

The Stockfish Heritage Community Charter

This is a Charter for the safeguarding of the stockfish traditions developed from the International Stockfish Heritage Community (SHC)) meetings and conferences since Cittanova in June 2023, as well as the inclusion of the Lofoten proposition about Stockfish production in Norway: Knowledge, craftsmanship and living cultural heritage.

The international task force for the inscription of stockfish traditions on UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, has therefore adopted the following:

Introduction/preamble

- Stockfish traditions are an essential part of the cultural heritage of the Stockfish Heritage Community and a defining element of the identity of their members¹.
- Stockfish traditions shall be safeguarded as living cultural heritage.
- Safeguarding measures of the stockfish traditions shall be based on the principles of UNESCO's Convention for the safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- Safeguarding measures for the stockfish traditions shall be based on the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.
- Safeguarding measures for the stockfish traditions as living cultural heritage shall be based on best practice through cultural, ecological, economic and social sustainability and a supportive environment.
- Safeguarding measures for the stockfish traditions should respect the rights of every community involved, including indigenous peoples and other national minorities.
- The stockfish traditions are fragile. Safeguarding measures with relevant resources and support must be put in place to guarantee the transmission to the next generations.

Aims

Article 1 Aim

The purpose of this charter is to help safeguard stockfish traditions as living cultural heritage by the SHC and the State Parties.

Article 2 Guiding principles

¹ The SCH - Stockfish Heritage Community includes the whole chain of individuals concerned by the stockfish from the fishing to the table

The guiding principles for the transfer and transmission of the stockfish traditions must be designed on the international level by the Stockfish Heritage Community. They shall contribute to the safeguarding of fishing and drying know-how, the access to the cod needed to produce it in enough quantity and of good quality, and preferably the spaces traditionally used to dry cod in North Norway and Iceland. They shall also contribute to safeguarding the processing and culinary skills, related spaces, gastronomic traditions and other kinds of intangible legacies, historical documents and artistic works concerning stockfish in other countries where this foodstuff is also appreciated.

Definitions

Article 3 The stockfish

Stockfish is, since the 800s, the dried product of the Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*) caught in the northern waters of the Atlantic, appearing like a yellowish, and “wood-like” stick to the eyes of people. For centuries, coastal communities of Norway and Iceland took advantage of the unique conditions of their climate to cure this fish, abundant in the surrounding seas. The stockfish is preserved without salt or any other additive. Cod is gutted and immediately hung out on large wooden frames, “tørrfiskhjeller” in norwegian, hjallur in islandic, to dry for 2-3 months. However, drying of heads can also be done indoors.

When rehydrated, the stockfish can be submitted to different kinds of processing operations before being consumed, to adapt the dried product to the local taste in each country. This final step can involve soaking and sometimes the inclusion of additives for special taste and durability, which vary from place to place, contributing to the cultural richness of this shared legacy. This last stage of production is what distinguishes the Nordic lutefisk from the other culinary traditions of stockfish. The raw dried cod product is, however, always the same.

Article 4 The International Stockfish Heritage Community

The SHC includes the whole chain of individuals concerned by the stockfish from the fishing to the table, which is long, diverse and cross borders.

The fishermen and the stockfish producers from North Norway and Iceland, respectively provide the raw material for the stockfish. These are traditions not only to the Norwegian and Iceland ethnic society, but also to the Sami people and the Kven minority.

Quality control, carried out by experienced stockfish graders (“vrakere”) in Norway and supported by specialized expertise in Iceland, is a fundamental prerequisite for the processing stage shared by all participating communities. The stockfish is exported by professional stockfish companies that ensure environmentally responsible transportation, fair pricing, and the delivery of a high-quality product to consumers.

The processors and soakers, in Iceland, Norway, Italy, and Nigeria, make the stockfish ready to be consumed. Chefs and private people turn it into renowned dishes for the eaters dispersed around the world. In Norway, Italy, and Iceland some of them are organized in brotherhoods (confraternities and laug) and other kinds of associations.

Slow Food is a global movement acting together to ensure good, clean and fair food for all. Slow Food has supported stockfish traditions and the taste of it over many years at the terra madre and other slow fish events. Thus, Slow food's international network from Nigeria to Norway is actively involved in the UNESCO nomination and the future safeguarding of the cultural and culinary stockfish traditions.

Artists, craftsmen and women use stockfish and the history as inspiration for their creative work and expressions.

All of them together form the International Stockfish Heritage Community. It is a large and diverse set of communities, groups and individuals spread around the world that have in common the care of safeguarding the common legacy that unifies them and gives them a common identity.

Article 5 Intangible culture and living tradition

Stockfish traditions are to be understood as an intangible cultural heritage shared by the Stockfish Heritage Community. It includes not only the bearers from the producing areas but also all those that include stockfish in their diet and celebrate these traditions in several ways, at home, but also through social events and cultural manifestations. These living traditions have been passed down from generation to generation through centuries. The traditions are diverse and are adapted to local conditions, use and beliefs, stockfish being a strong driver of cultural diversity, north-south dialogue and entanglement factor of the collective identities of all the communities and groups concerned.

Article 6 Geographical location and range

Today the drying tradition only remains in Northern Norway, especially in the Lofoten Archipelago, and in the Western fjords of Iceland. The port of Bergen, in south-west of Norway, was since the 12th Century the epicenter of the international trade of this conserved food, at the hand of German merchants belonging to the Hanseatic league, having a protected and segregated Kontor at the Bryggen quarter. Today it is an important UNESCO heritage site acting as a memorial of stockfish history and cultural traditions in Bergen.

The longevity and highly nutritious character of the fish product made it soon an attractive staple food. Travelling by boat, it crossed seas and continents, along rivers, to marketplaces allowing the development of the urban way of life across Europe. The tradition is still strongly alive in Italy, Iceland, Nigeria, Croatia and in diaspora communities around the world. However, the stockfish traditions also still survive in pockets in Germany, France, Spain, Slovenia, Serbia, Greece and UK, most of them being threatened to disappear.

The trade also extended its market to West Africa, Nigerians being today one of the principal consumers of stockfish, especially heads. The expatriate communities, particularly the Scandinavian, Italian and Nigerian ones, also brought it to the American continent. This commodity became the bearer of the intangible legacies in communities from several countries, including those that are the carrying element of the present application. Every one of them has their own ways to process and cook the stockfish, and their own cultural traditions and practices related to this staple food.

Article 7 Detailed definition in the nomination document

The main source for a comprehensive definition of stockfish traditions can be found in the document Stockfish traditions, UNESCO Inventory inscription:

“UNESCO, section 1. Identification and definition of the element”.

Iceland - [Hardfish and Stockfish: Cultural and Culinary Traditions of Hardfish and Stockfish – Lifandi hefðir](#)

Norway - [Intangible Cultural Heritage The Cultural and Culinary Traditions of Dried Cod/Stockfish](#)

Italy - <https://www.masaf.gov.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/11667>
No.7 La tradizione dello stoccafisso nella cultura e nella gastronomia italiana

Nigeria – The UNESCO Inventory inscription is in progress.

Article 8 Tradition bearers as stewards of the cultural heritage

The intangible cultural heritage related to the stockfish traditions is managed and transmitted by the bearers of the tradition and the practitioners themselves. They have the right to recognize the stockfish traditions as part of their cultural heritage and an essential compound of their identity. This must form the basis on which principles for safeguarding measures are founded.

Safeguarding through use

Article 9 Safeguarding through use

The main principle for the transfer of knowledge about the stockfish traditions is safeguarding through use.

Article 10 Traditional knowledge

The knowledge of the stockfish traditions has been transmitted from generation to generation. This perspective will form the basis of the future work on safeguarding. As far as possible, fishing, curing, processing, cooking and degustation must be based on traditional local knowledge.

Article 11 Economical sustainability

For the tradition to live on, the stakeholders involved in the stockfish chain must be able to make a living of their activity. For this, commercial activities within the sector should be developed and supported. The charter shall encourage programs to guarantee access to the cod populations to all ethnic groups - even if they are minorities in their own country - and involved in stockfish production and to the spaces in coastal areas where traditional drying stations are installed. It should also encourage all parties

involved in the stockfish trade to maintain the price of the final product affordable for the consumers in the different areas of the world where there are consumption habits, considering the cost of life in each one.

Resources, support and underlying conditions

Article 12 Resources, support and underlying conditions

To ensure best practice in promoting stockfish traditions, the members of the Stockfish Heritage Community must be fully supported in what concerns all the issues they face concerning the safeguarding of the stockfish tradition, through the provision of good provenance, a clear structure, and adequate support. The support will be educational and technical to provide a sound basis to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and learning practices. It will also be juridic to allow the members of the heritage community to be able to face legal issues related to the safeguarding of different aspects of the stockfish tradition, including the right of fair access to the raw and final product.

Article 13 State parties are formally responsible

According to the UNESCO Convention of Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the State Parties that supported the stockfish inscription in the Representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage have the formal responsibility for taking the necessary measures to ensure the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage found on its territory. Safeguarding means here the measures to ensure the viability of the stockfish traditions, including identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education. They must do this with the greatest possible participation from local communities, groups and individuals who create and maintain knowledge and practice related to stockfish traditions. So, the Stockfish Heritage Community must be fully involved.

Article 14 International Stockfish Heritage Steering Group

The International Stockfish Heritage Steering Group will be established by the advice of the founders, as well as the Indigenous peoples and local communities involved (IPLC). The International Stockfish Heritage Steering Group will thus represent the whole Stockfish Heritage Community, collaborate with State Parties and coordinate international programs aiming at the safeguarding of stockfish traditions. It will have local representatives at each State Party. This organization will undertake its mission through actions that permit the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education. It will also mediate eventual conflicts of interest between members of the Stockfish Heritage Community.

Article 15 Authoritative documents

Alongside UNESCO's Convention on the protection of the intangible cultural heritage, the stockfish Charter is based on the inscription of Stockfish traditions on UNESCO's Representative List of Humanity's Intangible Cultural Heritage. With reference to the document: "Stockfish traditions, inscription, UNESCO, ____".

These two, the Convention and inscription text, are to be understood as the authoritative governing documents for future work on the safeguarding and management of stockfish traditions.

Article 16 International and National Conservation Plans

The provisions in this charter must be followed up with periodic safeguarding plans at international and national levels. Such plans must follow the State Party's schedule for reporting to UNESCO. It must be made clear which measures and programs have been implemented.

This, then, ensures proper safeguarding and the proper management of the stockfish traditions under the auspices of the responsible authorities and the local representatives of the Stockfish Heritage Community under the coordination of the International Stockfish Heritage Society

Following people "The founders" took part in the work of the task force for drafting the Charter of the Stockfish Heritage Community for the safeguarding of stockfish traditions:

Einar Eythorsson and Marit Myrvoll (Slow Food Mearra-Sapmi), Inge-Arne Eriksen (Bivdu), Terje Inderhaug, Hildegunn Foldnes and Thor-Øivind Jensen (Slow Food, Bergen), Jonas Walsø (Museum Nord/Skreisenteret), Guðmundur Guðmundsson and Dóra Svavarsdóttir, (Slow Food Iceland), Andrea Vergari (International stockfish society), Otello Fabris (Macaronicorum Collegium), Maurizio Scarpi (Baccala Mantecato) , Babatunde Oreyemi (Slow Food Nigeria), Carl Walter Matthias Kaiser (UiB), Anne Karine Statle (Tørrfisk fra Lofoten), Mimi Lam UiB, António José Marques da Silva (University of Madeira), Klaus Adelt (stockfisch Frankenwald)

This document was made accessible to the whole Stockfish Heritage Community through the internet portal of the [International Stockfish Society](https://www.internationalstockfishsociety.org/) / www.stokkfisk.no and [SKREI](https://www.skrei.no/) -

The charter is drawn up in the following languages: Italian, Icelandic, German, Igbo, kven, Northern Sami, Norwegian, Yoruba, Igbo and other Nigerian languages. This normative act has also been translated into English and French. All versions have the same validity.

31.05.2026, The task force for the inscription of stockfish traditions on UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.