

Guidelines for Expression of Interest

For UNESCO's Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage 2026

1. Introduction

Finland ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2013. The Finnish Heritage Agency is responsible for the implementation of the Convention in Finland. In Finland, examples of intangible cultural heritage are collected in the Wiki-Inventory for Living Heritage, from which it is possible to apply for inclusion in the National Inventory of Living Heritage. At present, there are 86 elements in the National Inventory of Living Heritage. The most recent application round was held in early 2026, and the results will be announced during the spring.

As part of the implementation of the UNESCO Convention, Finland may nominate elements of intangible cultural heritage and good practices to UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage. Elements nominated for UNESCO's *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* and the *List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding* must already be included in the National Inventory. Practices nominated for the *Register of Good Safeguarding Practices* may also include practices that are not included in the National Inventory.

At present, Finland has four elements on UNESCO's lists. Finland's elements are **sauna culture in Finland** (inscribed in 2020), **Kaustinen fiddle playing** (2021), and the multinational inscriptions **Nordic clinker boat traditions** (2021) and **knowledge, craft and skills of handmade glass** (2023). The joint proposal by Sweden and Finland concerning dip-net fishing on the River Tornio is currently under evaluation, and the decision will be made in December 2027.

2. Preparation process in Finland

These guidelines apply only to the 2026 preparation process. Future calls concerning UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage will be decided separately.

In May 2026, the Finnish Heritage Agency will open a call for elements of intangible cultural heritage to express their interest in proposing an element for UNESCO's lists of

intangible cultural heritage. Depending on the list or register concerned, the element must either be included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage or in the Good Practices section of the Wiki-Inventory for Living Heritage. The element must respond to an electronic questionnaire prepared by the Finnish Heritage Agency by **4th September 2026**. Two different sets of questions are attached to these guidelines.

Based on the responses, the Finnish Heritage Agency, with the support of the Advisory group on intangible cultural heritage, will make a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Culture concerning 1–2 elements that most strongly reflect national priorities and would have the best possibilities of being inscribed. The Ministry of Education and Culture will decide on Finland's nomination to UNESCO, after which the Finnish Heritage Agency will begin preparing the nomination together with the communities concerned.

The Ministry of Education and Culture submits Finland's nomination to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Secretariat. The deadline is annually at the end of March. UNESCO examines 60 nominations each year.

At the heart of nominations must be the willingness of the communities that bear the traditions to commit themselves to acting in accordance with UNESCO's objectives. Preparation is a long-term process. The Finnish Heritage Agency is responsible for the process and prepares the nomination together with the communities concerned. The nomination process must be open, and a broad range of actors connected with the living heritage element must participate in it. Inscription on a UNESCO list or register also obliges the communities related to the element, in addition to the State, to safeguard the element inscribed on the list.

3. National criteria for UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage

UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage are supplemented in accordance with the principles of the Convention. The main objectives of the Convention are:

- safeguarding intangible cultural heritage
- ensuring respect for the intangible cultural heritage of different communities, groups and individuals
- raising awareness of the importance of intangible cultural heritage and its mutual appreciation at the local, national and international levels
- promoting international cooperation and assistance

National criteria when evaluating proposals:

- **Representativeness:** The element represents and expands understanding of the significance of diverse intangible cultural heritage locally, nationally and internationally.
- **Continuity:** The knowledge, skills, visibility and transmission associated with the element are renewed.
- **Openness and equality:** The element serves as an example of cultural practice in an open, diverse and democratic society.
- **Sustainable development:** The element serves as an example of the sustainability of cultural expression and of responding to the challenges of sustainable development.

UNESCO emphasizes the sharing of good safeguarding practices and encourages multinational nominations as part of international cooperation. The element should also complement Finland's existing elements inscribed and the diversity of UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage.

Finland's long-term aim is that the elements inscribed will form a credible and representative whole that reflects the diverse and plural intangible cultural heritage of the country, including both major national traditions and small local and minority traditions. Finland submits new elements with careful consideration. The number of Finland's elements is kept controlled and balanced. The overall approach takes into account the different domains of intangible cultural heritage, cultural diversity and geographical representation. Sustainable development is a cross-cutting objective in all activities.

4. General information on applying to UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for Finland's nominations to UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage. The Ministry assigns responsibility for the preparation to the Finnish Heritage Agency, which prepares the nomination together with the communities concerned. Responsibility for the content of the nomination lies with the communities and other actors that practise and are connected to the living traditions, and these choose from among themselves the body that coordinates the preparation of the nomination. The nomination must be prepared in close cooperation with the practitioners of the tradition and the communities and other actors connected to the element.

The actual nomination file is approximately 15–20 pages long, and longer in the case of multinational nominations. It is prepared in Finnish or Swedish, or directly in English,

which is the application language. Ten photographs and a 10-minute presentation video of the element must be submitted as annexes to the nomination. In the case of multinational nominations, the text and video are longer, and more photographs are required.

Different communities, tradition bearers, local stakeholders, organisations, associations, and informal groups can nominate elements for inclusion on UNESCO's Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage. These actors must participate in safeguarding living intangible cultural heritage and thus promote the practice and maintenance of the tradition.

Applying to UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage is a long-term process in which it is important to cooperate with the full field of actors working with the topic. UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage makes decisions on the elements to be inscribed solely based on the nomination files. This means that all necessary information must be included in the nomination and its annexes.

The application process itself requires resources from the body coordinating the nomination. These human and financial resources must be available from the applicant itself, or the applicant must seek external funding for them.

5. Good safeguarding practices as the focus

In the 2026 call, the focus is on good safeguarding practices. In other words, proposals are requested particularly for UNESCO's *Register of Good Safeguarding Practices*. Applicants may also nominate an element for UNESCO's other lists of intangible cultural heritage, that is, *the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* and *the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding*.

UNESCO's Register of Good Safeguarding Practices may include programmes, projects and operating models that have proven to be effective ways of safeguarding, strengthening and transmitting living heritage to future generations. The Register therefore does not focus on traditions themselves, but on how traditions are safeguarded in practice.

This may include, for example, a long-term national or regional programme, a fixed-term project, or a practice rooted in everyday activity in which practitioners and communities are genuinely involved in planning, implementation and evaluation. The nominated element and the process must be thoroughly community-based: it must be developed and maintained by the practitioners of the tradition.

A programme, project or activity considered a good safeguarding practice must reflect the principles of the UNESCO Convention, respond to real safeguarding challenges, be documented and proven effective, and offer experiences and lessons that can be applied globally elsewhere, including in developing countries. The Register of Good Safeguarding Practices brings visibility to community-based, participatory and sustainable solutions for keeping intangible cultural heritage alive in a changing world.

6. On the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage

The nomination file must define the safeguarding measures to which the communities connected with the tradition, as well as the State, commit themselves when proposing an element for UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage. These measures vary depending on the element and on the list or register for which the element is nominated.

The nomination file must be able to justify how the vitality of the tradition has been supported to date and how it will be supported in the future. Safeguarding measures must be described concretely, not only as goals or possibilities. Applicant communities must be prepared to commit themselves over the long term to the safeguarding measures presented in the nomination. More detailed information on the criteria for each list and register is available on UNESCO's website in English through [this link](#).

These measures may include, for example:

- the transmission of the tradition, especially through formal and non-formal education
- the identification, documentation and research of the tradition
- the protection and promotion of the tradition
- the revitalization of the tradition

States Parties to the Convention report to UNESCO every six years on how the Convention has been implemented (*Periodic Report*). The same report includes reporting on the elements inscribed on UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage and on how the safeguarding measures presented in the nomination have been implemented. Finland reported on the Convention for the first time in 2022, and the next report will be submitted in 2027.

7. UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage

1. Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (RL)
The purpose of the List is to raise the visibility of intangible cultural heritage and general awareness of it, and to promote dialogue that respects cultural diversity. There are currently 716 elements on the List.
2. List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (USL)
The purpose of the List is to ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures are implemented for endangered elements inscribed on it. Inclusion on the List supports international cooperation in planning and implementing these measures. There are currently 90 elements on the List.
3. Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (GP)
The Register contains programmes and projects for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. These practices exemplify the principles and objectives of the Convention and take into account the particular needs of developing countries. There are currently 43 programmes, projects and activities on the Register.

UNESCO's website includes useful material related to the application process:

- the criteria for each list
- the nomination forms for the lists
- UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage. On the page for each inscribed element, the nomination form for that element is available.

8. How are proposals evaluated in Finland?

The proposals submitted now are evaluated based on the criteria established by UNESCO for each list. These are available in English through [this link](#). See also Finland's national priorities in section 3 above.

The Finnish Heritage Agency will review the proposals submitted through the application procedure and present them to the expert group on intangible cultural heritage. On the recommendation of the expert group, the Finnish Heritage Agency will nominate to the Ministry of Education and Culture 1–2 proposals that most strongly follow the national priorities in applying to UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage and that would have the best prospects of being inscribed on UNESCO's lists or the register. The Ministry of Education and Culture will make the decision on Finland's next nomination.

Only the name of the element for which preparation of a nomination to UNESCO's list is decided will be made public. The Finnish Heritage Agency will provide feedback to those applicants whose element has not been accepted.

Preliminary timetable

2026

- May: The Finnish Heritage Agency opens the call and informs stakeholders about it widely. A seminar in support of the call will be held on 1 June, and a video recording will be made of it.
- September–October: Communities submit their proposals to the Finnish Heritage Agency by 4 September. The expert group on intangible cultural heritage discusses the proposals, on the basis of which the Finnish Heritage Agency prepares a proposal with justifications for the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- November–December: The Ministry of Education and Culture makes the decision on Finland's nomination, which the Finnish Heritage Agency then begins to prepare in cooperation with the communities.

2027/2028

- The Finnish Heritage Agency coordinates the preparation of the nomination in cooperation with the communities.
- The applicant body / community carries out participatory processes, for example workshops, seminars, surveys, interviews and reports, in which different stakeholders take part in preparing the nomination.
- Video and photographs of the element; written consent of the communities to the application.
- December: A draft nomination is submitted for comments to the Finnish Heritage Agency, the expert group on intangible cultural heritage, and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

2028/2029

- January: The nomination is revised based on the comments.
- February: The Finnish Heritage Agency submits the final nomination and its annexes to the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- March: The Ministry of Education and Culture submits Finland's nomination to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Secretariat.

- June: Possible requests for supplementary information from UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Secretariat (this concerns only technical matters, not content).

2030/2031

- Spring: The Evaluation Body established under the Convention evaluates the nominations against each criterion and makes a recommendation to the Intergovernmental Committee (inscribe / not to inscribe / refer back for further development).
- December: The Intergovernmental Committee makes the decision (inscribe / not inscribe / refer back for further development).

Annex

Expression of interest for good safeguarding practises or elements to be nominate for UNESCO's register or lists of intangible cultural heritage

Please answer one of the following sets of questions and send the file to the Finnish Heritage Agency by **4 September 2026 at 16:00** to kirjaamo@museovirasto.fi and leena.marsio@museovirasto.fi. Further information is available from Senior Advisor Leena Marsio by email or by phone at +358 29533 6017.

Questions for UNESCO's Register of Good Safeguarding Practices

Indicative character counts in parentheses.

Please note that the element to be nominated must be published in [the Good Practices section](#) of the Wiki-Inventory for Living Heritage when the proposal is submitted.

1. Name of the safeguarding practice of intangible cultural heritage to be nominated
2. Coordinating body/person for the proposal and contact details
3. Possible partners and their contact details
4. What programme, project or operating model is concerned, and to which intangible cultural heritage is it related?
5. Who is currently implementing the programme, project or operating model? What roles do they/these actors have in the development, implementation and evaluation of the safeguarding practice? (500–4000 characters)
6. What are the key threats or challenges that the safeguarding practice seeks to address? (500–4000 characters)
7. Has the safeguarding practice been developed in a community-based way? How do communities participate in its ongoing management and development?
8. What kinds of experiences, operating models or lessons does the safeguarding practice offer? How could these be applied in other countries, including developing countries? (500–4000 characters)
9. In what ways have the effectiveness and impacts of the safeguarding practice been documented and evaluated?
10. How does the safeguarding practice reflect the principles of the UNESCO Convention and promote sustainable, participatory and community-based safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage? (500–4000 characters)
11. How is the application process intended to be carried out in practice in the coming years? With what resources? How will broad community participation and support be ensured throughout the process?
12. What would support the selection of this specific element as Finland's future proposal to UNESCO's Register of Good Safeguarding Practices?

Questions for UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (RL) and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (USL)

Indicative character counts in parentheses.

Please note that the element to be nominated must be included in [the National Inventory of Living Heritage](#) when the proposal is submitted.

1. Name of the element of intangible cultural heritage to be nominated
2. The list for which the element is intended to be nominated (see above: RL, USL)
3. Coordinating body/person for the proposal and contact details
4. Partners and their contact details. In the case of multinational proposals, please indicate here the parties committed to the nomination.
5. Who practises and transmits the tradition today? What roles do these groups have? (500–4000 characters)
6. Description of the nominated element: how the tradition is practised and transmitted, the vitality of the tradition and threats to its survival; possible commercial, human rights-related or environmental dimensions. (500–4000 characters)
7. Have the communities practising the tradition already been consulted in relation to an international nomination? If yes, how?
8. Do the practitioners of the tradition wish to nominate the element for UNESCO's lists? Why?
9. How do the communities practising the tradition and the actors connected with it participate in the application process so that the proposal will have as broad support as possible? (500–4000 characters)
10. How is the application process intended to be carried out, with what resources, and on what timetable for the years 2027–2028?
11. What would support the selection of this specific element as Finland's next proposal?