Association of
Cultural Heritage
Education in Finland

Our approach to cultural heritage education

Ira Vihreälehto
executive director





Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland

- We work nationally and internationally through European projects and networks.
- We work across culture, education, youth, environment and sustainable development.
- We promote cultural sustainability and the active participation of children and young people in exploring, interpreting and shaping cultural heritage.
- We respond to educational needs and curriculum requirements across different educational settings.
- We support educators by developing training, workshops, learning materials and new pedagogical approaches.
- We connect research with practice through projects and publications.
- We actively seek and develop new partnerships and projects.



- Children and young people are not only learners – they are active participants and creators.
- Every child should have opportunities to recognise, define, interpret and shape cultural heritage.
- Teachers and educators need to be aware of their own perspectives, assumptions and position.

Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland



We ask:

- What cultural heritage is important to you?
- Who defines what cultural heritage is?
- Whose stories are heard?
- Who is “we” when we talk about “our cultural heritage”?
- Is all cultural heritage worth preserving?
- What do we want to pass on to future generations – and what should we leave behind?

Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland

- We recognise increasing linguistic and cultural diversity.
- We strengthen voices that are not commonly heard.

We ask:

- Is it participation, if you have to participate?
- Is it safe to participate?
- Is participation just ”nice behaviour”?
- What happens when the result of participation is not what was wanted?
- What difference does participation actually make?



Association of
Cultural Heritage
Education in Finland

In the world we live in today



- In an increasingly aggressive discussion culture, young people may avoid polarising topics and retreat into smaller, trusted circles.
- We ask: **Is it safe for everyone to comment, question and disagree?**

We work to develop:

- Safe and supportive spaces
- Meaningful offline experiences
- Tools for difficult conversations
- Rest, play and fun
- Opportunities to spark creativity

Association of
Cultural Heritage
Education in Finland

What have we learnt from projects?

- **Participation is not the same as ownership.** Meaningful participation requires real influence, shared decision-making and responsibility.
- **One approach does not fit all.** Different cultural, educational and local contexts require different approaches.
- **Research should inform practice.**
- **Sustainability starts during the project.** New practices need to become part of everyday work to continue beyond the project. Our methods need to be practical and adaptable to educators' everyday work, time and resources.
- **Accessibility is more than making materials available.** We need to address practical barriers related to language, abilities and background.
- **Be open to unexpected directions.**
- **Learn from what does not work.** Recognising and understanding why something didn't work is important for improving practices.



Association of
Cultural Heritage
Education in Finland

What have participating educators learnt?

Children's agency and independence

- “This project taught me to give children more freedom and to trust what they are capable of. I would probably have guided many groups in a completely different direction, but the results were wonderful and exactly what the children wanted.” — Teacher, Finland

Discovering unexpected strengths and creativity

- “Cultural heritage is a powerful way to encourage teamwork, mutual understanding and respect for differences. It also helps reveal children's hidden strengths. When they work on something they enjoy and are good at, they gain confidence, and their classmates discover abilities they might never have noticed otherwise.” — Teacher, Spain
- “The combination of new technologies and, above all, giving pupils the opportunity to take the lead stimulated their creativity in many ways. They wanted to express themselves creatively, and cultural heritage and technology provided the perfect means to do so.” — Teacher, Spain



Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland

Heritage in everyday life

Educators and children began recognising heritage in everyday life, local places and their own creations. Their local surroundings and everyday experiences took on new meaning.

- “The best part of the project is that I have started to see the cultural heritage of my own town with different eyes. We are a small, modest town, but we have so much cultural heritage here.” - Teacher, Finland
- “At first, pupils thought heritage was something from the past, connected to monuments. They came to realise that intangible heritage and things in their everyday lives are also heritage.” - Teacher, Spain
- “After a few workshops, they began noticing cultural heritage all around them. They even started saying that something they had created themselves could become heritage in the future.” - Teacher, Serbia



Inspiring examples of cultural heritage education

- **kulttuurinvuosikello.fi**, one of Finland's largest educational material banks, with 700+ learning ideas and 100,000+ visitors annually.
- **Spinner of Living Heritage**, a participatory tool for exploring and creating living cultural heritage together. Available in 21 languages and designed for use with children, young people and adults.
- **The 70 Adventures Before Grade 7** challenge invites you to explore your local area, discover cultural heritage and dive into nearby nature.
- **Learning from Archives** strengthens multiliteracy, interpretation skills, critical thinking and empathy. Designed especially for history and language education in lower and upper secondary schools, it can be used to explore a wide range of archival sources – from social media accounts and personal diaries to historical documents preserved in archives.
- **Aalto Works**, educational materials inspired by Alvar Aalto's architecture and design, connecting cultural heritage with observation, creativity, the built environment and hands-on learning.
- **360° Environments:** Interactive virtual spaces for exploring cultural heritage and local environments: CREATECH exhibition



Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland

Association of
Cultural Heritage
Education in Finland

Ira Vihreälehto
executive director
Association of Cultural Heritage
Education in Finland
www.kulttuuriperintokasvatus.fi

ira.vihrealehto@kulttuuriperintokasvatus.fi

+358 50 3381743