



## HERITAGE HUBS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE EDUCATION

*Heritage Hubs* was a two-year project related to the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. The project was coordinated by the [Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland](#) in partnership with [La Fundación San Millán de la Cogolla](#) in Spain, the [Centre for Urban Development](#) in Serbia, and [VITECO](#) E-learning solutions in Italy. The project's purpose was to support transnational learning from and about cultural heritage, and to allow children and young people to define and voice what *they* regard as important cultural heritage. *Heritage Hubs* school pilots were organised at 11 schools in Finland, Serbia and Spain in 2018-2019. The project brought together 10-16-year-old children and young people to share examples of their cultural heritage via digital platforms and to interpret the cultural heritage of others in face-to-face interaction at home and abroad. This approach gave the pupils an opportunity to discover cultural similarities and to recognize other uniting factors in their daily lives. Commenting on the benefits of the project to the pupils, teacher *Ingelisa Wikholm* explained: "The pupils noticed that one can also enjoy the culture of others and that cultural heritage is something common to humanity even though it may seem different on the surface." Teacher *Laura Pérez* believes that *Heritage Hubs* aroused interest in cultural heritage not only among participating pupils and teachers, but also among their families and neighbours. As a consequence, cultural heritage became a new link between pupils, teachers, parents and the wider community.

Based on participant feedback and empirical data collected during project implementation, *Heritage Hubs* project team has drafted recommendations for cultural heritage education. These recommendations will hopefully give education and heritage professionals ideas about how to integrate cultural heritage and intercultural dialogue into their daily work, to make cultural heritage accessible and inclusive, and to promote the agency of young people in cultural heritage processes.





### 1. Engaging children and young people in defining, interpreting and renewing cultural heritage

With their choices and actions, the young generation living and growing in Europe today decide what significance cultural heritage has in their lives, what stories and traditions they want to carry forward, what heritage they want to renew, and what kind of new cultural heritage they will create for future Europe. Their active participation in and opinions about cultural heritage are necessary to secure the plurality and diversity of identities and cultural expressions at local, national and European levels, as well as to construct a more sustainable present and future for Europe and beyond. It is essential to hear and recognize what children and young people regard as important heritage and what cultural heritage *they* want to maintain and to pass on. Therefore, children and young people should be given a more active role in the field of cultural heritage and opportunities to express their ideas of cultural heritage. [Heritage Hubs Manual for Cultural Heritage Education](#) gives numerous practical ideas and tips on how to implement these practices.

### 2. First-hand experiences of cultural heritage in varied learning environments

The importance of first-hand experiences of cultural heritage was very evident in *Heritage Hubs* surveys. First-hand experiences of cultural heritage – how it tastes, smells, feels, looks and sounds – are fun, meaningful and helped the pupils to better grasp the otherwise abstract idea of cultural heritage. The pupils also preferred varied learning environments, whether this was at local heritage sites, museums, science centres, out in nature, or outside the classroom at the school. For many, cultural heritage was initially something old, grand and static, with limited relevance to their everyday lives. However, through direct engagement with cultural heritage – own and that of others’ – the pupils’ noticed its presence in their daily lives and realized that cultural heritage is versatile, dynamic and constantly evolving. It can be old and contemporary, tangible and intangible, minor and grand, and important to only few or to a large group of people. When children and young people experience cultural heritage first hand in their local surroundings or further away, they are more likely to appreciate it and take responsibility for its maintenance and preservation. What one understands, admires and experiences, one is also more likely to foster in the future.

### 3. Communal experiences of cultural heritage

One of the most remarked on experiences of *Heritage Hubs* amongst the participants was the communal and social aspects of cultural heritage. The participants enjoyed exploring cultural heritage *together*, sharing heritage and learning about cultural heritage from each other – whether locally, nationally or internationally. Encounters with older generations (grandparents, community elders etc.) and heritage practitioners, as well as networking with other schools provided depth and context to the experience. This communal aspect added a further layer to participants’ personal experiences of cultural heritage, and made the learning experience particularly meaningful and memorable. Cultural heritage became a new link between individuals, groups and communities locally and beyond. In heritage education, involving older generations, local heritage practitioners, and networking with other schools locally, can enhance the enjoyment and learning potential of the entire experience.



#### 4. Sharing cultural heritage

*Heritage Hubs* pupils and teachers frequently commented on how learning about and from cultural heritage is important for understanding one's own culture and cultural identity. Getting to know others also entails learning to know yourself better. Participants were eager to share heritage as well as learn from and about it. There were repeated expressions of positive pride for own cultural heritage, and a grasp of the importance of being able to show that culture and heritage to others, whether online or in person. Sharing heritage at all levels is a valuable and effective means of learning about and from heritage. The production of heritage videos is an especially useful tool in heritage education. Video production makes it necessary to think and make decisions about how to express what heritage is, what is important, and why. The production process (choosing the topic, storyboarding, writing the script, shooting and editing the video) is a collaborative process, requires teamwork and offers participants opportunities to actively participate. It creates – at best – a multidisciplinary and multimedia learning experience crafted by and representing the participants' own expertise and creativity. *Heritage Hubs* pupils reported that making their own videos was particularly exciting and motivating. Through the videos, they could express their own views of cultural heritage, and highlight its liveliness and diversity. Sharing heritage is also an effective tool for cross-cultural and trans-national dialogue.



#### 5. Cultural heritage as a resource for cultural understanding, respect, and empathy

Feedback from *Heritage Hubs* participants indicates that socializing with different nationalities and experiencing diverse cultural heritage was a powerful experience. Stepping out of one's own comfort zone and into somebody else's shoes was, at times, emotional and overwhelming. Participants reported overcoming many pre-existing cultural prejudices, and increased respect for their peers and their culture and heritage. Transnational and cross-cultural heritage education is a valuable resource for raising awareness of cultural heritage – old and new, near and far – and drawing attention to cultural similarities and connections. It fosters and promotes mutual understanding and respect between different communities, ethnicities etc., increases cultural tolerance and supports cultural sustainability. It is a perfect tool for equipping European children and young people with a positive outlook and attitude to their rapidly changing societies.



## 6. Everyday cultural heritage education

Different kinds of education systems and national curriculums present various challenges to heritage education at schools. These challenges can present themselves in lack of resources, learning materials, time, or even interest amongst the teachers. However, it is possible to achieve lasting impact even with relatively little effort. This can be achieved by making cultural heritage a more visible – and therefore ever-present – part of daily school life through emphasis of and attention to the ordinary elements of cultural heritage that are already apparent at the school and its locality. This can be an annual visit to a local heritage; communal celebrations of different traditions; engaging minorities at the school or in the local community to teach others about their heritage; learning traditional sports or songs from other cultures, etc.

## 7. Deconstructing “our heritage”

When we – as educators, teachers or parents – talk about “our cultural heritage”, we must pay attention to who is “us”? Whose heritage do we mean by “our heritage”? There are various minorities in Europe – whether ethnic, linguistic, religious or sexual – whose voices have only recently emerged in the discourse about 'our cultural heritage'. By looking at Europe from a minority perspective, we also find silent (even silenced) cultural heritage, awareness of which is essential for the construction of a polyphonic and united Europe. The active participation of children, young people and minorities in defining what is their heritage and what cultural heritage *they* want to maintain and to pass on, is central to understanding these processes.

## 8. Cultural heritage is fun

Last but not least, learning from and about cultural heritage, considering ones' own relationship with cultural heritage is fun! Sharing heritage and engaging with cultural heritage in new and bold ways is a creative process which encourages new ways of expressing, interpreting, and presenting cultural heritage in new locations and contexts.

You can also visit [Heritage Hubs homepage](#) to find out more about the project. *Heritage Hubs* experiences can also be found at [Instagram](#) (@heritagehubs\_project), [Facebook](#) (@HeritageHubs) and [Twitter](#) (@HeritageHubs). You can also get in touch with us directly:

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