

Guidelines for Participation in Multinational Nominations to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists

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 [108 elements](#) in the National Inventory of Living Heritage.

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.

2. Preparation process in Finland

For multinational nominations, Finnish communities and organizations concerned may express their interest in participating and submit their justification for joining a nomination to the Finnish Heritage Agency at a time of their choosing. The

respective communities in Finland must respond to a questionnaire prepared by the Finnish Heritage Agency, attached to these guidelines. In addition, the State party coordinating the multinational nomination must respond to a separate set of questions addressed to it.

Based on the responses, the Finnish Heritage Agency, with the support of the Advisory Group on Intangible Cultural Heritage, may submit a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Culture if it considers that Finland should participate in the multinational nomination.

Finland will join multinational nominations only after careful consideration and in accordance with UNESCO's recommendations. In its assessment, the Finnish Heritage Agency evaluates whether the element aligns with Finland's national priorities concerning nominations to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists and whether it has realistic prospects for inscription.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is the responsible authority for Finland's participation in a multinational nomination. The Finnish Heritage Agency provides expert support to Finnish stakeholders involved in the preparation of the nomination. The Finnish Heritage Agency also responds, when necessary, to inquiries from the coordinating State and from UNESCO during the nomination process.

The State party coordinating the multinational nomination is responsible for coordinating the preparation of the nomination file, collecting the required signatures within the agreed timeframe, and submitting the nomination and its supporting documentation to UNESCO's Secretariat of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The submission deadline is annually at the end of March. UNESCO examines approximately 60 nominations each year. A State Party may also join an already inscribed multinational element at a later stage through an extension process.

At the heart of any nomination must be the willingness of the communities concerned to commit themselves to safeguarding the element and promoting the objectives of the UNESCO 2003 Convention. Preparing a nomination is a long-term process requiring cooperation among all relevant stakeholders. The preparation process should be open and inclusive, with broad participation from communities, groups, organizations and other actors associated with the living heritage element. Inscription on a UNESCO list or register also entails a commitment, shared by both the State and the communities concerned, to continue safeguarding and promoting the element in the future.
separately.

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 nation-wide 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 allowed.

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. 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.

6. 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.

6. How are proposals evaluated in Finland?

Proposals are evaluated on the basis of the criteria established by UNESCO for each list. These criteria are available in English through this link. Please also refer to Finland's national priorities outlined in Section 3 above.

The Finnish Heritage Agency reviews the proposals submitted through the application procedure and presents them to the Advisory Group on Intangible Cultural Heritage. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Group, the Finnish Heritage Agency submits to the Ministry of Education and Culture a proposal, together with its justification, concerning the elements that most strongly reflect Finland's national priorities for nominations to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists and that have the best prospects for inscription. The Ministry of Education and Culture makes the final decision on Finland's participation in multinational nominations.

Only the name of the element for which Finland decides to proceed with the preparation of a nomination to UNESCO's lists will be made public. The Finnish Heritage Agency provides feedback to applicants whose proposals are not selected.

ANNEX 1

Expression of Interest for Elements Included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage to Participate in UNESCO's Multinational Nominations for the Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists

Please answer the following questions and submit the completed document to the Registry Office of the Finnish Heritage Agency at kirjaamo@museovirasto.fi.

For further information, please contact **Senior Adviser Leena Marsio** by email at leena.marsio@museovirasto.fi or by telephone at **+358 29 533 6017**.

Questions for Multinational Nominations to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists

Indicative character counts are given in parentheses. Please note that the element concerned must be included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage at the time the expression of interest is submitted.

1. Name of the element of intangible cultural heritage proposed for the multinational nomination
2. The list or register for which the element is intended to be nominated (see above: RL, USL, GP)
3. Coordinating body/person in Finland and contact details, and the coordinating body/person for the multinational nomination as a whole, including contact details
4. Partners and their contact details. Please indicate the parties already committed to the multinational nomination.
5. Who practises and transmits the tradition today? What roles do these groups have? (500–4,000 characters)
6. Description of the proposed 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. (500–4,000 characters)
7. Have the communities practising the tradition already been consulted regarding participation in a multinational nomination to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists? If yes, how?
8. Do the practitioners of the tradition wish the element to be included in the multinational nomination? Why?
9. How will the communities practising the tradition and the actors connected with it participate in the nomination process so that the proposal will have as broad support as possible? (500–4,000 characters)
10. How is the nomination process intended to be carried out, with what human and financial resources, and according to what timetable for the Finnish participants? Please attach an outline of the proposed schedule.
11. What arguments support the inclusion of Finland in this particular multinational nomination? What added value would the participation of the Finnish element bring to the nomination?

ANNEX 2

Questions for the coordinating State party of the multinational file to UNESCOs list of ICH

1. Name of the intangible heritage element.
2. List or register to which you plan to apply (RL, USL, GSP).
3. Community representative(s) responsible for compiling the file in each participating country with contact details.
4. Community(ies), groups and/or individuals involved in practicing and transmitting the element today. What kind of roles do they have? (500–4000 characters)
5. Brief description of the element (500–4000 characters) including information on practice and transmission, location, commercial aspects (if any), human rights or environmental issues (if any), viability of the element and any threats to its viability.
6. How will you plan to execute the nomination process successfully? What is the planned time schedule?
7. What is your experience in multinational files either as a participant or coordinator?
8. What kind of human and financial resources do you have for executing the process?
9. What community consultations have taken place about possible nomination on the international level so far?
10. Are community members willing to endorse the development of the nomination file? Why do they think that inclusion in the list/register would be a good idea? Are community representatives actively involved in the nomination process, including the preparation and development of the nomination file?
11. How do you intend to involve the community(ies), groups and individuals concerned in each participating country, to ensure their widest possible participation and their free, prior and informed consent in the process?