



THE ABC OF CIRCLE ACTIVITIES

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was ratified in Finland in 2013. The Finnish Heritage Agency is responsible for the national implementation in Finland. The central agents in the Convention are the Circles of Living Heritage. The National Implementation Plan (2020) outlines that the circles are voluntary coordinating bodies that will act as a meeting place for actors responsible for the practice, transfer, training, research, documentation and storage of traditions in different sectors. Key tasks of the circles may include raising awareness of the safeguarding of living heritage, disseminating information on the implementation of the Convention, and encouraging the inventorying of living heritage among those working in the field.

To date, four of the fields of ICH defined by UNESCO have established their own circle: crafts (2015), nature (2016), folk music and folk dance (2016) and oral tradition (2018). The circles involve actors from 68 different organizations.

- The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted in 2003.
- In Finland, the convention was ratified in 2013.
- The purpose of the Convention is to promote and safeguard the intangible cultural heritage.
- UNESCO requires each State Party of the Convention to draw up an inventory of intangible heritage. In Finland, this is done by inventorying elements on the Wiki-inventory of Living Heritage and on the National Inventory of Living Heritage.
- More information on the Convention and its implementation can be found at [Intangible Cultural Heritage](#).

In addition to these fields, the circle model has also aroused interest among other groups. With the application to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists, a sauna circle and a clinker boat tradition circle have been established.

This plan provides examples of the activities already carried out by the circles and outlines various possibilities for operation. The UNESCO Convention emphasizes the role of communities in the preservation and transfer of the intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, the aim of the circle model is also to involve the best experts in living heritage, i.e. practitioners of traditions, on a large scale and to direct activities to what they consider to be the most important issues.

Examples of activities

Over the years, the Circles of Living Heritage have organized diverse activities and produced

various publications and tools. Previous operating models provide inspiration for the planning of future activities. The following are some of the actions implemented by the circles.

Events

- [Elävän perinnön klinikat \(*The clinics of ICH*\)](#) (in Finnish)
The clinics are a concept developed by the Circle of Folk Music and Folk Dance to find concrete ways to safeguard living traditions. The clinics help communities to analyze and develop measures on safeguarding. Clinics have been organized in festivals and other events in the field of cultural heritage.
- [Continue the story](#)
This event organized by the Circle of Oral Tradition consisted of 19 different story workshops attended by 250 storytellers and listeners. During the event stories were told throughout the National Museum.
- [Nostetta käsityöhön! -työpaja \(*Uplifting crafts! Workshop*\)](#) (in Finnish)
In this Crafts Circle's workshop, the attendees discussed the challenges of the field and sought solutions to them. The discussions revolved around themes such as education, cultural heritage, and the prospects for sustainable development from the perspective of the craft sector.
- [Arvokas luonto -seminaari \(*Valuable Nature Seminar*\)](#) (in Finnish)
The Nature Circle's seminar consisted of several speeches related to nature and the environment, bringing different perspectives to nurturing and renewing the tradition. Discussions were continued in workshops.

Publications

- [Itsetekemisen perinne – Käsityöt elävänä kulttuuriperintönä \(*Self-Made Tradition - Crafts as a Living Cultural Heritage*\)](#) (in Finnish)
The online publication features articles by ten experts that approach the craft tradition and the culture of self-creation from different perspectives. In addition to more traditional themes, such as the history and present of national costumes, it depicts today's craft culture that creatively combines tradition, design, and art.
- [Elossa – Luonto ja elävä kulttuuriperintö \(*Alive – Nature and Living Cultural Heritage*\)](#) (in Finnish)
The nine expert articles in the online publication describe different aspects of the Finnish nature relationship. The publication provides a view to things such as the Finnish cottage culture, horticulture, as well as the Sámi nature relationship.

Tools

- [Käsityön äärellä -keskustelukortit \(*Handicraft Discussion Cards*\)](#) (in Finnish)
The discussion cards are especially designed for groups interested in handicrafts to stimulate discussions about the meaning of handicrafts. The purpose of the cards is to inspire and encourage those interested in handicrafts to say and share their experiences, experiences, and views on the meaning of handicrafts and handicraft culture.
- [Toolkit for Story Workshop Organisers](#)
The tool kit provides comprehensive instructions to help you set up a story workshop anywhere on your own. Instructions for organizing the workshop are also provided in the [Jatka tarinaa: ohjeistusta tarinapajaan \(*Continue the Story: Instructions for a Story Workshop*\) Youtube video](#) (English subtitles available).

Basic Principles of the Circle Model

The operation of each circle takes its own form, depending on the composition of the circle and the practices in the field in question. However, there are some basic principles that are expected to be followed by each circle.

- When setting up a circle, the diversity of members should be considered to involve as diverse set of actors as possible. For example, associations, educational organizations, and representatives of museums and archives may be invited to attend the circle. Also consider linguistic diversity as well as different age groups and cultures.
- The Convention encourages cultural diversity and inter-community dialogue. Therefore, the activities of the circles must also support the realization of human rights, sustainable development, and respect between communities.

The Goals and Objectives

The first step in the actual circle activity is to map out the needs and expectations of the participants. It is worth looking at the issue not only from the perspective of the actors themselves, but also as a broader issue of living heritage.

The probable final target of the circle is to nurture the living heritage. There can be a discussion among the actors of the circle about what kind of goals need to be set to reach the final target. To help define goals, it is a good idea to map out the views of circle members extensively. For example, the following questions may be helpful:

- What are the greatest strengths for the continuity of living heritage?
- What are the biggest threats to the continuity of living heritage?
- What change in the practice of the tradition has taken place or is expected in the future?
- What actions could the circle implement to help preserving the tradition?

On the basis of a common reflection and goals, it is possible to formulate the goals of the activity, i.e. what is to be achieved. Possible goals for the circle could be, for example, to increase visibility or public appreciation, to create international connections, to teach a skill forward, to increase well-being or to provide information on the topic. When setting a goal, keep in mind the characteristics of a good goal:

- Accuracy. The goal is unambiguous and clear.
- Measurability. To achieve the goal, there is a clear metric, such as the number of subscriptions to the publication or the number of visitors to the event.
- Acceptability. The goal is supported by all the members of the circle.
- Accessibility. A good goal is realistic and possible to achieve.
- Time-bound. There is a clear timetable for achieving the goal.

The Modes of Operation

After defining clear goals, the ideation of concrete action is likely to be clearer as well. It would be

good for all activities to consciously strive towards some goal defined by the circle. Here are some possible ways to achieve different goals.

Objective: To raise public awareness

- Online events and workshops. Gather a group of actors and enthusiasts in the field to discuss common themes.
- Utilization of an extensive library network and local museums. For example, could the circle plan a traveling exhibition or theme day event? Locals can be involved in compiling the exhibition, for example, by requesting photos related to a specific topic.
- A campaign in which each member teaches a pre-agreed simple skill to at least one person during the day - and this in turn moves it forward. The compilation can be done, for example, in social media under a common hashtag.
- Improving national communication, for example through a common information base. Compilation of media contacts of circle members for bulletins.
- A national award for, for example, a deserving practitioner in the field or a new entrant.

Objective: Internal networking of actors in the field

- Creating common information sharing channels. Depending on your communication needs, this could mean a social media group, email list, or other platform.
- Promoting regular interaction and commitment, for example through a study circle or study trips.
- Joint visits to the offices of other circle actors.

Objective: To strengthen the teaching of living heritage

- A sponsor class with which you can work together either for a long time or choose a target group, for example, a sixth-grade elementary school. Pupils can still teach other pupils, for example, by making a morning opening on the subject, or by making a small collection, for example, by collecting a living heritage for one day in their lives.
- Preparation of common teaching materials for a school or educational institution. This can include things such as a little quiz on [Kahoot](#), inventing essay topics, making a video, or a writing competition.
- Cooperation with secondary and higher education institutions. Depending on the sector, education related to living heritage is provided in educational institutions of all levels. Perhaps a representative of the circle could attend a lecture course for students or possible topics for theses could be offered centrally to educational institutions?

Objective: To generate new knowledge

- Encourage living heritage wiki inventorying and gathering new examples from your own topic area.
- Publications in collaboration between research actors and field actors.

Objective: To increase well-being through living heritage

- Cooperation with other organizations. Many associations are looking for the program and visits to their group evenings. For example, in the Sosped Foundation's [cultural workshop model](#), young people in a challenging life situation arrange peer groups for each other in their own field of expertise, from yoga to rap. Could the model be applied or considered for cooperation with cultural workshops?
- Evening for reminiscing with seniors. Encounters can be valuable not only for increasing

well-being but also for capturing living heritage.

To Conclude

The challenge of the circle model lies in the diversity of actors. For example, professionals and living heritage enthusiasts may find it challenging to find a suitable time for joint action. Therefore, it is also worth paying close attention to equal opportunities for participation. If the goals or distances of the actors are too long, it is also worth considering the possibility of forming smaller circles, for example by region.

We also welcome ideas for general development of the model or for sharing with other actors.

WELCOME ABOARD!

CONTACT US!

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