

No. 8	ÚĽUV: The Centre for Folk Art Production	Slovakia	Bratislava region, southwestern Slovakia	Bratislava
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Categories of cultural heritage

Professional craftspeople	Knowledge transfer	Presentation of crafts	Network for preservation of crafts	Local community building	Crafts within tourism
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Description

Founded in 1945, ÚĽUV (Centre for Folk Art Production) in Slovakia promotes and preserves traditional crafts. Initially established to support local artisans through collaboration and market development, its role evolved after 1989 into a cultural institution focused on safeguarding and modernizing folk art. Today, ÚĽUV is a key authority on traditional crafts in Slovakia, offering exhibitions, educational programs, and advisory services. It operates the School of Crafts, recognized by UNESCO, and organizes major events like Master Craftsmen Days. With international partnerships, ÚĽUV ensures folk art remains a living tradition that supports sustainability and cultural identity.

Types of handicrafts

Pottery Knitting Weaving Woodworking	Embroidery Leatherworking Herbalism Culinary craft	Candle making Glassblowing Copper engraving Quilting Jewellery making	Basket weaving Stonemasonry Blacksmithing Traditional agriculture practice
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Craft touchpoints - where to find?

Workshop of an artisan (directly from the craftsman)
 Handicraft Centre of more than one local artisan
 Regular local market
 Local events/festival

Shop selling local artisans' products
 Local tourism agency / souvenir shop
 Web-shops
 Social media accounts

What can we learn?

<p>Heritage preservation / valorisation practice</p>	<p>What do they expose with their practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ÚĽUV's practice is centered on the preservation and valorisation of traditional Slovak crafts. It showcases Slovakia's folk art by promoting craftsmanship as a living tradition. • Through exhibitions, educational programs, and cultural events, they expose the public to high-quality, contemporary interpretations of traditional crafts, ensuring that these practices evolve while staying connected to their historical roots. • Researching, cataloging, and celebrating folk art, highlighting the importance of craftsmanship in cultural identity and community life.
<p>Success factors</p>	<p>Achievements and strengths that make this case inspiring for other attempts in the DR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ÚĽUV's long-standing achievements, spanning over 80 years of continuous operation, make it a model for heritage preservation. • Its School of Crafts, recognized by UNESCO for its good safeguarding practices, is the leading educational institution for traditional craftsmanship in Slovakia. • They have successfully transitioned from a production-focused entity to a cultural institution that connects artisans with the public through major events like Master Craftsmen Days and craft courses. • Its authority in the field is reinforced by strong partnerships with local and international networks, as well as a commitment to quality in both traditional and contemporary craft production.
<p>Local community involvement</p>	<p>Fundamental values that help to connect the target groups for the social prosperity of the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ÚĽUV's fundamental values center around community engagement and social prosperity. • Connection with local communities by offering craft courses, consulting services, and platforms for artisans to showcase their work. • Through collaboration with local producers, municipalities, schools, efforts to involve youth, through competitions and educational outreach and associations they support the development of traditional crafts. • By linking traditional craftsmanship with sustainability and self-sufficiency, it empowers local communities to preserve their heritage while contributing to economic and social development.

<p>Link to professional network</p>	<p>Reflecting on its strategic position in the region; making the most of networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ÚĽUV is strategically positioned within national and international professional networks such as the European Craft Organisation (ECO), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the Slovak Association of Museums (ZMS), Slovak Association of Libraries (SAK), Slovak Folk and Art Collective (SĽUK). • Opportunities for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and promotion of Slovak crafts globally. Through its membership in these organizations, ÚĽUV strengthens its ability to influence the discourse around traditional crafts, facilitates networking between local artisans and international markets, and ensures that Slovakia’s folk art is represented in global cultural and creative industries.
<p>Communication</p>	<p>The use of social networks to disseminate and promote their mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ÚĽUV use social media and digital platforms: Active engagement on Instagram, Facebook, and its website. • They share insights into traditional crafts, upcoming events, and educational programs. The online presence helps attract audiences, including younger generations, while highlighting the relevance of folk art in the modern world. • The use of multimedia storytelling, including craft demonstrations, artist interviews, and behind-the-scenes looks at the creative process, enhances the organization’s ability to build an engaged and informed community around Slovak craftsmanship.
<p>Sustainability factor</p>	<p>Operations and maintenance that drive the practice forward; opportunities for financial sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School of Crafts plays a key role, offering accredited programs to nurture new generations of skilled artisans, while regular exhibitions like Master Craftsmen Days and craft fairs provide visibility for local crafts. The organization also offers consulting and advisory services to artisans, helping them improve their craft and reach broader markets. • Sales from its Bratislava shop and online store provide income from the sale of high-quality, handcrafted products, directly benefiting artisans. • The center also generates funds through event revenues, including entrance fees and sponsorships from major cultural events like Master Craftsmen Days. • They also benefit from grants, EU funding, and private sponsorships, which support its educational programs, exhibitions, and research initiatives. The organization’s involvement in tourism—both through souvenir shops and cultural tourism. Diverse income sources and expanding its role as an educational and cultural hub they are focused on long-term sustainability of their mission.

What makes it a best practice?

ÚĽUV has been most effective in the heritage preservation and valorisation of traditional Slovak crafts, shaped by a combination of strategic legislative frameworks, cultural initiatives, and educational programs that have allowed them to adapt to changing economic and political environments over the years. The foundation of their success lies in the 1958 Law on Folk Art Production, which formalized their role in preserving and promoting traditional craftsmanship and in 1989, their transition from a state-run production organization to a cultural institution that was essential for their long-term viability, as they began focusing on education, cultural promotion, and public outreach rather than direct market control.

One of the key factors in ÚĽUV's ongoing success has been the broad variety of their work. They offer a truly wide variety of activities and practices: exhibitions, professional research, museological, artistic and publishing activities, organising competitions for children and the professional public, consulting and advisory activities for producers, craft courses for the general and professional public in the School of Crafts, networking of actors in the field of traditional crafts (linking producers and designers, consultancy on creation), presentation of crafts to the public at various events (the flagship event is the annual ÚĽUV Master Craftsmen Days in the centre of the capital, with the participation of more than 100 of the best masters of traditional crafts), popularisation of knowledge and information about traditional crafts and ULUV activities through web, social networks (Instagram, Facebook) and media channels (radio, press, TV, etc.)

Some major projects, like the educational School of Crafts (UNESCO recognition as a Good Safeguarding Practice) and major cultural events, such as the Master Craftsmen Days, as well as the consultations the organization offers have created a comprehensive ecosystem that not only protects Slovak folk art but also ensures its ongoing relevance in both local and international markets.

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