

## Towards the ratification of the Faro Convention - The Finnish experience

Finland signed the Faro Convention in June 2017. Currently, the ratification process is under way and the Convention is in parliamentary proceedings.

Joining the Faro Convention seemed a logical step for the Finnish heritage administration, also from a wider perspective, as the Convention reflects well the topical developments of the past decades as well as recent challenges in both heritage policies and the Finnish society in general.

Ground for joining the Convention was carefully prepared in Finland. Ratification of the Convention was included in the national Cultural Environment strategy 2014–2020 as one of the measures to promote joint responsibility for heritage and good governance. Prior to the decision to sign and join the Convention, the Ministry of Education and Culture tasked the heritage authority, the National Board of Antiquities, to draw up a background report. In the project executed in 2014, we chose to use a participatory approach in line with the spirit of the Faro Convention.

The purpose of the exercise was to map and assess the citizens' and stakeholders' views regarding the topical challenges in fostering cultural heritage and promote discussion on the value of heritage for society, communities and individual citizens. Another aim was to make the Convention and its content better known in Finland. Identification of existing good practice was an additional goal.

The project was a joint effort of the National Board of Antiquities and the Finnish Local Heritage Federation. In addition to a project group, a larger support group with representatives from the ministries, heritage administration and the civil society was created. Three prominent figures representing developers of open government and heritage research acted as sponsors or patrons of the project.

In order to secure an interactive preparation process, an open Internet survey was executed and three discussion fora were organised in different parts of the country. Social media and traditional media were actively used as well. The dialogue was structured under three themes: first, cultural heritage as part of everyday life of communities and individuals, second, heritage as a resource for sustainable development, and third, open, fair and people-oriented heritage governance.

The Internet survey mapped what kind of heritage and environment were regarded as significant and valuable by the respondents. It contained questions such as: what kind of heritage do you wish to sustain and transmit to future generations? Do you expect and need support in fostering heritage, and, if yes, what kind of support and advice and from whom? What kind of new, innovative ways to utilize and use heritage you can name, e.g. in your neighbourhood? Should heritage be included in childhood education, primary and secondary school and adult education and how? If and how does heritage affect your quality of life? In what ways should the heritage administration be developed, what kind of new channels and methods of cooperation are needed? Also the value of heritage to society was touched upon.

The final report presented the Convention and its main principles. It contained an analysis of the findings of the project and outlined a number of conclusions on the consequences of the ratification. Based on these, the report also gave recommendations on how to develop heritage practices and procedures in the spirit of the Faro Convention.

The report recommended the ratification of the Faro Convention. It was officially published in the spring of 2015. Parts of the report were translated into Swedish, Sami, plain Finnish and English. Formal steps towards the ratification were then prepared in the Ministry of Culture and Education in 2016–2017.

Currently, in September 2017, the Government proposal for the ratification is under the proceedings of the Parliament.

After the ratification of the Convention, we first need to inform the public and all relevant stakeholders about the content, aims and implementation of this Convention. Communicating the essence of an abstract international convention, such as Faro, in a concrete and captivating way is a challenge, but an interesting one. In the implementation, we need to take a closer look at heritage communities, explore and share existing good practice and create new procedures for cooperation between administration and diverse actors, new innovative and sustainable heritage partnerships. Administration should act more and more as a facilitator, whereas the role of the civil society, with its changing new forms including heritage communities, will grow stronger. Participation and sustainability are among the key words of the implementation. Ratification will also open the door to participating in and contributing to the European cooperation connected with the Faro Convention.

The aim is to encourage and promote the implementation of the Convention and its spirit across sectors, in various fields of the society and also on different levels of society ranging from the administration to the civil society and heritage communities.

*Additional information:*

[http://www.nba.fi/en/about\\_us/international\\_activities/international-cultural-heritage-conventions/the-faro-convention](http://www.nba.fi/en/about_us/international_activities/international-cultural-heritage-conventions/the-faro-convention)

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