



DIGITALISATION & INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Supporting safeguarding and visibility in rural & remote places



Co-funded by
the European Union

Why Are We Talking About This?

1

Rural places are digitally uneven

Access to digital infrastructure, skills, and online visibility varies significantly across rural and remote areas. Some places are well represented online, while others have little or no digital presence, affecting how their heritage is seen and valued.



2

Visibility shapes recognition

What is visible online is more likely to be recognised, supported, and shared. Digital presence influences how communities, visitors, and younger generations perceive and engage with cultural heritage.

3

Young generations live partly online

For many young people, digital spaces are part of everyday life. If heritage is not present in these spaces, opportunities for engagement, transmission, and connection may be limited.



Trainer notes:

Rural and remote areas often face digital gaps in infrastructure, skills, or visibility.

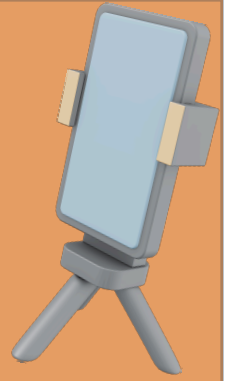
At the same time, cultural recognition increasingly happens online.

If heritage is not visible digitally, it may remain locally meaningful but globally invisible.

Digitalisation is not about replacing tradition — it is about expanding the spaces where heritage can be seen, shared, and learned.

What Is Digitalisation in INCH?

Digitalisation in ICH is the intentional use of digital tools to document, share, connect, and support the transmission of intangible cultural heritage within and beyond communities.



■ Documenting

Digital tools can record practices, skills, stories, and knowledge that might otherwise be lost. Documentation creates a trace of lived heritage and supports memory, continuity, and future learning.

■ Sharing & Connecting

Digital platforms allow communities to share their heritage with wider audiences and connect generations, regions, and networks. They expand the spaces where heritage can be seen, valued, and engaged with.

■ Supporting transmission

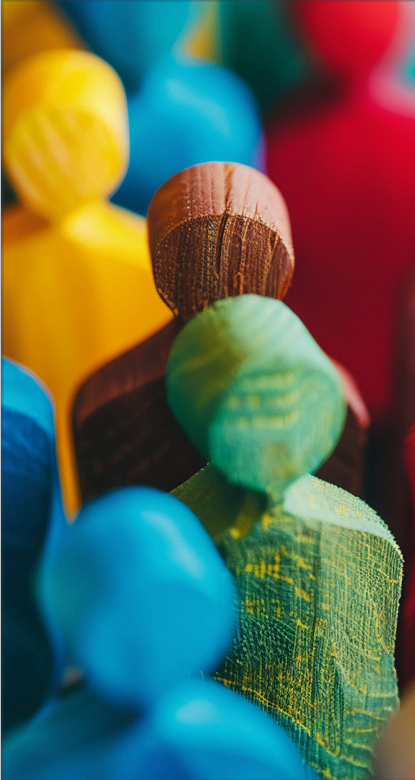
Digitalisation can complement face-to-face learning by providing access to materials, tutorials, archives, and storytelling formats. It supports intergenerational learning without replacing lived practice.

Trainer notes:

Digitalisation refers to the use of digital tools to:

- document practices and knowledge
- make them accessible
- connect generations and communities
- support continuity

It is not technology for its own sake — it is a support mechanism for safeguarding.



It Is NOT...

Digitalisation in INCH is a supportive process. It is not about replacing lived practices with online content, nor about transforming heritage into something purely technological. Instead, it is a complementary approach where digital tools strengthen visibility, access, and transmission while communities remain at the centre of safeguarding.

Digitalisation is not:

- Replacing lived practice
- Turning heritage into content only
- Making culture “modern”
- A solution without community

Examples:

- Documentation that supports practice-The digital tool supports memory and access ,it does not replace the lived experience.
- Digital storytelling that strengthens connection- Digital spaces expand visibility and engagement while the heritage remains community-based.



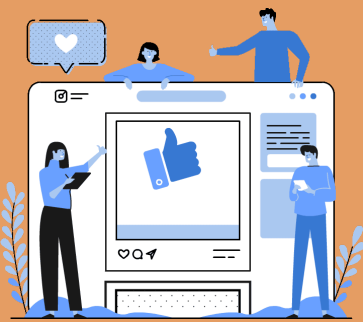
Trainer notes:

Digital tools cannot replace lived experience.

Heritage must remain practiced, embodied, and community-based.

Digitalisation must support – not dominate – safeguarding processes.

The Role of Digitalisation in Safeguarding INCH



Documentation

Digitalisation enables the recording of practices, skills, expressions, and knowledge that form part of intangible cultural heritage. Through video, audio, photography, and digital archives, communities can create lasting records that support memory, learning, and safeguarding—especially when transmission between generations is fragile.

Participation

Digital platforms can encourage broader community involvement by inviting storytelling, co-creation, and interaction. They create additional spaces where people can contribute, comment, share experiences, and feel connected to their heritage, particularly those who may not always participate in face-to-face activities.

Access

Digital tools expand access to heritage beyond geographical boundaries. They allow community members, diaspora, young generations, and wider audiences to discover and engage with cultural practices that may otherwise remain locally known. Increased visibility can strengthen recognition and appreciation.

Continuity

When used thoughtfully, digitalisation supports the continuity of heritage by complementing lived practice. It can facilitate learning across distance, preserve knowledge during periods of disruption, and help ensure that cultural expressions remain relevant and adaptable across generations.

Best Practice Example: Sweden

Sagobygden/Land of Legends

What happens:

- Oral legends are recorded and digitised
- Stories are linked to specific geographical locations
- Audio guides and mobile apps provide access on site
- A digital archive preserves narratives long term

How digital tools are used:

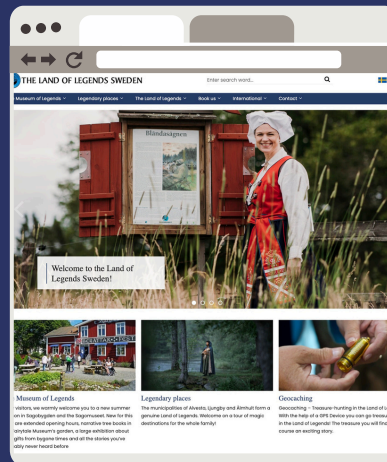
- Audio recordings and video documentation
- Interactive digital maps
- Mobile application for visitors
- Online searchable archive

Safeguarding impact:

- Prevents loss of oral traditions
- Makes stories accessible beyond the local community
- Encourages community participation in documentation
- Supports continuity without replacing live storytelling

Connection to place:

- Each story is tied to a specific landscape
- Digital maps connect memory to territory
- Visitors experience heritage where it belongs
- The landscape becomes both physical and digital space



Note for trainer:

"Sagobygden/The Land of Legends is a concept covering three municipalities in southern Sweden. It builds on local stories and legends and inspires people to discover the cultural landscape of the three municipalities. There are 60 places to visit, made available through a digital or physical map. 43 of the sites have a cupboard, a "sägenskåp", with a written story in Swedish, English, and German. The story is connected to the place – maybe a water spring, a dramatic event, or something supernatural that is supposed to have taken place on the very spot. 20 sites are available through geocaching. All the material is available through mobile applications, including spoken versions of the 43 stories in the cupboards.

Sagobygden also include a physical museum, Sagomuseet (the Museum of Legends), situated in Ljungby. Their educators arrange school programs, public events, team building activities, and together with the Linnaeus University also university courses. Sagobygden was added to the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices in 2018."

Link to use in order to share more info about the practice:

<https://sagobygden.se/en/>

Best Practice Example: SPAIN

Participatory Mapping of Intangible Heritage in Castilla-La Mancha

What happens:

- Local heritage elements are identified and documented
- Community members contribute stories, images, and knowledge
- Cultural practices are geo-referenced on a digital map
- An online platform makes the inventory publicly accessible

How digital tools are used:

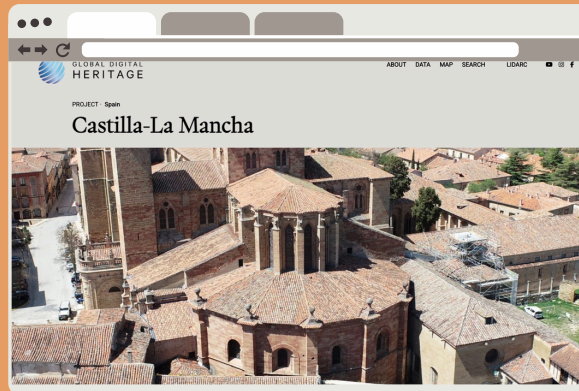
- Interactive geo-referenced digital map
- Multimedia uploads (photos, videos, testimonies)
- Online participatory platform
- Digital categorisation of ICH elements

Safeguarding impact:

- Creates a living, evolving digital inventory
- Encourages community participation in documentation
- Increases visibility of local heritage
- Supports recognition and long-term preservation

Connection to place:

- Each heritage element is tied to a specific location
- Mapping strengthens territorial identity
- Digital representation reflects local diversity
- The region becomes both physical and digital heritage space



"The Participatory Mapping of Intangible Heritage in Castilla-La Mancha is an exemplary initiative that blends community empowerment, digital innovation, and cultural preservation born from the recognition that while Castilla-La Mancha possesses a deeply rooted and diverse cultural identity, many of its oral traditions, seasonal rituals, craft practices, and local customs risk being lost due to demographic shifts, especially the aging of rural populations and ongoing youth migration to urban centers. In this context, the Dirección General de Patrimonio Cultural de Castilla-La Mancha, with the support of regional stakeholders, launched a collaborative digital mapping project to preserve and promote the region's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) through direct community participation. This participatory mapping project offers a compelling case study in community-led digital heritage, where the tools of the 21st century are placed in the hands of those who live and sustain the past, demonstrating that preserving culture is not just about documentation, it's about participation, ownership, and transmission, especially in regions where traditions are carried in the voices, gestures, and rituals of everyday people.

This initiative focused on encouraging local residents, schools, peñas culturales, associations, and municipalities to actively contribute to the creation of a living digital inventory of their traditions. Communities were not just consulted, they were empowered to become data collectors, storytellers, and curators of their own heritage and several youth groups were mobilized to engage with elders, gathering stories, rituals, lullabies, proverbs, artisanal techniques, and historical anecdotes. These were then recorded, photographed, or filmed and uploaded onto a geo-referenced online platform hosted at patrimonioclm.es, designed to be accessible and navigable by topic, location, or media format.

"

Note for trainer:

link to use in order to share more info about the practice:

<https://globaldigitalheritage.org/project/castilla-la-mancha/>

Best Practice Example: Romania

Via Transilvanica – Digital Storytelling & Cultural Route

What happens:

- A long-distance cultural route connects villages, landscapes, and heritage elements
- Local stories, traditions, and crafts are documented along the route
- Information is made accessible through digital platforms
- Communities contribute to storytelling and visibility

How digital tools are used:

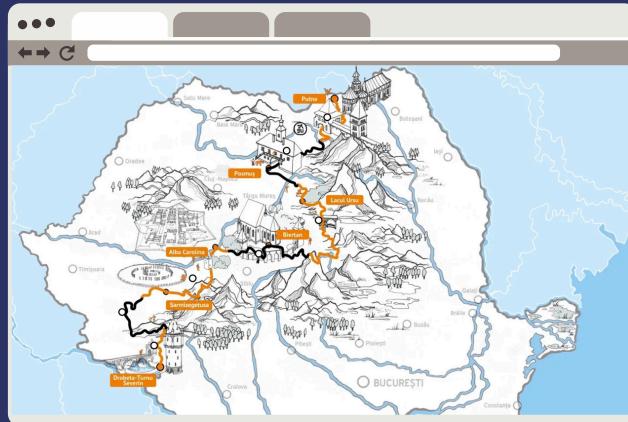
- Interactive digital maps
- Multilingual website and online guides
- Mobile applications with route information
- Photo, video, and storytelling documentation

Safeguarding impact:

- Increases visibility of rural heritage
- Encourages local communities to document and share their traditions
- Connects dispersed heritage elements into a coherent narrative
- Supports sustainable engagement without replacing lived practice

Connection to place:

- Each segment of the route reflects local identity
- Digital maps connect heritage to landscape
- Visitors experience culture in its geographic context
- The territory becomes both a physical journey and a digital story



Note for trainer:

"The Via Transilvanica is a 1,400-kilometer cultural route developed between 2018 and 2022 by the NGO Tășuleasa Social, linking Romania's diverse cultural landscapes and ethnic communities through a single cohesive trail. Inspired by pilgrimage paths such as the Camino de Santiago, it was created with help from more than 10,000 volunteers, artists, and residents. The trail traverses seven cultural regions: Bucovina, Terra Siculorum, Terra Saxonum, Terra Dacica, Terra Banatica, Terra Romana, and Terra Transilvanica, showcasing natural beauty and the living traditions of Romanian, Saxon, Hungarian, and Szekler communities. Along the path, hikers encounter over 1,400 individually sculpted andesite milestones, each created by artists interpreting heritage symbols, making this one of the world's longest open-air art galleries. Beyond physical landmarks, travellers experience rural folklore, crafts, dialects, rituals, and gastronomy transmitted directly by host communities, turning the route into a living museum of cultural diversity.

Importantly, the trail's development has sparked substantial social capital along its route. Informal networks of guides, homestay hosts, and craft mentors are integral to the Via Transilvanica, creating strong community bonds. These relationships foster asset-based development by highlighting and utilizing the inherent strengths within these communities. Guides share local knowledge and stories, homestay hosts offer authentic cultural immersion experiences, and craft mentors sustain traditional skills and artistry. The project also offers educational outreach through environmental and heritage education programs, blending preservation with local livelihoods by promoting homestays, craft workshops, and village fairs along the route. Its 2023 Europa Nostra Award acknowledged its community-driven impact and exemplary value for cultural cooperation across Europe.

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Link of the video:<https://www.viatransilvanica.com/en/>

From Concept to Exploration



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Digitalisation supports safeguarding
- Visibility influences recognition
- Communities must remain at the centre
- Digital tools complement, not replace, lived practice

Now we'll move from concept to exploration. In the next activity, you will analyse the digital presence of your place. Have in mind:

- How visible is your place online?
- Who is shaping the digital narrative?
- What aspects of your ICH are present — or missing?

Note for the trainer:

"Digitalisation is a support mechanism.

It increases visibility, access, and participation, but safeguarding remains rooted in communities and lived practice.

Technology must serve heritage — not the other way around."

The trainer can introduce the activity:

"We've explored what digitalisation means and how it can support safeguarding. Now we shift the focus to your own context. You'll investigate how your place appears digitally and identify strengths and gaps."



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THANK YOU !



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