of responsibility. The task covers tangible, intangible, and digital heritage.

According to the Act on Regional Development and Implementation of the European Union's Regional and Structural Policy (756/2021), the tasks of the regional councils include promoting culture as part of regional strategic work, the right of the Sámi people in their home region to their own language and culture, regional identity, and residents' participation in the development of the region.

The Act on the Financing of Education and Culture (1705/2009) and the Government Decree on the Financing of Educational and Cultural Provision (1766/2009) also provide for state grants, which can be granted, for example, for the functional development of pre-school education, basic education, upper secondary education, morning and afternoon activities and basic education in the arts. The Act on Liberal Adult Education (632/1998) provides for liberal adult education work, which plays a significant role in passing on many kinds of living traditions.

In addition to this, many national and regional strategies and action plans play an important role in terms of cultural heritage. The Government's resolution on the cultural heritage strategy 2023–2030<sup>38</sup> examines cultural heritage holistically: it is everywhere and it is a part of everyone's life and it can be tangible, intangible or digital. In 2024, the Ministry of Education and Culture will draw up an implementation plan for the implementation of the cultural heritage strategy.

Other guiding strategies are, for example, the Ministry of Education and Culture's Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025<sup>39</sup> and the Ministry of Education and Culture Strategy 2030<sup>40</sup>. Intangible cultural heritage is also taken into account, for example, in the Sámi cultural policy action and development programme 2020–2023 and the National Roma Policy 2023–2030<sup>41</sup>.

Intangible cultural heritage is also reflected in regions strategies and regional tourism strategies. This is most often the case if the region or municipality has a tradition that is part of the National Inventory of Living Heritage, such as Kaustinen fiddle playing in Central Ostrobothnia or the tradition of knitting tikkuröijy sweaters of Hailuoto island in Northern Ostrobothnia. Local cultural environment programmes and strategies also highlight living heritage in some places.

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38 <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164728>.

39 <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/80577/okm22.pdf>.

40 <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/161562>.

41 <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164779>.

## Public support

In Finland, public funding of arts and culture is divided between the state and municipalities. The state is financially and administratively responsible for national arts and culture institutions, direct support of arts and artists, higher education in arts and culture, and international relations. The Ministry of Education and Culture is the state's most important funder of arts and culture. Entities that maintain museums, theatres and orchestras in Finland are granted state support to cover the operating costs of the institutions. The Ministry of Education and Culture provides significant financing for basic activities and projects in many areas of living heritage.

Since living heritage extends to many areas of life, it touches the fields of various different ministries. For example, the administrative area of the Ministry of the Environment includes intangible cultural heritage, which covers, for example, built heritage and landscape and natural heritage. Other ministries, through their own policy programmes, also finance activities related to living heritage to some extent, but this could be planned and openly considered to a greater extent.

Municipalities maintain museums, libraries and archives, and support cultural and art organisations operating locally and regionally, as well as basic education in the arts and other cultural activities, such as events. Alongside the state, municipalities also directly support artists with grants, subsidies and by offering working and performance spaces.

Seven state art commissions in different art fields and thirteen regional art commissions run by Taike have a direct influence on many areas of intangible cultural heritage, such as the promotion of performing arts, music or cultural diversity. Art commissions decide on grants and Taike as an agency makes decisions on grants to communities. In addition to these, the regional development tasks to do with culture support regional cooperation, as does the cultural promotion work carried out by the regional councils. The activities of Taike also extend to the regions.

European Union funding supports various projects related to living heritage, for example through the Creative Europe and Interreg programmes. In addition to this, dozens of projects in the field of living heritage are financed in Finland every year through the Leader programme. Structural funds also support the viability of intangible cultural heritage in regions. Various financial instruments are available for Nordic cooperation under the Nordic Culture Fund and Nordic Culture Point.

In addition to public support, foundations play an important role in financing culture. There are currently hundreds of private foundations operating in Finland that support science, arts and other social development.



Knowledge, skills and techniques related to hand-blown glass were added on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2023 by Finland and four other countries.



Karelian pastries being baked at a workshop of the Uusimaa branch of the Martha Organisation.

Since 2018, the Finnish Heritage Agency has been distributing grants for cooperation and development projects on intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, intangible cultural heritage plays an important role in numerous museum projects and grants awarded to projects related to the cultural heritage and cultural environment of communities. There are also projects related to intangible cultural heritage in grants related to the cultural environment and world heritage sites.

→ [Read more in the periodic report to UNESCO \(indicators 7 and 8\)](#)<sup>42</sup>

## Living heritage as part of strategic development

**Aim:** We will strive to ensure that the nurturing of intangible cultural heritage has strong support in strategies and programmes and that sufficient resources are reserved for its safeguarding.

### The Finnish Heritage Agency's commitments:

- We will pass on information about the Convention on intangible cultural heritage in the administration of the Ministry of Education and Culture, so that living heritage is taken into account in all applicable strategies and programmes. We will also look for new co-operation opportunities in other spheres.
- In cooperation with regions and municipalities, we will initiate measures to make intangible cultural heritage known and take it into account in the work of municipalities.
- We are actively looking for opportunities to finance intangible cultural heritage work through different actors and different instruments.
- We will stress the role of intangible cultural heritage in the implementation of the cultural heritage strategy.
- We will support the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage by distributing grants.

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42 [https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH\\_Periodic-Report-2022\\_final.htm](https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH_Periodic-Report-2022_final.htm).

## 5 EDUCATION AND TRAINING AS GUARDIANS OF LIVING HERITAGE

Continuous development of traditions and their transmission to new generations are a vital condition for safeguarding the viability of intangible cultural heritage. Self-directed learning that takes place in everyday communities and forms of hobby activities is of central importance in passing on a living heritage. However, living heritage is also studied and maintained at different educational levels, in accordance with the education, teaching and training tasks set for it. Intangible cultural heritage is taken into account in the Finnish education system in a planned, versatile and extensive way. In particular, living heritage is treated as part of wide-ranging competence, i.e. the whole formed by knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and will. In basic education and upper secondary education, broad competence is part of the teaching of every subject. In early childhood education and pre-primary education, broad competence is promoted in all pedagogical activities.

### **Early childhood education and basic education**

Cultural heritage, cultural competence, sustainability and diversity, as well as supporting cultural identity, are included in the values, tasks and goals in the foundations. For example, the task of basic education is to promote the students' versatile cultural competence and appreciation of cultural heritage, and to support them in building their own cultural identity and cultural capital. Solutions in early childhood education and teaching organisers have a great impact on how widely intangible cultural heritage is included in education and teaching.

In basic education, students get opportunities to experience, examine and interpret intangible cultural heritage, for example in the teaching of handicrafts, physical education, music, visual arts and home economics. In addition to this, many themes of intangible cultural heritage come to the fore in the different syllabi of the subject mother tongue and literature (e.g. Finnish as a second language, Sámi language and literature, Romani language and literature, sign languages and literature) as well as history, religion and ethics. In addition to this, nature and environmental education conveys nature-related knowledge in basic education and early childhood education. In connection with basic education, for example, library activities and hobby activities can be organised for students. Intangible cultural heritage is also transferred during school meals, holidays, parties, trips, study trips and camps.

Cultural heritage education in early childhood education, schools and educational institutions is supported by active cooperation with arts and culture organisations and associations, cultural heritage professionals and cultural heritage practitioners. Organisers of early childhood education and basic education sometimes cooperate with, for example, museum pedagogues or living heritage associations.





The Nordic conditions have generated many kinds of skills in our cultural heritage, which we learn as children.

Cultural education plans<sup>43</sup> support the inclusion of local cultural heritage in teaching and education in more than half of Finland's municipalities. They complement and support the mission and implementation of local early childhood education plans and curricula. Cultural education plans strengthen goal-oriented art and cultural education in early childhood education units, schools and educational institutions.

School club activities can also support the transfer of intangible heritage in basic education. The starting points for club activities are the school's educational, teaching and guidance goals. The school's club activities support the versatile growth of children and young people and increase student participation. The principles of organising club activities are recorded in the curriculum and the school's annual school year plan. The activity is voluntary and free of charge for students. Every year it has been possible to apply for a state grant from the Finnish National Agency for Education for school club activities.

In addition to school club activities, the Finnish model for leisure activities<sup>44</sup> launched in 2021 has brought new impetus to pupils' hobby activities. The goal of the model is to support the well-being of children and young people by enabling everyone participating in basic education to have a pleasant and free hobby during the school day. Efforts are being made to establish the Finnish model as a permanent way of operating in the municipalities. Activities

43 <https://kulttuurikasvatussuunnitelma.fi/en/>.

44 <https://harrastamisensuomenmalli.fi/en/>.

within the framework of the model have been already organised in 249 municipalities. Every year it has been possible to apply for state aid from the regional administrative agencies to implement the Finnish model for leisure education. The challenge is that, although based on national surveys of schoolchildren, schoolchildren would like to have access to plenty of art and cultural (heritage) hobbies, they are not offered enough in relation to the demand, due to both the lack of bodies organising hobby activities and financial issues.

## **Upper secondary education and vocational training**

Cultural heritage, cultural competence, sustainability and diversity, as well as supporting cultural identity, are also included in upper secondary education. The areas of wide-ranging competence, such as global and cultural competence, social competence, communication competence and well-being competence, form the common goals of upper secondary school subjects, to which intangible cultural heritage can be connected in many different ways. As with basic education, topics related to living heritage are discussed in connection with various subjects in upper secondary school. The courses defined in the upper secondary school curriculum may also include upper secondary diplomas completed in different subjects. The purpose of high school diplomas is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate their special skills and hobbies through long-term efforts. It is possible to complete high school diplomas in home economics, visual arts, crafts, sports, media, music, dance and theatre. High school studies are also associated with customs, practices and traditions, which in themselves have become living heritage, such as bench dances and traditional dances.

Vocational training plays a central role in transferring knowledge, skills and learning abilities related to different professional skills. Numerous professions are associated with living heritage, familiarity with which is part of professionalism and its skilful practice. Elements of the vocational training directly prepare students for maintaining skills that are part of the living cultural heritage, for example in various fields of construction, natural resources, nutrition, nursing and the art industry. An important special feature are qualifications in Sámi handicrafts, where the nurturing of cultural tradition is pivotal. Apprenticeships can enable a particularly successful transfer of traditional skills and knowledge related to professional competence to new generations of experts.

## **Universities**

Intangible cultural heritage is deeply connected with studying and training in higher educational institutions. Universities of applied sciences support the most up-to-date professional skills in numerous fields through various training programmes, which often also involve the

transfer of traditional knowledge and skills. Teaching and training, especially in the fields of humanities and arts, also produce skilled individuals and experts directly for safeguarding living heritage in a couple of memory institutions, art fields, educational institutions, organisations, the media and administrative roles. In the training of class and subject teachers, know-how and readiness for educational work that takes into account intangible cultural heritage is imparted. The themes of intangible cultural heritage also form part of the teacher education curricula of Finnish universities, usually as part of courses dealing with cultural heritage or, for example, world heritage.

## **Cultural heritage education**

**Cultural heritage education strengthens cultural rights and the voice of children and young people in society. Its goal is to strengthen active citizenship and participation among children and young people, as well as continuous learning. Cultural heritage education is culturally sustainable education and the realisation of diversity. Accessible, meaningful and human rights-based cultural heritage has the power to unite different people, population groups, regions and countries and strengthen social cohesion.**

**The goal of cultural heritage education is to support the balanced development of individual cultural identity. We want to give everyone the opportunity to feel part of the surrounding culture. Cultural heritage education supports the goal-oriented educational activities of different parties and the achievement of learning goals according to the basics of the school curriculum. For example, in accordance with the fundamentals of the basic education curriculum, the goal of teaching is to promote versatile cultural competence and appreciation of cultural heritage, and to support students in building their own cultural identity.**

**Many skills important for the future are connected to cultural heritage, and these can support, for example, sustainable lifestyles. Cultural heritage education gives children and young people tools to build their identity, which is formed by participation in different groups. Children and young people themselves also produce their own intangible cultural heritage and pass it on to older generations. Cultural heritage can be approached in teaching from the local or student's cultural background, as well as from a national and global perspective. It is also important to deal with difficult or contradictory cultural heritage. Sensitive cultural heritage education pays attention to the 'blind spots' and the margins, amplifying voices that are often not heard. Cultural heritage education strengthens cultural competence, which is a key future skill and part of the general education that belongs to everyone.**



The folk dance jams feature dancing to the tune of an accordion and guitar in Helsinki.



The fairy tale workshop 'Winter Trip to India' at the Helinä Rautavaara Museum in Espoo.

## Lifelong learning: liberal adult education and hobbies

In Finland, liberal adult education means the provision of voluntary, non-degree-oriented, non-degree studies that are open to all at folk high schools, civic and adult education colleges, summer universities, sports colleges and study centres. Liberal adult education plays a significant role in transferring knowledge and skills of various forms of intangible cultural heritage. Educational institutions often also act as important employers for experts in various fields and skills. Through these activities, traditional knowledge and know-how are passed on and at the same time opportunities for continuing education are offered.

Liberal adult education is offered in a wide range of subjects that are central to living heritage, such as crafts and arts, music, exercise, language teaching, nature-related skills and cooking. Educational institutions operate in every municipality in mainland Finland; every year more than 890,000 adults participate in liberal adult education at more than 290 educational institutions across the country. Training is also available for minors.

Basic education in the arts<sup>45</sup> is extracurricular, goal-oriented education in various art fields that progresses from one level to another, organised primarily for children and young people. The purpose of basic education in the arts is to give students the skills to express themselves and apply for professional and higher education in the arts. Basic education in the arts can also be provided for adults. Despite its name, basic education in the arts is not a part of art education in basic education, and is instead its own form of education.

In basic education in the arts, students study architecture, visual arts, handicrafts, media arts, music, verbal arts, circus arts, dance or theatre arts. According to one report, approximately 128,000 students studied in basic education in the arts in 2019–2020 (Reports and reports 2020:4, Board of Education). Basic education in the arts is provided at, for example, music schools, visual arts schools and other art schools. Basic education in the arts is also provided at liberal arts educational institutions. Education organisers can be municipalities, joint municipalities, registered associations, foundations and state educational institutions. The basic education in the arts is based on the local curriculum approved by the education organiser, which has been drawn up in accordance with the general or broad syllabus of the basic education in the arts curriculum decided on by the Finnish National Agency for Education. Students gain the skills to express themselves and apply for professional and higher education in the arts.

Children's Cultural Centres provide cultural services for children, young people, families with children, schools and daycare centres. The centres bring accessible art education into the lives of as many children and young people as possible, and promote children's well-being through art and culture. In Finland, children's culture is financed by the Ministry of Education

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45 <https://okm.fi/en/basic-education-in-arts>.

and Culture in Finland, Taike, and various foundations. The Association of Finnish Children's Cultural Centres includes 35 member organisations that each operate one or more children's cultural centre.

## Learning materials

Educational materials related to cultural heritage are offered by several operators. For example, the Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland offers educators and education professionals information, materials, expertise, operating models and various websites to support their work, such as the site Kulttuurivuosisikello.fi. The MAPPA.fi service of the Finnish Association of Nature and Environment Schools brings together the materials and other services of more than 200 operators related to environmental education, teaching sustainable lifestyle skills and supporting outdoor education for different age groups.

The Finnish Heritage Agency's Learn about Living Heritage website offers schools materials on the themes of intangible cultural heritage. With the help of the site's materials, several schools have produced Our Heritage articles<sup>46</sup> for the Wiki-inventory of Living Heritage, where children and young people present the traditions that are important to them. The Living Heritage Spinner<sup>47</sup> is a tool developed by the Finnish Heritage Agency and the Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland for discussing living heritage.

→ Read more in the periodic report to UNESCO (indicators 4, 5 and 6)<sup>48</sup>

## Education and training as guardians of living heritage

**Aim:** We will develop our operations in such a way that the importance of intangible cultural heritage is strengthened at different levels of education among the parties involved in education and upbringing.

### The Finnish Heritage Agency's commitments:

- We will develop cooperation with the Finnish National Agency for Education to strengthen the prerequisites for cultural heritage education as part of the development of education and training. We will support the inclusion of intangible cultural heritage more comprehensively and systematically than before in curricula and the bases of degrees and other qualifications when they are renewed and in their implementation in municipi-

46 [https://wiki.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/wiki/Meid%C3%A4n\\_perintö/en](https://wiki.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/wiki/Meid%C3%A4n_perintö/en).

47 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/en/julkaisut/spinner-of-living-heritage>.

48 [https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH\\_Periodic-Report-2022\\_final.htm](https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH_Periodic-Report-2022_final.htm).

palities (early childhood education, pre-primary and basic education, upper secondary education, vocational education, basic education in the arts, and liberal arts work).

- We will produce learning materials and operating models for examining intangible cultural heritage for the use of educators and trainers. We will continue to provide, develop and make materials known to operators in the teaching and training sector in cooperation with the Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland and other stakeholders.
- We will communicate about the Convention and cultural heritage education to various stakeholders in the education sector, and we will support the planning and implementation of continuing education where possible.
- We will encourage municipalities to make and update cultural education plans from the perspective of living heritage by adding information through events and materials.
- We will in particular strengthen the participation of children and young people in reflections on living heritage and in the production of related materials and in supplementing the Wiki-inventory. We will pay attention to and include representatives of minority languages and cultures.

Photo: Tintti Karppinen



The living Christmas calendar of Käpylä brings local people together.



The Japanese Hanami Festival is celebrated in Finland, too, when cherry trees are in bloom.



Graffiti is an important form of self-expression for many young people. The phenomenon, which is encompassed by hip hop culture, can already be regarded as a tradition.



## 6 RESEARCH SUPPORTING SAFEGUARDING

Research related to intangible cultural heritage is important in terms of identifying and strengthening living traditions. The information produced by the research makes use of the documenting of traditions and increases understanding of the meanings of diverse living heritage in the lives of people and communities. In addition to this, researched information is needed on how the mechanisms related to the safeguarding and vitality of intangible cultural heritage, i.e. transformation, work, and how they affect intangible heritage and the people and nature living in its sphere of influence. At the same time, research increases the visibility, recognition and appreciation of living heritage. Furthermore, a critical examination of the processes of safeguarding, practising and identifying intangible cultural heritage is needed, as well as future literacy.

Research activities are a key part of the tasks of universities and colleges. Research and documentation of intangible cultural heritage is increasingly carried out in network collaboration. In addition to universities and colleges, applied research related to intangible cultural heritage is carried out by various memory institutions, institutes and multidisciplinary NGOs. In connection with the research work, living traditions are documented, often in cooperation with communities and memory institutions such as museums and archives.

Universities play an important role in the academic teaching and research of intangible cultural heritage. In particular, the study content and related research themes of ethnology, folkloristics, anthropology, museum studies, cultural policy, cultural studies, cultural heritage research and tradition research, as well as various art fields lie at the centre of intangible cultural heritage research and teaching. In addition to cultural research, language research is also key in the context of intangible cultural heritage. In addition to the official languages of Finland, the Sámi languages and Sámi culture, the Romani language and culture, the Karelian language and sign languages are studied at university level.

So far, very little research has been done in Finland on the concept of intangible cultural heritage or the meaning of the Convention. There has, however, been a lot of research related to intangible cultural heritage in various fields for a long time. Memory institutions offer their materials and continuously cooperate in the fields of intangible cultural heritage in terms of research. Research is also carried out within the scope of many other institutions, for example the National Library, the Institute for the Languages of Finland, the Finnish Literature Society and the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. Research in the fields of intangible cultural heritage is financed by several foundations and funds that support research in culture and society.

During the last decade, however, a development has been seen, as a result of which many small fields related to intangible cultural heritage have been the target of downscaling in universities and colleges. For example, from the fields of arts research, the area of responsibility covered by theatre studies (including theatre, dance, circus and performing arts) and

musicology research are all at the core of intangible cultural heritage. Subjects have been removed from institutions, and the number of teaching staff and the number of lessons have been reduced. A study unit alone does not provide the skills for sufficient expertise at the level of a higher university degree or in postgraduate studies. With the weakening of expertise, the documenting of these fields is also at threat in the future.

The UNESCO Convention's perspective on research emphasises the safeguarding of traditions and the promotion of their viability. In order for documentation and research to be considered a safeguarding measure in accordance with the Convention, the research must take place in cooperation with the community being researched. Research results must be openly available and usable by communities. Research should produce information that helps in the responsible application of cultural heritage, i.e. in practical actions in different social contexts, for example in political work. Research can also support the creation of safeguarding programmes for endangered forms of intangible cultural heritage, which can be used to support the transfer and continued use of living heritage. The research may involve processes of co-development of intangible cultural heritage with communities. In such cases, a responsible approach that respects the self-determination of the participants is particularly important.

→ **Read more in the periodic report to UNESCO (indicators 9 and 10)<sup>49</sup>**

## **Research supporting safeguarding**

**Aim: We act proactively so that intangible cultural heritage and its safeguarding are studied from an interdisciplinary perspective, and so that the knowledge base on the phenomena of living heritage is expanded.**

### **The Finnish Heritage Agency's commitments:**

- We will promote cooperation with universities and research networks related to living heritage themes through events and publications.
- In connection with the implementation of the Convention, we will monitor research related to intangible cultural heritage.
- We will organise interactive meetings with researchers in the field in cooperation with universities, memory organisations, NGOs and the Network for Collections Management and Contemporary Documentation in Finland and thus aim to increase research in the field.
- We will communicate the social impact of intangible cultural heritage to various stakeholders, including those funding research.
- We include a research perspective in the activities of living heritage circles and create new forms of cooperation.

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49 [aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH\\_Periodic-Report-2022\\_final.htm](https://aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH_Periodic-Report-2022_final.htm).

## 7 VISIBILITY AND DIVERSITY OF LIVING HERITAGE

A key part of implementing the UNESCO Convention is strengthening awareness of intangible cultural heritage and its meaning for people. By communicating and informing about intangible cultural heritage and its related fields, its recognition and appreciation are increased. Communication can also be used to encourage people to recognise and cherish living cultural heritage in the long term in the future. Multi-channel communication supports the availability and accessibility of intangible cultural heritage as widely and with as long-term an approach as possible.

Awareness of and media attention towards intangible cultural heritage have been increasing steadily in Finland since the beginning of the implementation of the Convention. Inventorying of living heritage and nominations to the UNESCO List have been important factors in this process. Before 2013, the concept of intangible cultural heritage was not featured in the Finnish media, whereas now it accrues hundreds of media hits every year. However, it should be noted that various aspects connected to intangible cultural heritage have been visible in the media in numerous different ways over the past decades.

Current topics and events dealing with living heritage are presented in numerous media, radio and magazine articles and items, from baking to gardening and from music to hobbies related to nature. They appear in the media at local, regional and national levels. Living heritage communities and actors also actively communicate about their own field and activities. For example, NGOs have their own websites and social media channels that reach hundreds or even thousands of operators and followers across the country and beyond. There are countless free hobby groups on social media where ideas, photos, instructions, recipes and tips are exchanged.

The UNESCO Convention emphasises the importance of communities and traditional practitioners' participation in raising awareness of their own tradition. The key is how the rights and interests of the communities are protected when the tradition is communicated. According to the Convention, communication must take into account various groups of people and make use of the languages of different communities and groups. Content related to traditions should also be aimed at different age groups and ensure their participation in the production of communications. The communication indicated by the Convention requires close cooperation between living heritage communities and the media.

Communication related to the Convention in Finland is based on a communication plan updated in January 2024, which covers measures, channels, key target groups, communication tips and a schedule. The Finnish Heritage Agency is responsible for the communication required for

coordination in Finland and communicates about international cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture. Living heritage circles are responsible for the communication of their own activities in cooperation with the Finnish Heritage Agency.

The communication emphasises the diversity of intangible cultural heritage, different elements and the importance of safeguarding. Communication takes into account the diversity of target audiences and cooperation groups, and in particular different minorities, including the Sámi as an indigenous people. In communications, we invest in accessibility and multilingualism by providing information through multiple channels and in different languages. Special priorities are implemented in cooperation with industry experts and intermediary organisations.

The Finnish Heritage Agency is constantly updating its intangible cultural heritage website<sup>50</sup> in Finnish, Swedish and English. The updates to the Living Heritage Facebook<sup>51</sup> page reach several hundred, sometimes even thousands of people every day. An important means of creating unity in social media is the use of the subject tag #elävaperintö in updates. The cooperation seminars organised by the Finnish Heritage Agency are recorded and can be viewed on the Living Heritage YouTube channel<sup>52</sup>. By the autumn of 2023, more than 60 living heritage events<sup>53</sup> have been held, with more than 220 videos that have already collected more than 29,000 views. All the Living Heritage videos have been viewed more than 104,000 times.

→ **Read more in the periodic report to UNESCO (indicators 17 and 18)**<sup>54</sup>

## Visibility and diversity of living heritage

**Aim:** We will strengthen the participation opportunities and awareness of the Convention for various actors. The visibility of intangible cultural heritage in public debate has increased and its many forms are better understood.

### The Finnish Heritage Agency's commitments:

- We will actively communicate about intangible cultural heritage activities in newsletters and via several different channels. We will continue our communication work to understand the concept of intangible cultural heritage and to implement its meanings. We will cooperate in communication with a wide range of actors, especially those behind the lists of living heritage and those active in living heritage circles.

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50 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/>.

51 <https://www.facebook.com/elavaperinto/>.

52 <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLHQsHT247LhZ242CeX8HtA>.

53 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/fi/tapahtumat?archive>.

54 [aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH\\_Periodic-Report-2022\\_final.htm](https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH_Periodic-Report-2022_final.htm).

- We will shine a spotlight on the elements on the lists of living heritage through means of communication. In particular, we will focus on the items on the National List during this term of office. With the help of the campaign, we will highlight good practices for safeguarding living heritage.
- We will highlight the international perspective and the transcendence of intangible cultural heritage, especially through multinational sites.
- We will direct communication especially to children and young people and plan these activities in cooperation with them.
- We will work in particular to develop interactivity and co-development in communication by looking for new ways to talk about living heritage.

Photo: Finnish Heritage Agency



The living heritage series of cards is intended to spark discussion on intangible cultural heritage through workshops held at schools and museums, for example.

<https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/fi/artikkeli/uusi-elavan-perinnon-kortisarja-on-julkaistu>



Finland and Sweden are applying for the addition of the Torne River Valley “lippo” dipnet fishing culture on the UNESCO list.



The conferment of master’s degree graduates involves many days of celebrations. Grande Maccaroni being danced at the Old Student House in Helsinki.

## 8 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION STRENGTHENS THE SAFEGUARDING OF LIVING HERITAGE

International cooperation is an important part of the implementation of the UNESCO Convention. The goal is that the State Parties to the Convention cooperate to safeguard intangible cultural heritage. This can happen through various projects, programmes and multinational destinations.

In the fields of intangible cultural heritage, a wide variety of international cooperation is constantly being carried out. Different professional networks work actively with organisations in other countries, for example, and cooperation and exchange between educational institutions, memory organisations and NGOs is lively in many different fields.

Various activities of the UN, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Union are based on cooperation between states. Multilateral cooperation is also carried out, for example, between the countries of the Baltic Sea and Arctic regions and in the Sámi region (Finland, Sweden, Norway). Nordic cooperation is carried out in the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council, which includes Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland, as well as the Åland islands, the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

### International conventions about cultural heritage

**Intangible cultural heritage work is done as part of many other international conventions and programmes. Among the UNESCO conventions, in particular the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972 World Heritage Convention) features a close connection with the Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. In addition to this, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005 Diversity Convention) has many points of convergence with intangible cultural heritage. Documented and written cultural heritage is protected through UNESCO's Memory of the World programme.**

**In 2017, Finland ratified the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention), which in part strengthens the importance of the participation of cultural heritage communities. Furthermore, the European Landscape Convention under the Council of Europe (since 2000) has a clear connection in particular with living traditions related to nature. The Council of Europe's Cultural Routes programme also includes intangible cultural heritage sites.**

**The European Heritage Label is a cultural heritage measure under the European Union. Cultural heritage labels can be awarded to sites located in the EU that are key**

**to European history, culture and integration. Objects can be tangible, intangible or documented cultural heritage.**

In recent years, international cooperation has intensified in the field of intangible cultural heritage. The project 'LIVIND - Creative and living cultural heritage as a resource for the Northern Dimension region'<sup>55</sup> (2021–2024) coordinated by the Finnish Heritage Agency, strengthens the role of living heritage in Northern Europe. There are nine countries partaking in the Northern Dimension, including the Nordic autonomous regions of Åland islands, the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

Finland has also been an active initiator in the European Network of Focal Points for the 2003 Convention<sup>56</sup> (ENFP), which strengthens cooperation between 45 countries. The Nordic and Baltic network on Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>57</sup> brings together organisations in the field in particular.

The ICH NGO Forum<sup>58</sup>, i.e. the cooperation forum of NGOs accredited to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, works actively on a global level. The forum holds meetings and gatherings about common international challenges in the field and is particularly committed to monitoring the implementation and development of the 2003 Convention. Forum meetings are held in connection with regular meetings of the Convention. Accredited organisations in Finland participate actively in the activities of the forum.

Multinational applications for UNESCO lists create opportunities for international cooperation. Cooperation uniting all Nordic countries has already emerged around the Nordic clinker boat tradition. Likewise, various networking and project activities are planned around the knowledge, craft and skills of handmade glass production shared by six countries. In addition to these, Finland is involved in the multinational application coordinated by Sweden regarding the Torne River dip net fishing tradition, with the related application to be submitted to UNESCO in the spring of 2025.

→ **Read more in the periodic report to UNESCO (indicators 23–25)<sup>59</sup>**

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55 <https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/fi/livind>.

56 <https://enfp-ich.eu/>.

57 <https://safeguardingpractices.com/the-nordic-and-baltic-network-on-intangible-cultural-heritage/>.

58 <https://www.ichngoforum.org/>.

59 [https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH\\_Periodic-Report-2022\\_final.htm](https://www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/assets/ICH_Periodic-Report-2022_final.htm).



## **International cooperation strengthens the safeguarding of living heritage**

**Aim: We operate actively in intangible cultural heritage networks, share our know-how and are involved as a partner in various projects. The actors in the field network more strongly with international intangible cultural heritage operators and generate new cooperation, strengthening the expertise in the field and the safeguarding of traditions.**

### **The Finnish Heritage Agency's commitments:**

- We will continue the international cooperation to safeguard living heritage. We will actively share information, expertise and experiences in international networks in nearby areas and globally through projects, communication and events. We are looking for opportunities to raise the theme of intangible cultural heritage in new networks.
- We will support the international networking of communities, groups, individuals, NGOs and experts by organising events, networking and informing operators about funding opportunities.
- In the LIVIND project, we are strengthening the expertise of entities operating in the Northern Dimension area in the issues of living heritage and sustainable development through events, workshops and pilot experiments. The web platform of living heritage and sustainable development created as the final product is being marketed at a global level.
- We will actively participate in international activities of intangible cultural heritage networks, e.g. European Network of Focal Points for the 2003 Convention (ENFP), as well as the Nordic and Baltic network on Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- We will actively cooperate with UNESCO-designated multinational sites in order to safeguard traditions.
- We will deepen cooperation with other authorities and actors responsible for international cultural heritage conventions during the programme period.

# AIMS FOR THE TERM 2024-2028

We will implement the action plan in broad cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders in the field of intangible cultural heritage. We actively monitor the implementation of the plan and update it if necessary. We will report to UNESCO on the implementation of the Convention in year 2028.

**Significance for the Society:** Intangible cultural heritage is to be a key factor in building a sustainable future and supporting well-being.

**Safeguarding:** We will continue to collect and disseminate information about the living heritage covered by the UNESCO Convention as a basis for safeguarding. We will do this work together with heritage bearers and communities. More and more living heritage in Finland is the subject of documenting and safeguarding work.

**Broad field of actors:** We will ensure that work with intangible cultural heritage covers different layers of society. We will actively influence living heritage being recognised as a concept and cultural heritage work emphasising a community-oriented perspective.

**Strategic development:** We will strive to ensure that the nurturing of intangible cultural heritage has strong support in strategies and programmes and that sufficient resources are reserved for its safeguarding. .

**Education:** We will develop our operations in such a way that the importance of intangible cultural heritage is strengthened at different levels of education among the parties involved in education and upbringing.

**Research:** We act proactively so that intangible cultural heritage and its safeguarding are studied from an interdisciplinary perspective, and so that the knowledge base on the phenomena of living heritage is expanded.

**Communication:** We will strengthen the participation opportunities and awareness of the Convention for various actors. The visibility of intangible cultural heritage in public debate has increased and its many forms are better understood.

**International co-operation:** We operate actively in intangible cultural heritage networks, share our know-how and are involved as a partner in various projects. The actors in the field network more strongly with international intangible cultural heritage operators and generate new cooperation, strengthening the expertise in the field and the safeguarding of traditions.

