

National Inventory of Living Heritage

Instructions and more information for applicants 2026

I The UNESCO 2003 Convention

[The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) was adopted in 2003 by UNESCO, the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Finland ratified the Convention in 2013. Currently the Convention has 185 states parties. The objectives of the Convention include:

- safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage
- respecting the intangible cultural heritage of different communities, groups and individuals
- promoting awareness about the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and its mutual appreciation on a local, national and international level, and
- promoting international cooperation and support.

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage concerns the living forms of cultural heritage. According to the Convention, these include e.g. oral traditions; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; craftsmanship; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe.

II Inventorying of Living Heritage

Why is the living heritage being inventoried?

The binding articles in the UNESCO Convention include the inventorying of intangible cultural heritage in the national level. This means that the countries that have ratified the Convention must identify and define the various elements of intangible cultural heritage present in their territory in cooperation with communities, groups and some cases individuals.

The inventorying of intangible cultural heritage in Finland:

- identifies the living intangible cultural heritage existing in the country, thus making it more visible in public,
- raises awareness of intangible cultural heritage on a local, regional, national and international level,
- pays attention to the safeguarding, protection and transmission of the intangible cultural heritage,
- recognises the value of intangible cultural heritage as a source of cultural diversity, enabler of sustainable development, expression of human creativity and means of promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding between people and bringing them closer to each other.

Inventorying in Finland

Wiki-inventory for living heritage

In Finland, intangible cultural heritage is inventoried in the [Wiki-inventory for living heritage](#) as part of the [implementation of the UNESCO 2003 Convention](#). The Finnish Heritage Agency functions as the administrator of this platform. The Wiki-based inventorying provides communities with a platform through which they can highlight their own intangible cultural heritage, ranging from smaller local phenomena to large-scale national elements. The Wiki was opened in 2016 and it now contains around 250 articles from over 400 communities. Articles in the Wiki have been written in seven different languages.

The wiki-inventory is also being used to collect good practices, i.e. projects, practices and methods that have been found to be effective in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. Proposals for the Wiki can be submitted by communities, NGOs and other groups, who are also responsible for the content of their proposals. As the administrator of this Wiki, the Finnish Heritage Agency has the right to request additions and clarifications to proposed texts and, if necessary, delete inappropriate or incomplete writings.

National Inventory of Living Heritage

Communities may propose elements in the Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage to be included into the National Inventory of Living Heritage. The National inventory will provide more visibility and

publicity for these traditions. This will be the next step in the inventorying, leading to deeper reflections on the safeguarding and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage. There are 86 elements in the National Inventory of Living Heritage.

The Ministry of Education and Culture will decide which elements are inscribed into the National Inventory, based on a proposal by the Finnish Heritage Agency. [The Advisory group on intangible cultural heritage](#) supports the work of the Agency. NGO's and other expert bodies working in the field of living heritage, as well as stakeholders involved in the [the Circles of Living Heritage](#), have the possibility to take part in evaluating the applications too. The field of intangible cultural heritage is extensive, and the comments received from the field are of paramount importance.

UNESCO lists of intangible cultural heritage

Proposals made to the [UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage](#) (*The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity; The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding*) need to be in the Finnish National Inventory of Living Heritage. Decisions on which elements are to be nominated for inscription are made by the Ministry of Education and Culture, based on the proposal by the Finnish Heritage Agency with the support of the Advisory group on intangible cultural heritage. According to the rules governing the implementation of the Convention, the member states can make no more than one submission a year. In addition, it is possible to be a partner in multinational submissions. Each state may decide on the timing of their possible proposals. However, nominations for inscription can be made to the UNESCO's Register of Good Safeguarding Practices even if they are not listed in the National Inventory.

At present, Finland's inscriptions on the UNESCO lists are Sauna culture in Finland (inscribed in 2020) and Kaustinen fiddle playing (2021). Furthermore, Finland is part of two multinational inscriptions: Nordic clinkerboat traditions (2021) and Knowledge, craft techniques and skills related to handmade glass (2023). The joint proposal from Sweden and Finland regarding traditional dipnet fishing on the Tornio River is currently under evaluation, and information on inscription will be available in December 2027. The next call from Finland on UNESCO lists and register will take place in the autumn of 2026, with an emphasis on Good safeguarding practices. Further information will follow in the spring 2026.

III Application procedure for the National Inventory of Living Heritage

Who can apply, how and when?

Different communities (e.g. practitioners and bearers, hobby groups, organisations), associations or a group of individuals can propose elements for the National Inventory. These actors must take part in safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, thus promoting the practice and transmission of the tradition. Organisations clearly driven by commercial interests or political organisations cannot make proposals.

The proposed elements must already be published in the Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage (by the last application day on 15th March 2026 the latest). Texts in the Wiki-inventory can be used in an application for the National Inventory of Living Heritage. In practice, when making an application for the National Inventory more questions will be answered, and longer answers are also allowed.

The application must be made online, using the form that can be found at the Wiki platform. Applications submitted in any other format will not be accepted. No attachments will be sent or saved in addition to the form. Pictures must already be saved in the submission made for the Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage. A licence for pictures can be selected from four different alternatives. The texts will be published within the Wiki-inventory with CC BY 4.0 licence, according to which the materials are free to be copied, published and edited by giving appropriate credit.

For the drafting of the proposals, we encourage for extensive cooperation between the communities or organisations related to the living heritage in question. It is possible to work on the proposal together, for example in a workshop onsite or online.

What kind of elements can be nominated for the National Inventory of Living Heritage?

The Wiki-inventory for living heritage and the National Inventory include the following categories:

Festivities and practices; Performing arts; Music and dance; Oral traditions; Crafts; Food traditions, Games and playing; Nature and the universe. Proposals for living heritage from these or other topics, or from a combination of topics, can be included in the National Inventory. Good practices will only be included in the Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage.

Action, practice and transmitting the tradition from people to people must be at the centre of the proposals. The inventorying will take into account those forms of living heritage that are practiced in Finland today – regardless of whether their origin is Finnish or if they are practiced in other countries in addition to Finland, as well. Only intangible cultural heritage that complies with human rights and Finnish law and supports the mutual respect and sustainable development of communities can be included in the Inventory.

Religious traditions can be included in the National Inventory only if the customs related to these are deeply rooted in the society (such as festive events, marches and processions with religious origins). These traditions should also be open for participation of people who are not members of these religious communities to.

Oral traditions are part of the intangible cultural heritage. However, languages and dialects as such are not among the elements being inventoried based on the UNESCO 2003 Convention, but they can be included in the Inventory in the form of oral traditions (e.g. dialectal proverbs).

How will the applications be evaluated?

The Finnish Heritage Agency will check the applications made for the National Inventory of Living Heritage to ensure they fulfil the technical criteria (e.g. the length of the application, inclusion in the Wiki-Inventory, applicant's eligibility). The applications will be opened online on the Wiki platform for comments from the experts and communities participating in the evaluation. The comments will be posted using real names / organisations and cannot be seen by other peer evaluators.

The Finnish Heritage Agency collects expert evaluations of applications through a separate call. The Advisory group on intangible cultural heritage reviews the applications and forms its position to support the work of the Finnish Heritage Agency. The Agency prepares a proposal for the Ministry of Education and Culture regarding items to be inscribed for the National Inventory, and the Ministry makes the final decision on the matter.

Only the accepted applications will be public. The Finnish Heritage Agency will provide feedback to applicants whose proposals were not accepted. It is possible to apply again during the next application periods for the National Inventory of Living Heritage.

Where to get help with the application?

Senior adviser Leena Marsio at the Finnish Heritage Agency will be happy to give advice on matters related to the applications leena.marsio(at)museovirasto.fi (+358 (0)2 953 360

I Selection criteria for the National Inventory of Living Heritage

The evaluation will pay attention to the technical criteria, not measure the value of the traditions themselves. The criteria specified by the UNESCO Convention will be used when accepting elements into the National inventory of Living Heritage. The elements must be:

1. Intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention

“practices, descriptions, expressions, information, skills – and the related equipment, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”

2. Inscription of the element will contribute to ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and to encouraging dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity.
3. Safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element.
4. The element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent.

In addition, the following items will be evaluated for the elements accepted into the National Inventory of Living Heritage:

- The phenomenon is an integral part of the living heritage of communities, groups or individuals.
 - All the relevant parties/associations/groups are taking part in the application
 - Local or regional and other interested communities can participate in practicing the tradition
- The continuity of the tradition
 - The tradition is transmitted through mutual learning and development between and within generations by constantly recreating it
 - The community wishes to continue safeguarding and practicing the tradition in the future
- Consideration of Sustainable Development
 - Practitioners of the tradition recognize the ecological, economic, social, and cultural impacts of their activities (both positive and negative).
 - Practitioners of the tradition strive systematically towards more sustainable practices.
- Living heritage supports the formation of identities
 - The phenomenon may be part of local or regional traditions or exist, for example, within web communities
 - The tradition is part of self-expression
 - The community may receive income through the tradition
 - The community feels that the tradition is part of its identity