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Future of Alpine Textiles

Heritage Safeguarding Toolkit
for Communities

October 2025

INTERTWINING CULTURES

This toolkit was created as a result of various activities carried out by the partners of the AlpTextyles project, as well as the long-standing experience of individual partners in safeguarding textile heritage in the Alps.

The booklet before you was designed to offer communities that are the bearers of rich textile heritage a practical tool to help them:

- identify and document tangible and intangible elements of heritage,
- care for and safeguard objects, techniques, and stories connected with heritage,
- communicate their heritage both within the community and beyond,
- connect tradition with contemporary forms of creativity and cultural tourism, and
- legally protect their knowledge and products while presenting them on the market in a sustainable way.

INTRODUCTION

The toolkit is intended for everyone involved in preserving and developing heritage—local communities, schools, associations, researchers, and artisans. Its purpose is to strengthen communities' self-confidence, provide practical steps for safeguarding and transmitting knowledge, and create a space where heritage is not only the past but also a source of inspiration, innovation, and connection.

We invite you to use this handbook as a tool that allows the stories of your ancestors, the knowledge of your masters, and the richness of your local practices to live on—not only in memory, but also in the hands of new generations, in contemporary products, in workshops, in exhibitions, and in digital content.

Let curiosity, passion for creation, and the desire for connection guide you—for heritage is not only what we preserve, but also what we are able to pass on.



1. The Importance of Safeguarding Heritage

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Understand the significance of heritage for community identity.
- Recognize knowledge, skills, and customs as key elements of heritage.
- Learn about the role of communities in preserving and transmitting heritage.
- Acknowledge the creative and economic potential of heritage.
- Identify the main threats to heritage.

Why is heritage important?

The Alpine region boasts a rich textile heritage and a long history of textile production. Knowledge about the use of natural materials such as wool and linen—their cultivation and processing—as well as traditional techniques of weaving, embroidery, knitting, plant-based dyeing, tailoring, patterns, and colors has long been passed down within communities. Textiles have always expressed belonging, adaptation to the environment, and identity.

Heritage is not only a memory—it is a living process. It forms the foundation of community identity and serves as a bridge between the past, the present, and the future. Alpine textile heritage is not merely a collection of old objects but a living testimony to the creativity, ingenuity, and connectedness of Alpine communities. It has a remarkable power to connect: knowledge, the exchange of experience, and collective creation transcend linguistic, cultural, and geographical boundaries. In this way, heritage becomes a tool for collaboration, inspiration, and transformation.

Cultural heritage is divided into tangible and intangible forms.



Tangible heritage

Tangible heritage encompasses physical objects and spaces that are important to a community's history, art, knowledge, or identity. For clarity, it can be divided into *movable* and *immovable* heritage.

Movable cultural heritage includes physical objects that can be seen and touched. Their value lies not only in their beauty or functionality but also in the stories they carry.

- **Products:** e.g. handwoven blankets, traditional garments
- **Tools and instruments:** e.g. looms, scissors, spindles, wooden wool combs
- **Documents:** e.g. archives, records, photographs, pattern drawings

Immovable cultural heritage refers to spaces, buildings, and locations that cannot be moved and that hold cultural, historical, or aesthetic value. Examples include archaeological sites, buildings, parks and gardens, memorials, settlements and their parts, and cultural landscapes.

In the context of textile heritage, important examples include:

- **Buildings and workshops:** e.g. traditional workshops, wool-drying facilities, spaces related to flax processing, artisans' houses
- **Industrial and economic sites:** e.g. small textile manufactories, dye houses, tanneries
- **Places:** e.g. seasonal pastures and herding routes, fairgrounds, market areas



Intangible heritage

Even more important than physical objects are the knowledge, skills, and customs that enable the creation and preservation of textile culture. Intangible heritage is living, as it exists only as long as people actively practice it, transmit it, and integrate it into their daily lives.

It includes specific methods and processes developed over generations—such as weaving, dyeing wool with plants, lace-making, embroidery, and other textile techniques that allow for the creation of patterns, structures, and decorative elements.

Equally significant are practical skills such as wool production and preparation, spinning, choosing motifs and patterns, using looms, needles, and other tools, as well as adapting products to the needs of the community.

Intangible heritage also encompasses the cultural context that gives objects meaning: the songs and rhythms that accompanied work; the fairy tales and stories connecting the past, nature, and community life; and the rituals and festivities where textiles played a central role—such as wedding veils or festive rugs.

Intergenerational transmission of knowledge is crucial, as customs and techniques are preserved only if tradition bearers actively teach younger generations. Intangible heritage is fragile—it can lose its meaning if knowledge holders are gone, if young people show little interest, or if ways of life change. Safeguarding it requires active community involvement.

What does it mean to safeguard heritage?

Safeguarding heritage means recognizing, valuing, and nurturing ancestral knowledge while ensuring the continuity of community identity and providing a source of inspiration for future development.

It involves identifying key knowledge bearers within the community and understanding the production and crafting processes developed across generations. Safeguarding heritage gives people a sense of belonging and continuity, as traditions connect communities, while rituals, collective work, and festivities strengthen solidarity and bonds among members.

At the same time, heritage serves as a rich source of creativity for new generations—traditional motifs, patterns, and techniques can be transformed into contemporary products, fashion lines, or tourism experiences, ensuring their preservation while dynamically integrating them into modern life.

The role of the community in safeguarding heritage

Heritage is not something to be kept only in museums but a living practice that communities can actively nurture, use, and develop. Safeguarding heritage strengthens the sense of belonging—when a community researches, restores, and shares its cultural traditions, internal connections grow stronger. Communities that actively protect their heritage often develop deeper social bonds and greater mutual solidarity.

Heritage also carries significant economic potential. Traditional knowledge and skills can serve as a foundation for innovative products, such as contemporary clothing inspired by tradition. Interpreted heritage also enriches tourism experiences—today's visitors do not only want to observe but also to participate, learn, and immerse themselves in the places they visit. Cultural and creative industries can transform heritage into a lasting economic opportunity, provided it is not trivialized and remains of high quality, thus ensuring its long-term benefits for the community and local economy.

The community plays a key role in safeguarding heritage, as its active participation ensures that traditions remain alive. Community members can contribute by documenting knowledge and techniques, taking part in workshops, organizing events and exhibitions, and actively passing on customs and skills to younger generations. In doing so, they preserve not only objects and practices but also the meanings and values these carry in everyday life.



Challenges

If heritage is not actively nurtured, it can quickly fade away. The greatest risks include:

- **Loss of knowledge due to lack of transmission**

When masters and tradition bearers pass away, their knowledge is lost if it is not shared and passed on. Without a connection between older and younger generations, or without proper documentation of processes, heritage becomes confined to museums or archives.

- **Inadequate preservation**

Textiles are sensitive to moisture, light, and pests such as moths. Without proper care and documentation, both the objects themselves and the stories attached to them can disappear.

- **Lack of interest among young people**

If younger generations do not recognize the value or potential of heritage, the transmission of knowledge is at risk. A tradition without successors loses its vitality and purpose.



GOOD PRACTICES

Textile heritage recognized by communities

Coperta Poschiavina

Many families in the Poschiavo Valley (Switzerland) own a woolen blanket with wide and narrow colorful stripes in a herringbone pattern. This Poschiavo blanket is a guardian of family stories and centuries-old traditions rooted in the valley's heart. In recent decades, its colors have often been standardized.

These colorful wool blankets traditionally formed part of a daughter's dowry and were woven at home before marriage. In local households, they were central items—often placed over the kitchen bench. The Valposchiavo Museum preserves a collection of these blankets, with some on permanent display. Every family had its own unique version, differing in colors and patterns. The Tessitura Valposchiavo weaving mill still produces these blankets today, thereby safeguarding an important part of local textile heritage.

The Valposchiavo Museum also preserves a precious donation from weaver Anna Maria Foppoli—woven samples of Poschiavo blankets, fully catalogued, showing their incredible variety.

It is said that every family in the valley owns its own Poschiavo blanket, with colors inherited across generations, following centuries-old traditions—particularly prominent from the distant past until the mid-20th century—of knowledge and skill being passed down from parents to children.

As part of the AlpTextyles project, under the guidance of Polo Poschiavo, a community action was organized to collect additional materials about these family blankets.

More information: [Musei Valposchiavo](#)

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFEGUARDING HERITAGE

- More information about Alpine textile heritage: [YouTube – MOOC link](#)
- **Inscription to the registers:** Registration of heritage elements can be carried out on national intangible cultural heritage lists (depending on each country) and, potentially, on the UNESCO list, which represents the highest level of safeguarding recognition.

Examples:

- **Intangible Search:** [Link](#)
- **Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage on Ministry of Culture, Republic of Slovenia:** [Link to the register](#)
- **UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:** [Link to the list](#)

One bottom-up example:

- **Application Writings of Memory** is the initiative for recording intangible cultural heritage involving the elderly population and was developed by the Dobra Pot Institute. [Link to the application](#)



MODULE OBJECTIVES

Documentation is the first step toward safeguarding cultural heritage. What is not

- Preservation of memory related to objects, knowledge, and stories

- Enabling the development of a new generation of leaders is a key challenge for the 21st century. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of leadership development in the context of the 21st century. The study is based on a review of the literature and a series of interviews with experts in the field. The findings suggest that leadership development is a complex process that involves a range of factors, including individual characteristics, organizational context, and societal norms. The study also highlights the importance of leadership development in the context of the 21st century, as organizations face a range of challenges, including globalization, technological change, and environmental sustainability. The study concludes that leadership development is a key factor in the success of organizations in the 21st century and that it should be a priority for organizations and governments alike.

Ethical aspects of documenting and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage

When communities or cultural organizations decide to document their intangible cultural heritage, it is important to understand that documentation is not merely a technical record but primarily a process of collaboration and mutual trust. Safeguarding living heritage should involve as many people as possible who actively practice and transmit that heritage.

It is crucial that knowledge bearers, practitioners, and other community members are involved from the very beginning in discussions about what will be documented, how, and for what purpose.

One of the most important aspects is obtaining informed consent from community members. They need to know what will happen to the collected material—photographs, recordings, or notes—where it will be accessible, and who may use it. Communities often have their own rules regarding which knowledge can be shared publicly and which should remain within the community. Respecting these decisions is essential for ethical documentation.

When documenting practices, it is important to present them as understood by the community, without adding stereotypes or simplifications that could distort their meaning. Some rituals or heritage elements may be sensitive or even secret; in such cases, careful consideration is required regarding whether and how to document them while preserving their intimacy and dignity.

Documentation should be an open process, with the community involved in the interpretation and presentation of the collected material. Results should be returned to the community, either as public exhibitions, workshops, or accessible archives. In this way, documentation serves not only researchers or institutions but also strengthens local identity and supports the transmission of knowledge to younger generations.

Finally, intangible cultural heritage is dynamic. It evolves alongside its environment and society, so documentation should not freeze practices in an idealized form but allow them to continue growing and adapting. Ethical documentation is therefore not a one-time act but a long-term relationship between the community, researchers, and cultural organizations, based on respect, collaboration, and mutual learning.¹

1 UNESCO ICH Guide, p. 9

What and how to document?

At the outset, it is important to establish a clear system for all participants. The system depends on whether you are documenting tangible or intangible heritage. Regardless of the type, some basic principles apply:

Define documentation objectives

Before collecting data, clearly identify why you have chosen to document a particular object or practice. Are you preserving knowledge, building a (museum) collection, preparing an exhibition, creating content for knowledge transfer, or supporting a market presentation? Clear objectives guide the choice of methods and the level of detail needed.

Standardise and choose the recording systems

- **Tangible heritage:**

Objects: garments, fabrics, patterns, textile accessories

Tools: looms, spindles, scissors, fiber preparation tools

Documents: archives, manuscripts, photographs, old books, records

Assign the same number to the object and its documentation; record storage location and complete given categories for each object:

- Basic information (name, age, place of origin)
- Object type
- Description of use
- Dimensions, materials, and production technique
- Condition of the object
- Special features
- Story related to the object (e.g., who made it, when, and why)
- Owner

2. HERITAGE DOCUMENTATION

• Intangible heritage:

Techniques and knowledge: material processing, artisanal skills

Stories and narratives: personal experiences, family traditions, local legends

Customs and practices: festivals, rituals, communal work

Key methods are **interviews and observation** with each knowledge bearer or for each practice. In a conversation, you should tackle:

- Record the practice in details (materials used, procedural steps, tools, location)
- Knowledge bearers, and their stories accompanying the practice
- Record not only procedures but also personal feelings, values, and meaning for the community
- Using standardized forms and categories ensures clarity and comparability



About the possibilities and requirements

- **Documentation tools**

- Camera: for photographing objects on a neutral background or in use; ideally, both approaches. Capture multiple angles and details, patterns, and dimensions.
- Computer: for editing, storing, and archiving documentation. Ensure backups and safe storage.
- Audio recorder/camera: to record stories, interviews, or demonstrations of intangible heritage, including tools and procedures.
- Standardized forms: for uniform recording of all data.
- Numbered tags: for physical objects, linking them to the documentation.
- Measuring tape: for recording object dimensions.
- Notebook and pen: for additional notes when technology fails.

- **Digital organization and metadata**

Organize photos, videos, and audio files using a unified naming system and add metadata (e.g. object name, date, author, owner, location, description, keywords) to ensure usability, searchability, and durability.

- **Data protection**

When recording people, stories, or interviews, obtain verbal or preferably written consent. Determine who has access and for what purpose. Include personal stories and experiences as allowed by participants. Record basic biographical information (name, birth year, residence, education) and personal narratives.

- **Transparency and quality control**

Regularly review documentation for accuracy and completeness. Assign a responsible person for quality control and a contact person for access to collected data.

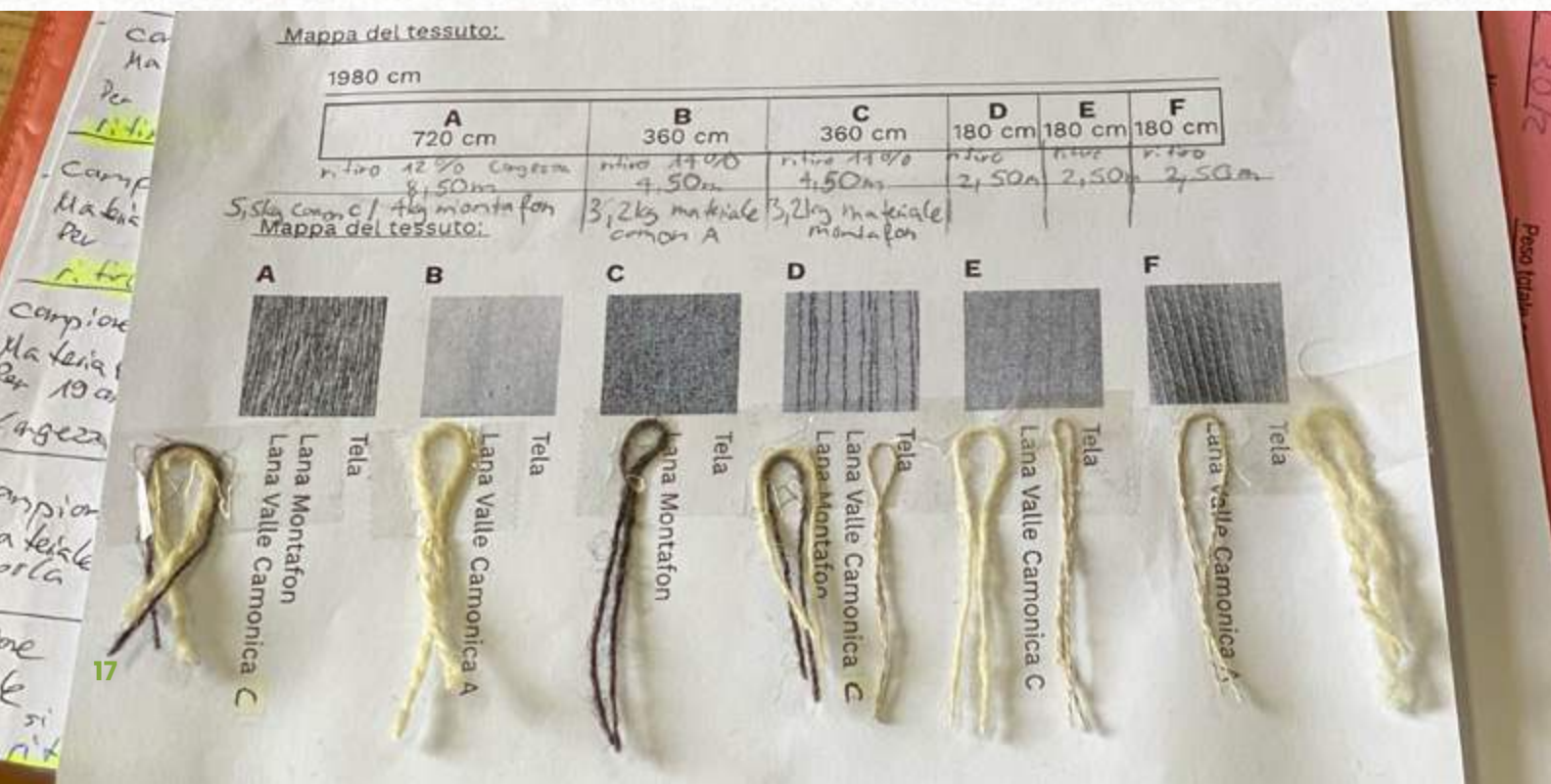
Practical tips

- Photograph objects on a neutral background or in use to show function.
- For intangible heritage, prepare an interview structure or questionnaire to capture techniques, tools, and stories.²
- Label physical objects with neutral, durable materials; ensure labels match documentation. Use hanging tags rather than adhesives to avoid damage.

Basic ethnographic interview principles:

- Listen more, speak less
- Ask open-ended questions
- Record facts and personal stories
- Respect participants and obtain consent for recording
- Trust is crucial; respect requests to omit or not record certain information
- Clarify any unclear data by returning to the interviewee

² You will find ideas for basic questions in the Appendix.



Complete a documentation sheet³ for one textile heritage object from your community.

Steps:

1 Choose an object

Each participant creates a basic record that the community can later integrate into a shared heritage collection or digital archive.

3. Digitization

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Learn to use digital tools for documenting and storing heritage.
- Ensure heritage data remains accessible for future generations.

How digital records help preservation and access

When discussing digital recording of textile heritage, it is important to distinguish **two terms**:

Digitization

Digitization is the conversion of analog information into digital form. It is a technical process in which a physical object or document becomes digital.

Examples in textile heritage:

- Photographing or scanning handwoven textiles
- Scanning archival records, drawings, or photographs
- Recording oral stories or interviews and converting them into digital files (audio or video)



3. DIGITIZATION

Digitalization

Digitalization is a broader process that involves using digital technologies to transform, improve, or organize workflows. It is a strategic and conceptual approach, not just a technical step.

Examples in textile heritage:

- Creating digital collections and archives where objects and stories are organized, named, and linked with metadata (all information related to an object, skill, or story)
- Developing online catalogs or virtual exhibitions to make collections accessible to the public
- Using digital tools for education or heritage promotion (online courses, interactive apps)

The first step communities usually take is digitization—converting information into digital form—as a foundation for broader digitalization efforts.



Digital archives

Digital archives are systematically organized collections of data, documents, photos, audio, video, or other digital content, accessible through computer systems.

Main purposes:

- Long-term preservation
- Organization of information
- Easy access to materials that might otherwise be lost due to decay or limited accessibility

Challenges:

- Technical issues: data corruption, outdated formats
- Continuous maintenance for security and updates
- Copyright and privacy considerations

Digital archiving is not a one-time task but an ongoing process requiring adaptation to technological developments.

Benefits of digital storage

- **Protection against loss:** If a physical object is damaged or destroyed, the digital record remains
- **Easier accessibility:** Communities and the public can access heritage online
- **Education and promotion:** Digital collections form the basis for exhibitions, workshops, and online presentations
- **Networking:** Digital records allow sharing with other communities and integration of different resources into comprehensive knowledge bases in the international archives



Basics of digitalizing textile heritage

Photography

- Most accessible method
- Guidelines: natural light, simple background, multiple angles, capture details (e.g. stitches or patterns)
- Use smartphones or cameras

Scanning

- Suitable for documents, drawings, or paper-based samples
- 2D scanners capture fine details accurately

3D scanning and photogrammetry

- Useful for complex objects and tools (e.g. looms, spinning tools)
- Photogrammetry: creating 3D models from a series of photographs (can be done with a smartphone and apps)



Step-by-step: creating digital collections

1. Preparation

- Select an object, skill, or process for digitalization
- Define the purpose (archiving, promotion, education)

2. Capture

- Photograph or record the object/skill
- Ensure good audio quality for interviews

3. Description (Metadata)

- Add key information: object name, date, location, material, technique, associated persons, story
- Naming standards: clear filenames (e.g. woolen_scarf_Tolmin_2023.jpg), avoid generic names like IMG_1234.jpg

4. Organization

- Create folders by category (e.g. Objects, Tools, Techniques, Interviews)
- Use standardized forms for descriptions (documentation sheet + digital version)

5. Storage and security

- Always make at least two copies: one local (computer, disk) and one in the cloud (Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive)
- Regularly check file integrity



Practical tools and platforms

Photography and scanning:

- Smartphone with a good camera
- Free apps: Google PhotoScan, OpenCamera
- Scanners

3D documentation:

- Qlone (mobile app), Meshroom (free software), Autodesk ReCap (professional tool)

Digital collections:

- Omeka (open-source platform for communities)
- Europeana (European cultural heritage collection)

Organization and sharing:

- Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive (easy for teamwork)
- Trello or Notion (project and documentation organization)



GOOD PRACTICES

AlpTextyles Digital Archive—Europeana

Europeana is a European digital platform combining collections and archives from art, literature, film, music, and other sources from thousands of museums, libraries, and archives across Europe. It provides access to rich cultural heritage while clearly labeling copyrights and licenses.

In the AlpTextyles project partners digitized key collections representing Alpine textile heritage and created a digital archive on Europeana:

- Collaboration with the Montafon Museum: traditional clothing and garment components from the 18th to 20th centuries, sample books, and archival materials illustrating textile traditions. [Link](#)
- Collaboration with Musei Valposchiavo: materials showing the connection between textile practices, sustainability, and local stories, including Casa Tomé (1350) and the “Coperta Poschiavina.” [Link](#)
- ZRC SAZU contributed over 100 unique traditional garments from 19th to early 20th century Upper Carniola, including items from local museums, photographed specifically for the project. [Link](#)

These collections provide wider access to valuable cultural heritage in a European digital space.



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Task:

Create a digital folder with a description and photograph of a chosen object.

Steps:

1. Select an object
2. Photograph it from multiple angles
3. Name the file according to the standard (type_object_place_year.jpg)
4. Create a folder on a computer or cloud storage
5. Add a short description (name, material, place of origin, related story)
6. If possible, include an audio recording or short video with the knowledge bearer/ owner telling the story

Outcome:

Participants gain hands-on experience in creating a digital heritage collection that can be expanded and shared.



4. Safeguarding Textile Heritage

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- **Learn methods for safeguarding tangible heritage (textiles, tools, spaces).**
 - **Understand the basics of preventive conservation and storage.**
 - **Understand how to document and transmit intangible heritage.**
-

Heritage care is both a responsibility to the past and an investment in the future. Objects, knowledge, stories, and customs that we preserve and pass on form the foundation of community identity and inspire creativity. Safeguarding them for future generations requires careful handling—both to protect material objects and to sustain living knowledge and traditions. Different principles apply when dealing with tangible and intangible heritage.

Safeguarding tangible heritage

Textile items and tools used in production are valuable carriers of history but are highly sensitive to time, moisture, light, mechanical damage, and improper handling. Although often used in everyday life, their long-term preservation requires special care and attention. Before any intervention, consulting experts is recommended, as unskilled cleaning or repairs can cause irreparable damage.

Basic textile care and restoration

Basic care involves preventive measures to avoid deterioration and careful handling to maintain objects in the best condition possible.

- **Cleaning:** Usually dry cleaning using a soft, clean cloth or a very gentle vacuum with an appropriate attachment. Wet cleaning should be done only in exceptional cases, as it can damage dyes and fabric structure. If cleaning is necessary, it should be done by trained specialists, especially for older textiles.
- **Minor repairs:** Small repairs like patching holes or reinforcing seams should be done by a textile conservator or skilled tailor/seamstress. Improper interventions can shorten an object's lifespan.



Preventive measures and storage

Proper storage conditions are critical for textile preservation:

- Keep away from direct sunlight, as UV rays cause fading and fiber deterioration.
- Ideal microclimate: 18–22 °C and 45–55 % relative humidity, with stability being crucial.
- Store textiles flat rather than hanging to avoid stretching.
- Use acid-free boxes and paper for wrapping and separating layers.
- If flat storage isn't possible, large garments can be kept in breathable cotton protective bags.
- Avoid metal hangers; use wide, padded, neutral-material hangers to support shoulders evenly.
- Protect against moths and other insects: keep textiles clean of sweat, food, and organic residues. Natural repellents like lavender, cedar, or bay leaves can help.
- Tools also require care: protect wood from pests and moisture, metals from rust.
- Storage spaces should be dry, regularly ventilated, and dedicated to heritage materials if possible.
- Regular inspections and airing (e.g. twice a year) help detect early signs of damage.



Safeguarding intangible heritage

Intangible heritage—knowledge, skills, customs, stories, and rituals—is often even more vulnerable than physical objects, as it exists only while it is actively practiced and transmitted. When knowledge holders are gone, their knowledge disappears unless it is properly passed on.

How to document and transmit knowledge

Documentation is fundamental: recording videos, taking photographs, and carefully noting procedures help ensure that knowledge is preserved for future generations.

However, recording alone is not enough. Effective transmission requires hands-on learning opportunities—workshops where masters directly teach younger people are among the most effective methods. In addition to technical procedures, it is important to document stories, proverbs, songs, and customs that provide cultural context and meaning.

Community events such as fairs, festivals, and open days offer opportunities to present traditions to a wider public, raising awareness and appreciation of their value.

Engaging masters and knowledge holders

Knowledge bearers are true ambassadors of heritage. Actively involving them in community life is essential. Transmission can take place through schools, intergenerational projects, local exhibitions, and public presentations. This approach preserves techniques while fostering respect for those who keep heritage alive. Public recognition of their role strengthens community identity and raises awareness of the importance of heritage.



GOOD PRACTICES

- **Transumanza Culturale** has been conceived as a grassroots event involving all the stakeholders that contribute to the sustainability of the wool supply chain—from shepherds to local associations that have reactivated traditional artisanal skills and restored value to wool, innovating products and highlighting their sustainability and circularity to consumers: [Link to the video](#)
- **Arts & Crafts Centre Škofja Loka** (Sora Development Agency): Handicraft [manuals](#) and [videos](#) for knowledge transfer

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Task: Create a maintenance plan for an object or space.

Steps:

1. Select an object (e.g. woolen blanket, loom) or a space (e.g. textile storage).
2. Record:
 - Current condition (photo + description)
 - Potential risks (moisture, moths, misuse)
 - Necessary preventive measures (proper storage, regular cleaning, protection)
 - Maintenance frequency (e.g. annual inspection, monthly cleaning)
3. If dealing with intangible heritage (e.g. weaving knowledge), prepare a transmission plan:
 - Identify knowledge holder(s)
 - Define the method of transmission (workshop, video, mentoring)
 - Identify participants (youth, associations, visitors)

Outcome: Each community will create a concrete, actionable heritage care plan that can be applied in practice and updated over time.



5. Heritage Communication

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Understand how to present heritage in an engaging and inspiring way.
- Learn the basics of storytelling as a tool to promote heritage.
- Identify appropriate communication channels for different target audiences.

Communicating heritage

Heritage gains value only when people live it, understand it, and share it. Preserving objects and knowledge is essential, but if heritage remains locked in cupboards, archives, or museum collections without proper communication, its potential to connect and inspire is wasted. Communities must therefore develop ways to present their heritage—both to their members and to the wider public.

Why to communicate heritage within and outside the community

- **Within the community:** Communication strengthens understanding, belonging, and connection. Organizing community events (storytelling evenings, workshops, collaborative work such as production, processing, crafting, or object care) allows knowledge to be transmitted between generations and enables everyone to contribute to the shared story. Such activities encourage active participation and reinforce a sense of collective identity.
- **Outside the community:** Heritage becomes a bridge to other communities, tourists, researchers, designers, and the general public. It is crucial to craft stories that not only inform but also inspire. A story brings heritage to life, highlighting the human aspect and helping audiences relate to it.



Preparing presentations, exhibitions, and stories for the public

Heritage objects and knowledge often do not speak for themselves—they need context: the story should answer who, when, where, why, and how.

Example:

- Basic info: “19th-century woolen shawl”
- Extended context: “The shawl was woven from wool of local sheep and richly decorated, worn by women on holidays. A QR code could link to a recording of the songs women sang during celebrations.”

This storytelling approach creates an emotional connection that visitors carry with them long after the visit.

Stories can be shared through exhibitions, publications, websites, social media, podcasts, and short films. Choose the channel according to the audience: younger generations respond better to videos and interactive content, while older audiences may prefer personal stories or printed catalogs.

Engaging media and digital platforms

- Local media can partner in sharing stories.
- Tourist organizations can include heritage in promoting the region.
- Museums, libraries, and schools bridge to education and youth.
- In the digital age, online galleries and platforms like Europeana, YouTube, and Instagram expand reach to global audiences while inspiring the local community.



Connecting with other communities and cultural institutions

Heritage knows no borders. Joint exhibitions, festivals, and exchanges with other communities strengthen intercultural dialogue and allow heritage to thrive in a broader context. Digital tools, such as virtual exhibitions and online conferences, enable long-distance connections and story sharing beyond geographic limits.



GOOD PRACTICES

- **European Heritage Days Stories:** Each year, communities are invited to tell stories about their heritage. The best stories can receive funding to implement and expand activities. [Link to stories](#)
- **AlpTextyles Narrative labels:** While mandatory labels provide basic technical data, the narrative label offers a richer story: in the case of textile products, it gives insight into the producers, the fibers and techniques used, the local breeds and plant varieties they are made from, the landscapes involved, and the values that shape the process. [Link to the guidelines](#)
- **READ MORE: Diego Rinallo:** Heritage storytelling, community empowerment and sustainable development: [Link to the article](#)

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Task: Write a short story about an object for an exhibition or publication.

Steps:

1. Choose an object.
2. Answer the questions: who, when, where, why, what, how.
3. Write a story of no more than 150 words.
4. Include emotions or imagery that the reader can visualize.
5. Optionally, add a photograph or short video.

Outcome: Participants will create concrete communication material ready for exhibitions, online use, or publications.

More exercises on heritage storytelling available here: [Link](#)



6. Revitalization of Textile Heritage

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Recognize different ways to integrate heritage elements into contemporary life.
- Understand the importance of collaboration between communities, designers, and tourism organizations.
- Find inspiration in successful heritage revitalization practices.

Revitalizing heritage

Heritage is not merely a memory of the past—it is a living foundation for shaping the future. Revitalization means reintroducing traditional techniques, knowledge, and products into modern life—whether as part of everyday routines, tourism experiences, or as inspiration for new creative practices. This approach ensures that heritage does not remain locked behind museum glass but becomes a bridge between generations and a source of identity and innovation.



How to reintroduce traditional techniques and products

Traditional textile products can flourish again when traditional practices are combined with modern usability. Collaboration with designers and artists opens up opportunities to reinterpret traditional techniques in new ways—for example, through digital patterns, contemporary textile printing, or updated garment designs.

Revitalization can also serve as a foundation for cultural tourism: visitors can actively participate rather than merely observe—for instance, by weaving, dyeing wool, exploring thematic trails, or taking part in hands-on events.



Involving the community and youth

Revitalization can succeed only through active community involvement. Practical activities—such as demonstrations of traditional techniques, workshops for children and young people, and fairs or festivals—enable knowledge to be both transmitted and transformed.

Schools, youth centers, and associations can integrate heritage into informal education, combining learning with creativity. Intergenerational collaboration is essential: masters and knowledge holders act as mentors, while younger generations contribute new ideas and use digital tools to give heritage fresh forms and promote it through social media.



GOOD PRACTICES

- **Reviving linen production in Škofja Loka region:** Practical workshops, films, exhibitions, publications. [YouTube example](#)
- **Brächette event in Switzerland** [Link](#)
- **Development of natural dyes:** Collaboration with various individuals/communities for new products (Mediplant—Lili Panjtar—Landici)

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Task: Design a small event or activity to revitalize heritage.

Steps:

1. Choose an element of textile heritage you want to highlight (e.g. technique, object, story).
2. Decide on the form of the event (workshop, open day, market presentation).
3. Outline basic elements:
 - Who participates (master, community members, youth, guests)?
 - What will be demonstrated or produced?
 - Where and when will the event take place?
 - How will you promote it (posters, social media, partners)?
 - What will be the outcome (products, new knowledge, community connections)?

Outcome: Participants will create concrete communication material ready for exhibitions, online use, or publications.



7. Knowledge Sharing and Transmission

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Develop effective ways to share knowledge and skills within and beyond the community.
- Recognize and support knowledge holders as key actors in heritage preservation.
- Encourage sustainable forms of education and skills transfer.

The importance of sharing knowledge

Heritage knowledge only has meaning if it is shared and passed on. Alpine textile heritage is rich with specialized techniques, skills, and processes that cannot be found in textbooks—they exist only in the hands and minds of the people who practice them. Therefore, it is crucial for communities to develop ways to share this knowledge, skills, and processes internally and externally, ensuring their preservation.



Sharing skills within the community

One of the simplest and most effective ways to transfer heritage knowledge is through community gatherings. These can be small-scale events in local spaces such as cultural centers, museums, or community halls, where older members and knowledge holders meet with younger participants. Knowledge is shared through conversations, demonstrations of techniques, and collaborative creation.

Such gatherings not only transmit skills but also strengthen a sense of belonging, trust, and community cohesion.

Learning and education

Structured learning opportunities complement informal gatherings by providing systematic knowledge transfer:

- **Workshops and courses:** Practical learning of techniques like weaving, felting, natural dyeing, lace-making, or embroidery, organized by schools, museums, or associations.
- **Mentorships:** Experienced knowledge holders guide small groups of learners over extended periods, fostering deeper understanding and hands-on skill development.
- **Online courses and videos:** These expand access beyond the local community, enabling heritage to reach new generations of researchers, designers, and enthusiasts worldwide.



Empowering knowledge holders

Knowledge holders are the heart of heritage—without their willingness to share, knowledge can quickly disappear. Communities should:

- Recognize and publicly appreciate their role.
- Include them in projects and events.
- Provide fair compensation or support for their work.
- Offer platforms for their stories to be visible and accessible.



GOOD PRACTICES

- **ALPINE ICON Summer School promoted by Lombardy region** [YouTube link](#)
- **AlpTextyles Textile School Slovenia:** [YouTube link](#)
- **Handicraft manuals:** [Vezenje guide](#)
- **Peer exchanges** and networking with other masters help reinforce skills and inspire innovation. In the AlpTextyles project, several such exchanges took place, e.g. **Škofja Loka—Regione Lombardia exchange:** [YouTube link](#)

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Task: Organize a knowledge-transfer course.

Steps:

1. Select a skill and an experienced master.
2. Define the target group (children, youth, adults, tourists).
3. Choose the form (workshop, live demonstration, online video).
4. Plan timing and location (e.g. afternoons after 17:00, or weekends; ensure enough space, lighting, access to water, storage, etc.).
5. Plan promotion (posters, social media, partners).
6. Agree on fair compensation for the master (free workshop supported by an institution or paid participation).
7. Define expected outcomes (new product, acquired skill, increased awareness of heritage).
8. Prepare a short article or social media post about the workshop using skills from Module 5.

Outcome: The community will have a simple educational plan and a hands-on experience of knowledge transfer that can be developed and repeated.



8. Heritage as an inspiration for new generations

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Encourage young people and creators to see heritage as a source of creativity.
- Connect traditional knowledge with contemporary trends and practices.
- Create opportunities for intergenerational collaboration and the development of new products.

Heritage as a living source of creativity

Cultural heritage is not just a collection of objects or records—it is a living source of inspiration that opens space for exploration, creativity, and innovation. Alpine textile heritage, with its rich patterns, colors, techniques, and stories, offers limitless possibilities for contemporary creation.

Encouraging creativity among youth

Young people often seek new ways to express themselves. Traditional motifs can inspire them with aesthetic power and storytelling. Integrating heritage elements into contemporary design—fashion accessories, interior elements, or artistic projects—stimulates innovation and gives traditional techniques new life. Providing practical challenges and accessible heritage materials is key to engaging youth.

Intergenerational collaboration

When youth creativity intersects with the knowledge of older generations, innovative and authentic solutions emerge. Workshops where masters demonstrate traditional techniques and young designers reinterpret them into contemporary products enable simultaneous knowledge transfer and idea generation. Schools, artists, local creators, and community associations can all participate, building a bridge between tradition and modernity.



Contemporary products inspired by heritage

Products based on heritage combine authenticity and story with modern usability.

Examples include:

- Bags, clothing, jewelry, or interior elements featuring traditional textile patterns and techniques.
- These products strengthen local identity and appeal to markets seeking unique, story-rich items not found in mass production.

GOOD PRACTICES

- **AlpTextyles project:** capsule collection by Istituto Marangoni and Montafon ([Link to the catalogue](#)), UMID Capsule Collection by Francesco Ferrero and Codadilana - Lombardy Region. [Link](#)
- **Designer examples:** Vita Ivičič. [Link to the website](#)
- **Opančareva kći** enterprise inspired by local tradition. [Link to the website](#)



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Group creative process—mentorship and collaboration

Objective: Connect traditional knowledge from heritage holders, youth, and professional designers to develop new ideas for contemporary products inspired by heritage motifs and techniques.

Group composition:

- Knowledge holders (older community members, masters of traditional techniques)
- Youth (students, local creators)
- Designer or creative mentor (fashion, graphic, or industrial designer)

Steps:

1. Presentation of heritage:

- Knowledge holders present techniques, patterns, materials, or stories.
- Highlight significance and unique aspects of each technique or motif.

2. Brainstorming and idea generation:

- Identify possibilities for innovative use of heritage elements.
- Designer guides creative thinking: sketches, moodboards, combining tradition with modernity.
- Youth contribute ideas on functionality, contemporary trends, and user preferences.

3. Development of product concept:

- Decide product type, purpose, target audience, and key characteristics.
- Consider prototyping or demonstrating the product in workshops, exhibitions, or mini-collections.

4. Presentation and reflection:

- Groups present concepts to other participants or mentors.
- Discuss how heritage was incorporated, challenges faced, and opportunities for further development.



8. HERITAGE AS INSPIRATION FOR NEW GENERATIONS

Outcome:

- Group produces an innovative product concept combining tradition and contemporary design.
- Participants gain experience in intergenerational collaboration and mentorship.
- Ideas are ready for prototyping or practical implementation.



9. Intellectual Property (IP) and Legal Protection

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Understand the basic forms of protection for cultural and textile heritage.
- Comprehend the importance of legal protection for preserving authenticity and ensuring the economic sustainability of heritage products.
- Learn how to approach the protection process.

Cultural and intellectual property (IP)

Preserving heritage is not only about physically safeguarding objects or revitalizing techniques; it also involves legal protection. Intellectual property (IP) rights and cultural intellectual property rights are essential tools that allow communities to:

- Protect their knowledge, products, and identity from misuse and
- Create the foundation for sustainable economic development.

What are intellectual property rights and why are they important for heritage?

Intellectual property rights (IP) protect creative ideas, knowledge, and products. They are crucial for heritage because they:

- Prevent unauthorized use or copying of traditional knowledge and symbols,
- Allow communities to decide how their heritage is used,
- Enhance recognition, market value, and sustainability of heritage products.



Types of intellectual property rights

Copyright: Protects original works such as pattern drawings, publications, photographs, or story collections.

Trademarks: Protect the name, logo, or symbol used by the community to represent its products (e.g. a quality mark for textiles).

Patents: Protect new technical solutions, processes, or inventions. Less common in textile heritage but relevant for innovative production methods.

Collective marks and geographical indications: Indicate product origin and guarantee quality (e.g. Idrija lace).

Cultural intellectual property: Protects knowledge, traditions, and practices linked to a community and prevents unauthorized commercial use.



How to address cases of cultural appropriation and ensure respectful collaboration

Textile traditions can attract the interest of designers and companies. While such collaborations can bring visibility and income, they also risk misuse or cultural appropriation when communities' designs, motifs, or knowledge are used without consent, credit, or fair compensation.

When companies wish to collaborate with heritage communities respectfully, here is what communities should ask and require, drawing on best practices and guidelines by the World Intellectual Property Organisation and the Cultural Intellectual Property Rights Initiative®.

Consent: free, prior, and informed

- Ask companies to present their project idea **before using any traditional motif or knowledge.**
- Ensure the community understands what will be produced, how it will be sold, and for how long.
- Decisions should be collective and follow traditional governance or representative bodies.
- Written consent should specify the scope, limits, and duration of use.

Credit: acknowledgment and attribution

- Request that the community's name and contribution appear in all communication materials, packaging, exhibitions, and media releases.
- **Discuss how the community wishes to be represented** (visuals, language, name).
- Ensure the story of the textile or technique is told accurately, in consultation with community members.

Compensation: fair and equitable benefits

- Ask for transparent and fair benefit-sharing:
 - Monetary: royalties, lump-sum fees, or community funds.
 - Non-monetary: capacity building, shared IP rights, visibility campaigns, or training.
- **Clarify the type of compensation before production starts.**
- Ensure agreements include mechanisms to review and adjust benefits over time.

Building respectful relationships

- Companies must take time to know the community and its culture before any negotiation.
- The community has the right to refuse collaboration if the proposal is inappropriate.
- Collaboration should be based on trust, respect, and continuous dialogue—not one-time transactions.

If misuse occurs

- Document and make public evidence of unauthorized use (dates, images, communication).
- Contact local IP offices, cultural heritage organizations, or NGOs for legal and public support.
- Communicate calmly and professionally, requesting rectification, acknowledgment, or compensation.

How to protect textile heritage

- **Traditional patterns and motifs:** copyright or collective trademark.
- **Products with geographical origin:** geographical indication.
- **New techniques or production processes:** patent.
- **Community marks:** quality or authenticity labels verifying the origin and quality of the product.

Practical Advice for Communities

1. Identify which elements of your heritage have potential for legal protection (objects, patterns, techniques, names).
2. Consult experts (intellectual property offices, lawyers, support organizations).
3. Consider **collective protection**, which is often more effective than individual protection.
4. Learn the registration process: submission of application, documentation, fees. Subsidies and support programs are often available.

Useful Contacts

- **The 3Cs' Rule: Consent. Credit. Compensation© (2017)** is a soft law, agreement-based framework for sustainable, fair and equitable relationships with traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions custodians who belong to indigenous peoples, ethnic groups and local communities (i.e. community, group or, if applicable, individuals) [Link to the website](#)
- **Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Slovenia (UIL)** – check local contacts for individual countries.
- **European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)**
- **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)** [Official website](#)
- **Study Safeguarding Traditional Textile Knowledge in the Alpine Context** by Agnese Musatti (Lombardy Region): [Link](#)



10. Market Presentation and Business Models

MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Understand how heritage can become a sustainable source of income.
- Learn the basic elements of a business model for cultural products.
- Identify opportunities to link heritage with tourism and local markets.
- Recognize the importance of clear communication and positioning of heritage products.

Cultural heritage can also represent an important economic potential for local communities. When heritage is properly presented and market-positioned, it supports sustainable development, strengthens local identity, and creates new jobs. In the context of textile heritage, this means that products are not only aesthetically pleasing, but also carry stories, authenticity, and values that contemporary consumers increasingly appreciate.

Heritage products have a special appeal—they combine craftsmanship, tradition, and cultural significance. Their value is not only functional but also lies in their ability to tell the story of a community, its lifestyle, and the skills passed down through generations.



How to present and sell heritage products

Clear storytelling is essential when presenting and selling heritage products. Every product should answer the questions:

- Who made it?
- When and where was it created?
- Which techniques and materials were used?
- What significance does it hold for the community?

Such storytelling can transform products into “premium” items—unique, high-quality, and carriers of an authentic narrative.

Basics of a business model for cultural products

A clear business model ensures that heritage products can survive in the market and become a sustainable source of revenue. Key aspects to consider include:

- **Costs:** materials, production, promotion, packaging, and distribution.
- **Target customers:** tourists, local residents, designers, collectors, or the general public.
- **Production:** handmade, small workshops, or a combination with industrial production.
- **Sales and promotion:** channels through which the product reaches the customer—local fairs, museum shops, online sales, social media, or tourism packages.
- **Pricing strategy:** ensure fair compensation for producers and authors, while considering how much revenue is reinvested into the community, content development, and promotion.
- **Brand positioning:** A consistent visual identity, quality labels, or community marks help buyers recognize authentic products and build trust.



Linking heritage with tourism and local markets

Tourism is an excellent channel to showcase heritage products. Visitors often seek authentic experiences and products that tell a story—exactly what heritage products can offer. Communities can integrate products into:

- **Tourism packages:** visit a workshop, watch a demonstration, and purchase products.
- **Museum shops and local stores:** selling as part of the cultural experience.
- **Local markets and festivals:** direct interaction with customers and educational opportunities.
- **Collaboration with local businesses:** restaurants, hotels, and travel agencies can promote products as part of the local experience.

Practical advice

- Start with small quantities and test customer response to reduce risk.
- Use a combination of sales channels: local stores, fairs, online platforms, social media.
- Ensure high-quality product presentation: packaging, origin labels, story and technique description.
- Think long-term about branding: recognizable visual identity, logo, or shared quality mark supports sustainability and market visibility.

LEARN MORE about heritage-sensitive products and their valorization: [Link to the Massive Online Open Course \(MOOC\)](#)

GOOD PRACTICES

- Sales of **official tourist souvenirs** made by craftspeople and **Handicrafts experiences** in Arts & Crafts Centre Škofja Loka. [Link to the website](#)
- **Semne Cusute** sale of textile courses and contemporary items inspired by embroidery tradition from Romania. [Link to the website](#)
- **Business Plan for Bergamasca Wool by** Kilowatt (Lombardy Region) [LINK](#)

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Task: Select one product or service and answer the following questions:

1. Product definition: What are we offering (tradition, materials, story)?
2. Target customer: Who will buy it (tourists, local community, designers, youth)?
3. Unique value: Why is the product “premium” (origin, handmade, authenticity, limited edition)?
4. Market channels: How and where will it be sold (local fairs, shops, online, tourism packages)?
5. Pricing: How will the price reflect premium positioning and production costs?
6. Storytelling: How will we communicate the heritage story to the buyer (label, description, digital media)?

Outcome: Participants will develop a comprehensive concept for the market presentation and business model of a heritage product, which the community can use for sustainable sales, promotion, and the dissemination of cultural value.



Sample documentation sheet:

Basic information

Object ID:

Production technique:

Name:

Date of creation (if known):

Description (what it is, material, usage):

Place of origin:

Dimensions and materials:

Owner/knowledge bearer:

Related story (short narrative)

What was (or is) the object used for? In what manner? Does it have any symbolic meaning or is connected with socialisation, work, life-cycle rituals? Any “hidden” information is very meaningful for the interpretation of the material (tangible) culture.

Photograph

For photographing objects on a neutral background or in use; ideally, both approaches. Capture multiple angles and details, patterns, and dimensions. Use a unified system for naming the photos and add metadata (object name, date, author, owner, location, description, keywords).



Interview questions

Do not forget to record basic biographical information (name, birth year, residence, education).

Basic information, taking up handicrafts:

- What is your profession?
- Is crafting your main income or are you an amateur craftsperson?
- What led you to this craft?
- Where and how did you learn the techniques? Have you been (formally) trained in this craft? Who taught you?
- Since when has your workshop been operating?
- Did you take over the craft from someone else?

Production:

- How many people are involved in production?
- What kind of products do you make?
- What are you best known for/what is your best-selling product?
- What is the average production/service time?
- What is the average price?
- What materials do you use?
- Where do you source them?
- What do you look for when choosing/what is the quality of the material?
- How do the prices of the materials fluctuate?
- What do you do with the leftover material (do you have any recycling methods)?
- What tools and machines do you use (are there any adapted, special tools)?
- What is the rhythm of the work, when is the main season, how do you plan your work?



Connections and support:

- Do you have any problems (production, material supply, sales, etc.)?
- Are you a member of an association, a craft centre; are you registered as a holder of intangible cultural heritage?
- Do you miss institutional support?

Broader meaning of work:

- What is the significance of this work for you and your community?
- What is still practiced today, and what is changed, adapted or forgotten?
- What would you like younger generations to preserve?
- Can you share any other stories related to the sense of your work, personal heritage, handicrafting process etc.?



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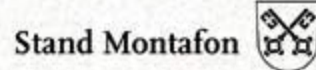
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