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# **NORDIC DIVERSITY CONNECTIONS IN ARTS AND CULTURE SEMINAR REPORT**

Ministry of Education and Culture



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
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# Nordic Diversity Connections in Arts and Culture Seminar Report

## **SECTION 1. Introduction**

The Nordic Diversity Connections in Arts and Culture Seminar, held in Oulu on 7 October 2025, brought together cultural practitioners, policymakers, researchers, artists, and institutional leaders from across the Nordic and Baltic region to examine the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the cultural field. The seminar formed part of the Co-Presidency of Finland and Åland of the Nordic Council of Ministers. It continued a series of regional efforts initiated over the past decade to strengthen cultural democracy, representation, and accessibility in the arts.

This report documents the day's programme, discussions, artistic interventions, and thematic sessions. It aims to offer a clear and accurate account of what took place, who contributed, and the insights that emerged from the materials shared by speakers, session organisers, note-takers, and working-group members.

## 1.1 Background: From Oslo to Oulu

The seminar builds on work that began during the Norwegian Chairmanship of the Nordic Council of Ministers (2017–2019), which launched the project “An Inclusive and Diverse Cultural Sector in the Nordics<sup>1</sup>.” A critical component of that initiative was the establishment of the Critical Friends<sup>2</sup> group, an advisory network of Black, Brown, and Indigenous arts and culture professionals from Nordic countries who provided guidance, accountability, and sectoral insight.

Since then, multiple Nordic and Baltic countries have developed new policies, research initiatives, and institutional commitments to address inequities in cultural participation, artistic labour conditions, data practices, leadership representation, and cultural rights. Across the region, however, progress has been uneven. While there have been significant advances, such as new networks, youth-driven initiatives, and stronger public discourse, structural change remains slow. The Oulu seminar was designed to revisit these efforts, assess where the region stands today, and renew collective momentum.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Seminar

The primary goal of the 2025 seminar was to create a dynamic platform for networking and collaboration among cultural actors in the Nordic region, with a specific focus on fostering understanding and promoting cultural diversity. To achieve this, the seminar was strategically designed to:

- Reconnect a fragmented field and diagnose persistent obstacles, while exploring strategies for fostering equity and breaking down systemic barriers.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://webadmin.abmd.no/english/vis/-/project-for-an-inclusive-cultural-sector-in-the-nordics>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kulturdirektoratet.no/publikasjoner/critical-friends-recommendations>

- Highlight the intersectional dimensions of diversity encompassing ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic background, and other identities by creating space for meaningful exchange, shared learning, and mutual recognition.
- Showcase practical tools and pioneering examples that position artistic practice as a vital mode of critical inquiry.
- Ultimately, catalyse a shift from isolated projects toward long-term, embedded structural change within the cultural sector.

The programme was built around dialogue as its core methodology, aiming to ground all discussions in lived experience and carry our histories, voices, and dreams into a future where everyone in the cultural landscape feels seen, heard, and valued.

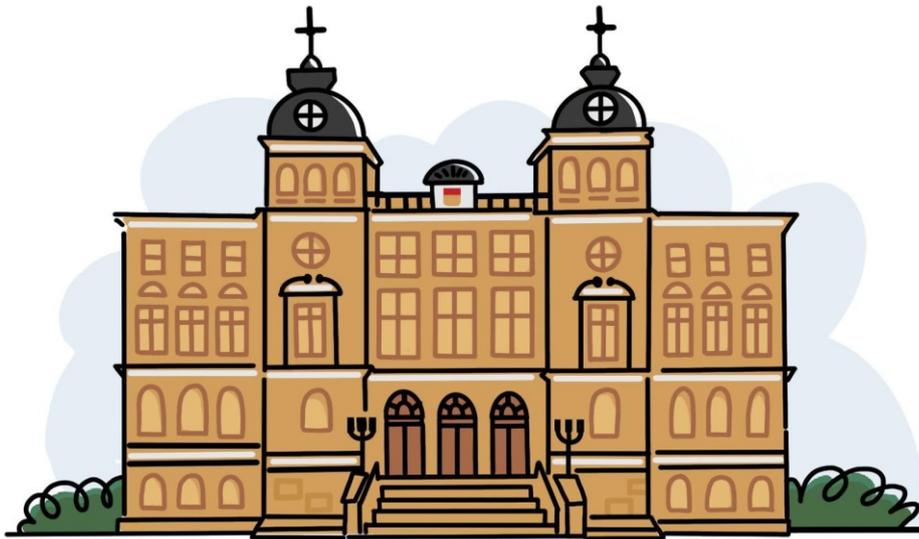


Illustration: Trilce García Cosavaliante

## **SECTION 2: Methodology and Seminar Design**

### **2.1 Organisers, Partners, and Working Group**

The Nordic Diversity Connections in Arts and Culture Seminar (Oulu, 6–8 October 2025) was organised as part of Finland and Åland's Co-Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The seminar was coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland together with Arts Promotion Centre Finland - Taiteen edistämiskeskus Taike, Oulun kaupunki - City of Oulu, Oulu2026 - European Capital of Culture 2026, the Sámi Parliament, Culture for All - Kulttuurია kaikille, and Globe Art Point and in collaboration with a cross-organisational working group of cultural professionals active in diversity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives across the Nordic-Baltic region.

The programme design was shaped in close dialogue with multiple partners, including Oulu Theatre, UrbanApa, and several networks and institutions that contributed to the content of the parallel sessions. The working group's priority was to ensure the seminar reflected current needs in the cultural field, curated themes relevant to the region, and incorporated both artistic and discursive formats.

### **2.2 Seminar Structure**

The seminar day on Tuesday, 7 October 2025, was structured to provide a coherent progression from shared framing to deep thematic exploration. The day began with plenary sessions including opening remarks, an artistic intervention, and two keynote presentations, followed by a panel discussion bringing together voices from across the Nordic-Baltic region.

In the afternoon, participants joined one of four parallel thematic sessions, each facilitated by a specialised organisation and featuring keynote addresses, participatory methods, and structured discussions. The day concluded with a Reflection Plenary facilitated

by Critical Friends Finland, who synthesised the discussions and highlighted cross-cutting themes.

## **2.3 Accessibility Plan**

Paying attention to improving the event's accessibility was a core organisational principle of the seminar. Therefore, an Accessibility Plan was developed for the event and shared with all organisers and participants to improve engagement and access for participants with diverse needs. Measures included physical accessibility of venues, speech-to-text interpretation during plenary sessions, the availability of a hearing loop, clear signage, reserved seating, accessible routes, and support for participants using mobility aids. All speakers were asked to provide a physical description when introducing themselves, and participants were encouraged to do the same during discussions.

In addition to physical accessibility, the plan emphasised communicative and social accessibility. This included providing information in advance, ensuring interpreters were present where needed, offering assistance during transitions between spaces, and creating conditions in which participants could contribute comfortably regardless of linguistic, sensory, or cognitive differences. The plan served as both a practical tool for implementation and a model for future cultural events in the Nordic region.

## **2.4 Safer Space Principles**

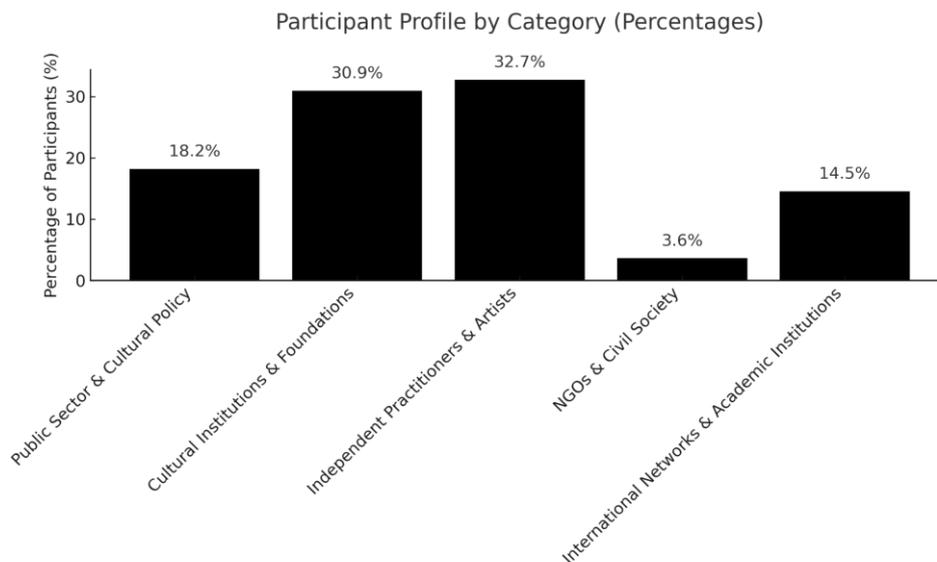
The seminar adopted a set of Safer Space Principles to create an environment grounded in mutual respect, trust, and consideration. These principles guided behaviour, communication, and interaction throughout the event and are annexed to this report in section 8.

## **2.5 Participant Profile**

Participants represented a wide range of professions. Based on registration data and the participant list, attendees included artists,

cultural producers, curators, researchers, arts administrators, educators, policymakers, activists, members of funding bodies, and representatives of cultural organisations.

Participants came from across the Nordic and Baltic countries, as well as from international contexts engaging with cultural diversity. Their professional backgrounds included visual arts, performing arts, literature, film, cultural management, community arts, arts education, and cross-sectoral cultural work. This diversity of experience contributed to rich discussions and ensured that multiple perspectives were represented across sessions.



## 2.6 Sources and Documentation for This Report

This report is based on the official seminar programme and documentation, presentation materials shared by speakers, session minutes compiled by organisers and note-takers, and additional documents provided by presenters. The content has been synthesised to provide an accurate and clear account of the seminar day, without interpretation. Wherever possible, information is drawn directly from provided documentation to ensure fidelity to the speakers' and organisers' intentions

## SECTION 3: PLENARY SESSIONS

### 3.1 Opening Session

The seminar opened in the Banquet Hall of Oulu City Hall, immediately establishing its core themes of accessibility, inclusion, and intercultural cooperation through both form and content. Live music by **Hanieh Hadizadeh** and **Hamed Jalili** created an atmosphere of cultural plurality as participants arrived.

The host, **Silva Belghiti**, a sign-language actor accompanied by interpreters, welcomed participants in both spoken and signed modalities.

The opening remarks followed, setting the tone for the morning:

**Mari-Leena Talvitie**, Minister of Science and Culture (Finland), offered a video greeting underscoring the national commitment to cultural diversity, equity, and international collaboration.

**Ari Alatossava**, Mayor of Oulu, connected the seminar's themes to Oulu's ongoing transformation as a cultural hub, including its designation as the European Capital of Culture 2026.

**Piia Rantala-Korhonen**, CEO of the Oulu2026 Foundation, spoke to the importance of embedding diversity and inclusion structurally into long-term cultural initiatives rather than treating them as isolated projects.

The emphasis on shared responsibility and cross-institutional collaboration framed the seminar not only as a meeting point but also as a continuation of long-term efforts in cultural diversity and inclusion.

## **3.2 Keynote I. - From Oslo to Oulu: A Cross-Country Perspective on Diversity Efforts and Gaps in the Nordic-Baltic Region**

**Speaker:** Sadjad Shokoohi, Independent Researcher

Sadjad Shokoohi opened the first keynote by situating the Oulu seminar within a five-year regional trajectory that began with the Norwegian Chairmanship of the Nordic Council of Ministers (2017–2019) and early collaborative efforts in Oslo. His presentation provided a wide, comparative overview of how cultural diversity and anti-racist work have developed across the Nordic-Baltic region, highlighting where progress has been made and where significant gaps remain.

At the start of the keynote, Sadjad invited participants to follow the presentation through three guiding questions, which he called “our lenses for the morning”:

- Evidence and Knowledge: What data are we using to make our decisions?
- Competence and Dialogue: How are we tackling internal resistance and building skills?
- Resources and Gaps: Are our ambitions backed by real human and financial capital?

These questions structured the keynote and emphasised the need for aligning ambition with capability.

### **Country-Specific Reflections and Conceptual Gaps**

Moving through different national contexts, Shokoohi used reflective questions to illustrate specific challenges. He identified conceptual gaps for each country: an ‘Integration Gap’ in Norway between reconciliation policy and institutional practice; a ‘Tension Gap’ in Sweden between equity goals and artistic freedom; a ‘Resource Gap’ in Estonia where ambition outpaces capacity; and an ‘Evaluation

Gap' in Finland concerning the measurement of real-world policy impact.

Through these examples, he illustrated the region's uneven progress: while new initiatives and collaborations have emerged, many structural barriers, including limited data, inconsistent leadership diversity, and gaps in institutional capacity, continue to shape the cultural landscape.

### **Shared Regional Challenges and a Forward Look**

Beyond individual national contexts, Shokoohi underscored three shared, cross-cutting challenges for the region: a 'Knowledge Gap' in data and metrics; a 'Competence and Resource Gap' between intention and institutional capacity; and the overarching 'Mainstreaming Challenge' of making inclusion a standard practice rather than a special project.

The keynote concluded with an invitation to imagine the long-term horizon of cultural policy, posing the central question: “*What changes when diversity becomes the norm, not the exception, in cultural policy?*”

This concluding question framed the day's programme as part of a broader, essential shift. The keynote consistently stressed the importance of moving from project-based interventions to genuine systemic change, underscoring that this transition requires long-term vision, sustained resources, and cross-border cooperation.

## **3.3 Keynote 2. - Why True Democracy Needs Everyone? Diversity as a Democratic Imperative**

**Speaker: Ceyda Berk-Söderblom**, Senior Project Manager and Researcher, Trans Europe Halles (TEH), European network of grassroots cultural centres, Lund, Sweden

Ceyda Berk-Söderblom presented a powerful and urgent argument, framing **diversity work as a fundamental defence of democracy itself**. Building on the previous keynote's thematic grounding, she

articulated a vision in which diversity is not a peripheral issue but the core operating system of a healthy society. Her speech was a call to action, emphasising that protecting pluralism, dismantling discriminatory structures, and ensuring the unconditional inclusion of all voices are non-negotiable for democratic survival.

The keynote was built on a central, compelling premise: true democracy is impossible without diversity. Berk-Söderblom asserted that diversity is not about "ticking boxes" but about the fundamental re-engineering of power. She defined it as:

- **The architecture of society:** The vital ecosystem that ensures everyone has the right to participate, belong, and shape the future.
- **A mandate for intersectional sustainability:** Arguing that the social fabric, not just the environment, needs protection and is strongest when woven from diverse threads.
- **The engine of imagination:** Highlighting that diverse voices are essential to spark innovative solutions and counter the shrinking of our collective political imagination.

The speech did not shy away from the scale of the challenges, acknowledging the systemic erosion of human rights and the despair it can provoke. Berk-Söderblom identified key failures:

- **Systemic Inequity:** Structures that fail to provide equal opportunities in employment, funding, and leadership for underrepresented minorities, foreign-born artists, and cultural workers.
- **Weaponisation of Identity:** The use of ethnic background, skin colour, beliefs, and other personal characteristics as tools for exclusion, racism, and dehumanisation.
- **The Decline of Belief in Democracy:** Identified as a pressing obstacle, fueled by disinformation and mistrust.

She directly confronted the prevailing toxic narratives, stating unequivocally: *"The immigrants are not the enemy!"* Instead, she

identified the real enemies as racism, hate speech, and the political systems that normalise and spread these divisive narratives.

Ceyda's keynote moved from critical analysis to a proactive blueprint for change, linking core democratic principles to diversity:

- Gender Equality means rejecting binary confinement and ensuring freedom of gender identity.
- Listening to Youth secures the future of democracy.
- Human Rights and the Rule of Law are the guarantees of a diverse democracy.
- Inclusion and Equity ensure democracy belongs to all, not just the majority.

Berk-Söderblom anchored this in stark reality, citing that over one in ten people in Finland have a native language other than the national languages, a figure that rises to one in five in Sweden, a diversity starkly absent from positions of power in cultural institutions.

Her speech culminated in a powerful, poetic call to action: a reading from the Manifesto of Change<sup>3</sup>, from the Cultural Transformation Movement. This manifesto provided a collective language of "hope, justice, and radical transformation," inviting the audience to join in the work to "repair, restore, rebuild" and "dismantle oppressive systems<sup>4</sup>."

Berk-Söderblom concluded by reaffirming that the necessary courage is already present in the collective. She positioned diversity as the undeniable *"heartbeat of democracy,"* and true democracy,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.teh.net/initiatives/the-cultural-transformation-project-and-movement/cultural-transformation-movement-manifesto-of-change/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://okm.fi/documents/1410845/249381090/Why%20True%20Democracy%20Needs%20Everyone\\_Speech%20by%20Ceyda%20Berk-Soderblom.pdf/c244b289-c230-4c72-f519-8c6f40d93c5c/Why%20True%20Democracy%20Needs%20Everyone\\_Speech%20by%20Ceyda%20Berk-Soderblom.pdf?t=1761641679412](https://okm.fi/documents/1410845/249381090/Why%20True%20Democracy%20Needs%20Everyone_Speech%20by%20Ceyda%20Berk-Soderblom.pdf/c244b289-c230-4c72-f519-8c6f40d93c5c/Why%20True%20Democracy%20Needs%20Everyone_Speech%20by%20Ceyda%20Berk-Soderblom.pdf?t=1761641679412)

by its very definition, needs everyone. This was presented not as a choice, but as the only meaningful future to invest in.

### **3.4 Panel Discussion: *Nordic-Baltic Perspectives on Diversity Work***

**Moderator: Ninos Josef** (Sweden)

**Panellists:**

**Alyssa Bittner-Gibbs**, Vice-Chair, Nordic Migrant Expert Forum and Chair, Ålands Natur och Miljö (Åland)

**Elham Fakouri**, Project Manager for events and artistic program, Nordic House (Iceland)

**Izabel Nordlund**, Cultural Affairs Adviser, Saami Council (Sápmi/Sweden)

**Gražina Sluško**, Senior Specialist at the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (Lithuania)

**Lība Bērziņa**, Art therapist, Educator, Designer, Inclusive culture promoter (Latvia)

Note: Ilannguaq Petrussen was unable to join due to a last-minute flight delay.

The moderator, Ninos Josef, a dancer, actor, diversity strategist, and previously co-vice-chair of the Critical Friends group, framed the discussion by focusing on future possibilities, setting a forward-looking tone. The panel itself modelled inclusive practice, with each member introducing themselves visually and sharing their pronouns.

Their reflections reflect the vast spectrum of the region's diversity and demonstrate how the challenges and manifestations of inclusion vary across the Nordic and Baltic states, yet remain connected by overlapping structural and historical forces.

### **3.4.1 Systemic Barriers and Slow Progress**

A central and resonant theme was the frustratingly slow pace of structural change, despite decades of dialogue. Panellists attributed this inertia to deeply rooted power structures, political short-termism, a societal preference for familiarity, and norms that systematically privilege dominant groups. They observed that diversity efforts are still often treated as one-off initiatives, echoing the "Resource and Evaluation Gaps" identified in Sadjad Shokoohi's earlier keynote, rather than being integrated into sustained, systemic transformation.

### **3.4.2 Representation, Responsibility, and the Risk of Tokenism**

The conversation critically differentiated between surface-level representation and meaningful inclusion. Panellists stressed that marginalised individuals must be involved from the very inception of programmes, policies, and artistic projects, not brought in later as symbolic figures. This tokenism, they noted, carries real personal risk, as increased visibility can provoke backlash and public hostility, a phenomenon recently witnessed in debates around Sámi representation and queer visibility in the Nordic region.

### **3.4.3 Intersectionality and Accessibility as Commitment**

The panel emphasised the necessity of recognising intersectional experiences, particularly for those facing multiple, compounded forms of discrimination, such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and racialised communities. They framed accessibility not merely as a practical checklist, but as a profound cultural commitment to creating safe, supportive, and genuinely welcoming spaces where everyone can participate fully.

#### **3.4.4 Qualitative Measures of Change**

A significant part of the discussion challenged the sector's over-reliance on quantitative metrics. Several panellists argued that while numbers can track attendance or funding, they fail to capture the quality of participation, the depth of community engagement, or the relational work that builds trust and true inclusion. The call was for the development of more nuanced, qualitative markers that reflect the lived realities of artists and cultural workers.

#### **3.4.5 Navigating Artistic Freedom and Equity**

The panel thoughtfully addressed the perennial tension between artistic freedom and equity policies. Drawing on the ongoing Swedish debate, they acknowledged concerns that diversity mandates can be perceived as limiting creative autonomy. The consensus leaned towards a balanced approach that fiercely protects artistic freedom while simultaneously recognising the arts as a crucial site for advancing equity, justice, and pluralism, ensuring both values can coexist.

#### **3.4.6 Sámi Perspectives and Cross-Border Complexities**

The Sámi experience provided a concrete example of how differing national frameworks in Finland, Norway, and Sweden create unequal access to cultural funding and recognition. These jurisdictional differences complicate unified approaches to Indigenous cultural rights and powerfully illustrate the need for strategies that respect cross-border realities and inherent Indigenous sovereignty.

#### **3.4.7 Toward Sustainable and Systemic Change**

In conclusion, the panel issued a collective call for long-term political commitment, adequate resources, and robust shared accountability frameworks. They emphasised the importance of creating environments where difficult conversations can happen safely, where marginalised individuals are supported rather than isolated, and where ongoing self-reflection is embedded in the sector's culture. Despite acknowledging the slow pace of change, the

discussion ended with a resolute sense of hope, asserting that meaningful transformation is achievable through sustained collaboration, institutional courage, and persistent, relational effort.

### **3.5 Artistic Intervention: “+12” by Ksenia Peretrushina**

As participants prepared to leave the plenary hall for lunch, the host reminded them of the participatory art installation “+12,” created by artist Ksenia Peretrushina.

Several everyday objects, including a shovel, a stack of books, a potted plant, and a small wooden bird, had been quietly placed around the hall that morning, and the attendees were invited to choose an object, carry it with them during the break, and consciously “include it” in their day.

The artist, Ksenia Peretrushina, described her work as an attempt *“to create a miniature model of an inclusive society, where the conference participants represent society/public organisations, and the objects occupying 12 places in the hall represent objects of inclusion.”*

Despite the clear invitation, the initial response was passive. Ksenia later observed: *“Participants were asked... to take the objects, bring them to lunch, and then return them to the hall. No one did this.”* The dynamic shifted only when she actively modelled the participation, walking through the lunch area with a shovel. She noted, *“After I demonstratively walked around with a shovel in my hands during lunch, many people became interested, asked questions and reacted positively, and some took part.”*

This shift from collective hesitation to engaged curiosity became an integral part of the work. It demonstrated that symbolic invitations to inclusion are often insufficient without active initiative and visible modelling. Thus, the installation itself became a profound provocation, holding up a mirror to the conference and forcing a reflection on who and what we include and how easily we overlook the quietest voices in the room.

# SECTION 4: PARALLEL SESSIONS

## 4. Parallel Sessions

### 4.0 Introduction: Deep-Dive into Thematic Streams

Following the morning's plenary sessions, the seminar transitioned into an afternoon of deep, thematic exploration. Participants dispersed into one of four parallel sessions, each focusing on a critical dimension of cultural diversity and inclusion in the Nordic-Baltic region. These sessions were designed to allow for focused dialogue and practical knowledge-sharing.

The lunch break in the City Hall's Council Chamber, with its self-service buffet and communal seating, provided an informal space for the morning's ideas to resonate and for new connections to form across disciplines and borders.

#### A Collective Opening: The TaikaBox Artistic Intervention

All four parallel sessions began not with a lecture, but with an experience. A simultaneous, 15-minute artistic intervention by **TaikaBox** (Oulu) served as a powerful, conceptual prelude to the afternoon's work.

Artists **Gaku Okata** (painting), **Osmo Hakosalo & Jussi Tuohino** (music), **John Collingswood** (digital interactivity), and **Tanja Råman** (dance) were physically located in separate rooms. Through distributed artistic technology, their individual contributions (movement, sound, drawing, and digital layering) were woven into a single, unified audiovisual artwork transmitted across all sessions.

This hybrid practice became a living metaphor for the seminar's core themes, exemplifying how distinct voices and disciplines can collaborate to create culture together and bridge mental, cultural,

and physical spaces. The intervention framed diversity work as a fundamentally distributed and collective practice, whose power derives from interconnected actions.

## **4.1 Privilege and Access in Arts Education**

**Organisers:** European Arts and Cultural Education Network

**Format:** Part I (Keynotes) + Part II (Participatory Group Work)

**Moderator:** Joonas Keskinen, Manager of the Art Testers programme at the Association of Children's Culture in Finland.

### **4.1.1 Session Focus and Objectives**

This session explored how culture and arts education can become more accessible, equitable, and empowering for all learners. It examined structural barriers in educational systems, reflected on global frameworks guiding reform, and invited participants to consider the competencies needed for inclusive cultural ecosystems.

Before the keynotes, the creator, Roni Liedes, introduced the audience to the Valve film school in Oulu, which recently received the Better World Award (2024) and Oulu's Most Oulu-Friendly Operator award (2024). The school's mission is to encourage children to express themselves creatively through the language of cinema. Roni, who also works as a media education teacher, brought up to the stage some of the students who explained in their own words what the film school means to them, highlighting that this club is the only cultural hobby they can do in Oulu since there isn't really anything else like the film school. The presentation included a short movie made by the students that showed the activities and interests they engage in. This presentation and the conversation between Liedes and the students set the emotional tone of the room, with comments emphasising the key role of artistic education, especially among youngsters and people with diverse needs.

After the presentation, the session followed with two keynote presentations offering global and research-based perspectives,

followed by participatory group work to ground these frameworks in local realities.

The guiding question for the session was:

*“What structures and practices are needed to ensure that arts education is genuinely accessible and empowering for all?”*

#### **4.1.2 Part I: Keynote Presentations**

##### **A. UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education**

**Speaker: Ke Leng**, Programme Coordinator, Cultural Policies and Development, Culture Sector, UNESCO

Ke Leng opened the session by situating arts and culture education within the global educational crisis, referencing findings from the 2022 Transforming Education Summit. He emphasised that many education systems worldwide are struggling to deliver relevant, engaging, and inclusive learning, and that culture and the arts are essential tools for addressing this.

He presented the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education, adopted in 2024 after consultations with over 2,300 global stakeholders. This framework is built on five strategic goals:

1. Ensuring equitable access
2. Contextualising learning through local cultures
3. Fostering appreciation of cultural diversity
4. Developing future-oriented skills
5. Institutionalising arts education within policy and governance systems

Ke also outlined an eight-step implementation methodology that moves from baseline assessment and stakeholder engagement to monitoring progress and sharing knowledge. He stressed that culture and arts education are not a luxury but a legal and ethical

obligation, embedded in multiple UNESCO conventions. This grounding in international law reframes arts education as a fundamental right rather than a privilege.



Illustration: Trilce García Cosavaliente

## B. Creativity and Critical Thinking in Education

**Speaker: Szilvia Németh**, Managing Director and Researcher, T-Tudok Centre for Knowledge Management and Educational Research

Szilvia Németh expanded on the UNESCO framework by focusing on creativity and critical thinking as foundational competencies for democratic participation and 21st-century employment.

Key points included:

- Research consistently shows a decline in creativity as learners progress through standardised school systems.
- Creativity is not solely an academic skill; it is a behavioural, social, and civic competence.
- Educational systems must transition “from producing job-seekers to nurturing job-creators.”

- Effective creative learning environments, such as the “high functioning classroom”, depend on authenticity, flexibility, collaboration, and reflective pedagogy.
- OECD research demonstrates that countries that perform well in creativity have systematically embedded it in curricula, assessments, teacher training, and school leadership.

Szilvia’s presentation reinforced that arts education reform must be systemic, not additive: creativity cannot flourish if confined to extracurricular activities or isolated projects.

Together, the two keynote presentations positioned arts and culture education as a transformative force in rebuilding equitable, inclusive educational ecosystems locally and globally.

### **4.1.3 Part II: Participatory Group Work and Dialogue Themes**

In the second part of the session, facilitators guided small groups to reflect on the keynotes and discuss their application within Nordic and Baltic contexts. The dialogue revealed several key themes and challenges:

- **Structural Barriers and Spatial Justice:** Participants highlighted how physical distance and rurality in the Nordic region create significant access gaps. They discussed the need to move beyond centralised models and develop mobile, digital, and community-embedded solutions to achieve true spatial equity.
- **The Role of Educators and Teacher Training:** A strong consensus emerged on the need to better equip teachers. Discussions focused on the lack of training in participatory and creative methodologies, and the need for continuous professional development to help educators implement the principles of the UNESCO framework.
- **Beyond the School Gates:** Participants emphasised that empowering arts education requires connecting schools with

the wider cultural ecosystem, such as museums, artists, and community centres. Forging sustainable partnerships between schools and cultural institutions was identified as a key success factor.

- **Challenging the "Talent" Paradigm:** Groups reflected on how the notion of "innate talent" in the arts creates exclusion. They advocated for a pedagogical shift towards valuing process, experimentation, and critical thinking over technical mastery, thereby making arts education more inclusive.
- **Curriculum and Assessment Pressures:** The tension between fostering creativity and meeting the demands of standardised curricula and assessments was a recurring topic. Participants explored ways to integrate arts and creativity as cross-curricular competencies, rather than treating them as separate subjects.

#### **4.1.4 Concluding Reflections**

The session concluded by synthesising the global vision of the keynotes with the grounded challenges identified by practitioners. There was a clear sense that while frameworks like UNESCO's provide a crucial roadmap, their implementation requires context-specific strategies, political will, and sustained investment.

The participatory dialogue underscored that ensuring privilege does not dictate access necessitates a systemic approach: reforming teacher education, rethinking partnerships, and embedding creative competencies at the heart of educational policy. The session reinforced that making arts education genuinely inclusive is not just an educational reform. Still, a democratic imperative, echoing the morning's keynote call for a cultural sector that reflects the full 'architecture of society.

## 4.2 Data, Research, and Cultural Policy

**Organisers:** Centre for Cultural Policy Research (Cupore)

**Moderator:** Aleksandra Dunaeva, Independent Researcher, Theatre Educator, Diversity Bridge Builder.

**Speakers:**

**Marja Alastalo**, University Lecturer, Deputy Head of Department. Department of Social Sciences, University of Eastern Finland

**Malin Weijmer**, PhD, Senior Project Manager, Kulturanalys Norden

### 4.2.1 Session Focus and Objectives

This session critically examined the fundamental frameworks used to measure cultural diversity in the Nordics, questioning how administrative data systems can both reveal and conceal inequality. It grappled with the tension between the need for quantitative evidence for policy and the potential harm caused by rigid, state-defined categories that often misrepresent lived identities. The Timeout Dialogue <sup>5</sup>Method emphasised listening, equal participation, and non-competitive conversation, allowing participants to explore sensitive questions with care.

Guiding questions included:

- What information is essential for cultural policy?
- Which proxies are acceptable, and where do they fail?
- What safeguards (GDPR, consent, governance) make sensitive data legitimate?
- What can the Sámi CARE and SODA principles teach about data sovereignty?
- What could Nordic collaboration standardise, from shared definitions to question modules and reporting formats?

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.timeoutdialogue.fi/whats-timeout-about/>

## **4.2.2 Part I: Framing Presentations**

### **A. Register-Based Knowledge Production**

Marja Alastalo introduced the Nordic register-based population data system, tracing its origins to the 1960s and its consolidation in Finland by 1990. She explained that register data is designed primarily to serve administrative needs, not analytical ones. It reflects the perspectives of bureaucratic systems, differs across administrative and statistical contexts, may contain gaps, and is shaped by changes in legislation, ICT systems, and institutional routines.

She highlighted that administrative categories, such as mother tongue, citizenship, or parental birthplace, are not neutral. They shape access to rights, services, and recognition, carrying political and symbolic weight.

Examples discussed included:

- Foreign-language speaker: Only one mother tongue can be recorded, making multilingual identities invisible.
- Foreign background: A category inherited from parental birthplace, unaffected by naturalisation, reinforcing the permanence of othering.

Drawing on Evelyn Ruppert's concept of double identification, she contrasted census systems, where categories are visible and contestable, with register-based systems, where categories remain invisible and difficult to challenge.

### **B. Measuring Cultural Diversity**

Malin Weijmer provided an overview of Kulturanalys Norden's mandate as the Nordic knowledge centre for cultural policy. She outlined key features of the Nordic cultural policy model, including universal access, decentralisation, artistic freedom, and strong, publicly funded institutions.

She summarised findings from earlier Nordic studies, including:

- Representation of employees with “foreign background” increased in cultural institutions, but not at the pace of population change.
- Museums show the lowest diversity; performing arts institutions show the highest.
- Western European and English-speaking migrants are overrepresented.

She also presented gender equality data and insights from a recent Nordic survey on threats and harassment against artists and authors. The survey showed high levels of exposure to threats, violence, and harassment, with gendered and age-based differences. Data protection challenges under GDPR were highlighted, particularly regarding sensitive personal data, small sample sizes, and re-identification risks.

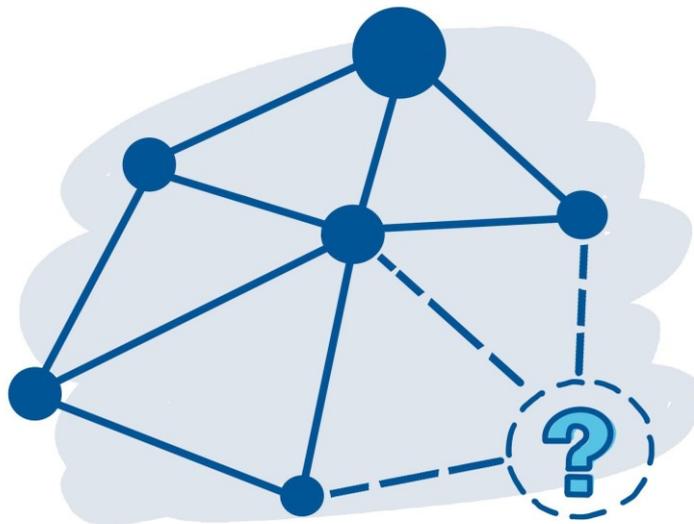


Illustration: Trilce García Cosavaliante

### **4.2.3 Part II: Dialogue Themes**

The participatory dialogue brought together municipal cultural workers, researchers, artists, producers, and international participants. Key themes and implications emerged:

#### **A. The Problem with Proxies: Lived Experience vs. Administrative Labels**

Participants expressed frustration with the fundamental mismatch between administrative categories and lived identities. Categories like “foreign background” were seen as social labels that fail to reflect individual realities, erasing mixed and multilingual identities. This led to discussions on how to measure structural change and artistic value with methods that go beyond reductive demographics.

#### **B. Towards Ethical Data Practices: Co-design and Sovereignty**

A strong consensus called for identity categories to be co-designed with the communities they describe to prevent misrepresentation and harm. Suggestions included self-identification exercises and creative facilitation. This approach aligns with principles of Indigenous data sovereignty (e.g., Sámi CARE and SODA principles), shifting the paradigm from data extraction to community-led data governance.

#### **C. Confronting the Human Barriers: Bias, Privilege, and Fear**

Participants identified that building trustworthy data systems requires acknowledging institutional bias and implementing independent oversight. They also noted that privilege often goes unnamed, with white participants avoiding naming whiteness, while racialised individuals cannot avoid race. Confronting this avoidance was seen as necessary for meaningful structural change.

#### **D. The Power of Narrative: Complementing Numbers with Story**

The need to balance quantitative data with qualitative narratives was strongly emphasised. Participants highlighted the power of community voices, storytelling, and arts-based methods to convey the human realities behind the statistics and influence policymakers.

#### **4.2.4 Closing Reflections**

The session concluded that advancing equitable cultural policy requires a dual approach: first, critically reforming our data systems to be more responsive to community-defined identities and needs, and second, persistently complementing quantitative data with qualitative, narrative evidence. The path forward, as reflected by participants, lies in deeper cross-Nordic collaboration to develop shared ethical standards, such as standardised diversity disclaimers and community review processes, ensuring that the pursuit of measurement does not perpetuate misrepresentation or cause harm.

### **4.3 Leadership, Power, and Gatekeeping in the Arts**

**Organisers:** Globe Art Point & Culture for All Service

**Moderator:** **Anna Litewka-Anttolainen**, Project Manager at Oulu2026 Foundation and Diversity Agent.

**Speakers:**

**Amalie Ørum Hansen**, Executive Director, ASSITEJ Denmark

**Nicol Savinetti**, Chairperson and Founder, IMMART, Denmark

**Alex Kollerová**, Project Manager, Globe Art Point (GAP)

#### **4.3.1 Session Focus and Objectives**

This session critically examined the invisible architectures of power within the arts, exploring how leadership, organisational culture, and daily practices act as gatekeeping mechanisms. Moving beyond formal titles, the discussion framed leadership as a distributed practice that directly influences whose art is seen, whose voices are heard, and who can access resources.

Guided by the central question: “How can we challenge traditional structures of power and gatekeeping in the arts?” the session used the Timeout Dialogue Method to create a space for candid conversation about discrimination, resistance, and institutional change.

### **4.3.2 Part I: Keynote Dialogue – Rethinking Leadership from Within and Without**

Rita Paqvalén, Executive Director of Culture for All, opened by asserting that power and gatekeeping are woven into the very fabric of artistic and institutional life. She set the tone for the dialogue by reminding participants that everyone holds some form of power and that those in gatekeeping positions must learn to wield it with conscious intent.

The keynote dialogue featured Amalie Ørum Hansen and Nicol Savinetti, offering two distinct yet complementary perspectives shaped by their work in the Nordic Network of Non-Critical Leadership.

Amalie Ørum Hansen focused on the internal work of institutional transformation. She argued that sustainable change requires collective leadership and strong networks, rather than relying on solitary figures. Her reflections highlighted the need to move beyond diversity branding and instead dismantle the unspoken structural norms, routines, and hierarchies that perpetuate inequality. This, she noted, requires building new organisational muscles for vulnerability, psychological safety, and navigating difficult conversations. She challenged the sector to redefine narrow, exclusionary concepts of “professionalism” that often sideline valuable contributions from amateur, care-driven, and youth-centred practices.

Nicol Savinetti grounded her insights in lived experience and strategic activism. She reframed her position as an “outsider”, coming from a non-arts background and a racialised family, as a source of strength and clarity, providing a sharp understanding of discrimination and the courage required to confront it. She detailed the structural barriers encountered while building IMMART in Denmark, advocating for the use of human-rights-based frameworks as practical tools for holding institutions accountable. For Nicol, networks are not just professional but essential ecosystems for survival, providing the belonging and safety that formal structures often fail to offer.

### **4.3.3 Participant Dialogue: The Anatomy of Inclusive Leadership**

The keynote dialogue sparked a deep reflection among participants, who identified both the core components and the significant obstacles to inclusive leadership.

Participants agreed that inclusive leadership begins with self-awareness, particularly the ability to recognise and manage one's own defensive reactions to critique. It also demands the intentional use of one's platform to amplify others and the practice of team solidarity to collectively address discrimination. The group offered a nuanced view on hierarchy, suggesting the problem is not the structure itself, but its exclusionary application. Ultimately, they stressed that inclusion must be practical, visible in everyday operational adjustments like flexible scheduling to meet diverse accessibility needs.

When identifying obstacles, the dialogue pointed to a pervasive lack of institutional self-awareness, where the subjective notion of "quality" can be weaponised to justify exclusionary decisions. Other significant barriers included restrictive language policies, closed networks in hiring and programming, and the unequal distribution of artistic freedom. A critical challenge identified was the tendency towards surface-level inclusion that focuses on diversifying audiences while failing to transform the demographics and culture of staff and leadership.

### **4.3.4 Part 2: Practical Framework for Systemic Change**

The session's second half, led by Alex Kollerová of Globe Art Point (GAP), shifted from theory to practice with the introduction of the Diversity Training Module: Towards Systemic Change<sup>6</sup>. This Erasmus+ project outcome was presented not as a rigid checklist, but as a developmental roadmap for organisations at various stages of their inclusion journey.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.globeartpoint.fi/towards-systemic-change-diversity-training-module-for-cultural-leaders/>

The module guides institutions through a progressive process:

- **Foundation Actions:** Initial stages focus on mapping current practices, establishing basic commitments, and implementing foundational accessibility measures.
- **Advanced Systemic Actions:** Later stages involve the transformative work of overhauling core functions, including governance, recruitment, programming, and evaluation.

To ensure comprehensive coverage, the framework is organised around key operational areas: from Recruitment and Programming to Governance and Monitoring & Evaluation. A core component is a continuous evaluation cycle, recommending institutions assess progress every 6–12 months using a mix of demographic data, community insights, and peer learning.

#### **4.3.5 Dialogues on the Realities of Implementation**

The presentation of the framework led to a candid exchange about the real-world challenges of implementation. Participants shared personal stories of being “the only one” in a room, highlighting the loneliness and emotional labour involved in driving change from within. They pointed to internal barriers such as defensive team reactions and a chronic lack of resources dedicated to DEI work.

The discussion also identified systemic hurdles, including rigid institutional policies, hierarchical constraints, and a fundamental lack of preparedness, often evidenced by the absence of clear action plans for addressing discrimination or harm. In response to these challenges, participants collectively suggested protective and sustainable practices, such as developing clear safety and discrimination protocols, ensuring team rather than individual responsibility for responding to incidents, and maintaining evolving, flexible safe-space guidelines.



Illustration: Trilce García Cosavaliante

#### **4.3.6 Closing Reflections: Leadership as an Ongoing Practice**

Anna Litewka-Anttolainen brought the session to a close by synthesising the day's insights. She emphasised that inclusive leadership is not a final destination but a continuous, demanding practice. It requires structural analysis, emotional resilience, shared learning, and sustained institutional accountability.

Participants expressed deep appreciation for the session's honesty, valuing the unique combination of high-level conceptual discussion and the concrete, practical toolkit offered by the Diversity Training Module. The session ended with a renewed consensus that meaningful inclusion is a long-term commitment, requiring dedicated time, resources, and a structured approach to transform the arts ecosystem truly.

## 4.4 Equitable and Accessible Arts Funding

**Moderator: Emma Beverley**, Director, HIAP – Helsinki International Artis.

**Speakers:**

**Mika Romanus**, Director, The Swedish Arts Grants Committee

**Henri Terho**, Head of Arts and Culture Funding, Arts Promotion Centre Finland

### 4.4.1 Session Focus and Objectives

This session examined how public arts funding systems across the Nordic region can become more equitable, accessible, and reflective of diverse artistic realities. Facilitator Emma Beverley opened the session by welcoming participants, explaining that the discussion would be recorded and anonymised, and inviting attendees to share examples from their own national contexts. The emphasis was on understanding not only technical barriers to access but the broader social, linguistic, and structural factors shaping who has access to apply for and ultimately receive public cultural funding.

### 4.4.2 Keynote Presentations: Nordic Funding Models in Transition

#### A. The Swedish Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärnämnden)

Representing the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, Mika introduced the agency’s mandate to support the economic and social conditions of professional artists through a comprehensive grant system grounded in the arm’s-length principle. The agency distributes working and long-term grants, project grants, travel and international exchange funding, assistant grants, and various awards.

He highlighted several challenges related to accessibility:

- Uncertainty over who qualifies as a “professional artist”
- Barriers affecting who feels welcome or legitimate in applying

- Language limitations in communication and application materials
- Digital accessibility issues within the application system
- A clustered applicant profile, typically a highly educated, 33-year-old woman living in central Stockholm

Though 27% of grant recipients were born outside Sweden, representation across world regions remains uneven. Efforts underway include adapting language, broadening communication strategies, collaborating with community partners, and building long-term relationships with underrepresented groups.

### **B. Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike): Structural Reform and Challenges**

Henry provided an overview of Taike's national and regional responsibilities, which include artist grants, project funding, regional support, organisational funding, festival grants, and statutory artist pensions. Taike processes more than 15,000 applications annually, awarding just over 2,000 grants, while navigating significant national funding cuts.

He highlighted key challenges:

- Unequal access for applicants whose primary language is not Finnish or Swedish.
- Lower success rates for these applicants.
- A long-standing decision-making structure dominated by professional associations, which can reinforce existing networks.

Henry then outlined Taike's major structural reform, legislated in 2025. The reform introduces:

- A Council of Arts and Culture consisting of 8-12 government-appointed members.

- A Pool of Experts of approximately 200 individuals, selected through open calls and nominations.
- Assessment panels drawn from this pool will evaluate applications and develop recommendations.

The intention is to preserve peer review while improving diversity, expertise, transparency, and access. However, there was no concrete plan on how this would be achieved. A new digital platform will operate in Finnish, Swedish, and English, and Henry expressed a long-term ambition to enable decisions in English, despite current legal limitations.

#### **4.4.3 Key Concepts Shaping Equity and Access**

The speakers introduced several concepts to frame the session:

- Inclusive: recognising all artistic practices and removing unnecessary barriers
- Diverse: ensuring assessment panels reflect a range of perspectives and backgrounds
- Equity: offering differentiated forms of support to ensure equal opportunity
- Accessibility: making systems easy for all applicants to navigate

These definitions created a shared starting point for the dialogue.

#### **4.4.4 Dialogue Themes: Barriers, Opportunities, and Good Practice**

##### **A. Centralisation, Peer Review, and Political Risk**

Participants raised concerns about whether concentrating final approval authority in a government-appointed council could increase vulnerability to political influence. Henry clarified that peer-

review panels would remain central, with the Council expected to ratify rather than override expert recommendations.

### **B. Gatekeeping in Small Art Ecosystems**

Participants discussed the challenges of working within tight professional networks, especially in relatively small art fields such as Finland. Suggestions included open calls for assessors and the inclusion of international experts, both of which Taike intends to adopt.

### **C. Linguistic and Digital Accessibility**

Barriers were identified in both countries. Sweden continues to address digital accessibility issues, while Finland faces a significant linguistic access gap, with foreign-language applicants experiencing lower success rates. Participants also asked about alternative formats such as video or sign-language submissions; these are currently restricted by administrative law.

### **D. Regional and Cultural Representation**

Participants sought information about regional imbalances within Finland. While foreign-language applicants are concentrated in Helsinki, Henry noted that more detailed data is being developed.

### **E. DEI Competence and Assessors**

A discussion emerged around the need for assessors to have competencies in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Participants emphasised that DEI competence is a skill, not an optional awareness. Henry noted that the concept of “education” in this context can sometimes trigger defensiveness, though shared reflection and competence-building remain essential.

### **F. International Perspective and Learning**

Mika highlighted Sweden’s collaborations with local authorities and Nordic peers, while Henry referred to lessons drawn from Norway

and Canada as particularly influential for Finland's ongoing reform process.

#### **4.4.5 Closing Reflections: Visioning the Next Ten Years**

In closing, Henry expressed hope that conversations about equity would remain active and shift towards centring artists' lived experiences rather than relying solely on statistics. Mika highlighted the importance of demonstrating measurable progress while acknowledging that new challenges will continue to arise. Emma Beverley concluded by underscoring the importance of robust, transparent data for evaluating long-term improvements in equity and access.

The session reinforced that building more equitable arts funding systems requires long-term reform, intentional trust-building, cross-border learning, and sustained institutional courage.



Illustration: Trilce García Cosavaliente

## **4.5 Collaborative Futures: Building an Equitable Creative Economy in Arts and Tech**

**Organisers:** Creative Net / Arts Promotion Centre Finland

**Moderator:** **Katri Halonen**, PhD, Cultural Management Educator and Researcher at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.

**Speakers:**

**Marja Konttinen**, Expert Advisor in the LUME – Creatives in Web3 age (ESF+) project

**Ali Abaday**, Visiting Expert in the KUVATA Expanded Field of Visual Artists' Income and Work (ESF+) project

### **4.5.1 Session Focus and Objectives**

This session explored how collaboration between arts and technology can build a more diverse, sustainable, and forward-looking creative economy. Coordinated by Creative Net, Finland's national coordinator for the ESF+ theme of Creative and Cultural Innovation Expertise, the session used two funded projects, LUME and KUVATA, as case studies. The dialogue, facilitated by Katri Halonen, critically examined the role of games, Web3, and AI in shaping future cultural participation and economic models.

### **4.5.2 Keynote 1: Games as Cultural Ecosystems (LUME Project)**

Maria Konttinen presented the LUME project, framing games as significant cultural, social, and educational environments.

- **Games as Cultural Tools:** Drawing on Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, she positioned play as a fundamental human activity, with modern games serving as global social spaces where community, heritage, and art converge.
- **Active Storytelling and Learning:** Unlike passive cultural consumption, games require active participation, ethical decision-making, and emotional engagement, serving as

powerful platforms for “playful learning” that fosters 21st-century skills.

- **Cultural Integration and Reach:** Concrete examples, such as the Finnish National Gallery’s Fortnite collaboration and Independence Day events in Roblox, demonstrated the massive global reach possible when culture is experienced, not merely observed.
- **The Need for Game Literacy:** Konttinen emphasised that understanding game mechanics and digital systems is an increasingly essential civic and professional skill for cultural operators.

### **4.5.3 Keynote 2: Web3 and New Economic Models (KUVATA Project)**

Ali Abaday outlined the evolution from Web1 (static) and Web2 (platform-owned) to Web3 (decentralised) and its implications for artists.

- **The Shift to Decentralisation:** He explained Web3’s core promise: moving from a platform-owned internet to one where users own their data and assets via blockchain technology.
- **NFTs and Smart Contracts:** These technologies enable verifiable digital ownership and potential long-term revenue through resale royalties automated by smart contracts.
- **Critical Challenges:** Abaday acknowledged significant hurdles, including inconsistent royalty enforcement, regulatory gaps, market volatility, and the risk of repeating Web2’s exploitative patterns.
- **A Call for Early Engagement:** He urged the cultural sector to experiment and help shape ethical frameworks, drawing a parallel to the early pioneers of the web.

#### **4.5.4 Facilitated Dialogue: Opportunities and Ethical Risks**

A playful introductory round led into a deep dialogue facilitated by Katri Halonen, surfacing key tensions and considerations:

- **Gamification vs. Cultural Respect:** Participants debated the balance between using game mechanics to engage new audiences and the risk of trivialising heritage. Maria Konttinen argued that emotional connection and engagement can revitalise culture, citing the example of Tuvalu creating a digital nation to preserve its identity against rising sea levels.
- **AI as a Tool, Not a Creator:** Discussions affirmed that human creativity, with its emotional context and imperfect "flaws," remains irreplaceable. Ali Abaday stressed that AI is a tool shaped by human intention.
- **Redefining Success and Access:** The need for new metrics for virtual engagement was highlighted, alongside concerns about digital divides. Conversely, the potential for free mobile games to offer new forms of accessible and intergenerational participation was noted.
- **Structural Risks and Sectoral Agency:** Critical concerns were raised about AI companies training models on copyrighted works without permission. A strong consensus emerged that Europe must develop its own ethical frameworks and that the cultural sector must actively co-create the norms of digital spaces to protect fair rights and cultural values.

#### **4.5.5 Closing and Resources**

Creative Net concluded by sharing practical tools like multilingual sparring cards and idea canvases. The session ended with a shared appreciation for the frank discussion and a reinforced sense of urgency for the creative sector to proactively engage with technological change, ensuring it develops in an equitable and sustainable manner.

## 4.6 Afternoon Plenary

Following the parallel sessions, a coffee break in the Banquet Hall Foyer provided space for rest and informal conversation. At 15:30, participants reconvened in the Banquet Hall for the day's final collective moment: the Reflection Plenary facilitated by Critical Friends Finland (CFF). This session was designed to synthesize the day's discussions, identify cross-cutting themes, and ground the proceedings in system-level insights drawn from lived experience.

### 4.6.1 Reflection Plenary. Critical Friends Finland (CFF)

**Facilitator:**

**Kemê Pellicer**, polydisciplinary artist and poet, who also works with facilitation, education, and consultancy.

Chairperson of CFF.

**Panellists:**

**Isa Hukka** does poetry, facilitation, and crip/rampa philosophy. **Julian Owusu**, dancer and spoken word artist, educator. **Monica Gathuo**, researcher of women of colour's digital media use and co-founder of ARMA (Anti-Racism Media Activist Alliance). **Ritni Ráste Pieski**, Deanu river sámi storyteller, drag artist, choreographer, dancer and performer. **Päiviö Maurice Omwami**, curator and philosopher who works as an exhibition curator at the Finnish Museum of Photography.

The seminar's final plenary, facilitated by Critical Friends Finland (CFF), served as a final grounding of the preceding discussions. CFF an advisory group of eight arts and culture practitioners with diverse expertise, had been a key sounding board during the seminar's planning, making this session a unique, reflective capstone bridging policy frameworks with practical challenges.

Moderator Kemê Pellicer opened a dialogic space grounded in principles of visibility and consent. Each panellist introduced themselves visually and shared pronouns.

## **4.6.2 Key Themes and Reflection**

The conversation unfolded around several intertwined themes that have shaped diversity work in the Nordic cultural field. The panellists spoke from their own experience, articulating both the progress achieved and the persistent structural barriers.

### **A. Slow Progress and Structural Resistance**

Panellists noted that despite years of initiatives, progress remains incremental. They attributed this to entrenched power imbalances, cultural norms favouring conformity, political short-termism, and societal resistance to discomfort and change.

### **B. Beyond Numbers: The Need for Qualitative Change**

A strong emphasis was placed on moving beyond surface-level metrics. Meaningful diversity work, they argued, requires qualitative measures like community connection, co-creation, and shared decision-making, which cannot be captured by attendance numbers alone.

### **C. Representation vs. Tokenism**

The panel differentiated between visibility and power, urging institutions to involve marginalised communities from the outset of projects, not merely in symbolic roles.

### **D. Accessibility as Collective Care**

From a disability arts perspective, accessibility was framed not as a technical requirement but as an ongoing collective practice rooted in care that ultimately benefits everyone.

### **E. Intersectionality and the Risk of Flattening Identity**

CFF highlighted the multiplicity within diversity work, cautioning against treating marginalised groups as monolithic and stressing the need to recognise intersectional identities.

## **F. Emotional Labour, Discomfort, and Vulnerability**

Panellists discussed the emotional weight carried by racialised and marginalised arts workers, emphasising that embracing discomfort and vulnerability is a necessary component of institutional transformation.

## **G. Nordic-Baltic Specificities**

The discussion explored the region's differing contexts, calling for a shared vocabulary, long-term relationship-building, and context-sensitive approaches.

## **H. The Risk of Backlash**

The panel acknowledged that increased visibility can provoke hate speech and political resistance, citing recent experiences of Sámi and racialised communities.

### **4.6.3 Concluding Reflections and Forward Momentum**

In closing, the panel translated critique into a clear call for action. They urged a move from dialogue to measurable steps, emphasising the need for concrete goals, shared accountability mechanisms, sustained monitoring, and transparent communication. They emphasised that meaningful change is possible and must begin immediately, especially when those with power choose to act decisively.

The plenary concluded by reaffirming the unique role of the arts in imagining more equitable futures. While acknowledging the emotionally demanding nature of the work, the discussion underscored its indispensability. The session left a powerful reminder that meaningful change is a continuous process and requires courage, critical reflection, and a collective commitment to embed these principles into the very fabric of cultural work.

## **4.7 Closing Remarks and Evening Programme**

### **4.7.1 Closing Remarks: A Call to Sustained Action**

**Minna Karvonen**, Acting Director General of the Department for Art and Cultural Policy at the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, brought the formal seminar proceedings to a close. Following the Critical Friends Finland plenary, her remarks served as a formal commitment from the host institution. Karvonen expressed profound gratitude to all speakers, organisers, and participants, framing the day not as a conclusion but as a catalyst for continued Nordic-Baltic collaboration.

She emphasized that the day's dialogues reinforced the non-negotiable need for persistent, long-term effort to advance diversity, accessibility, and cultural rights. Underlining the Ministry's commitment, she pledged support for the structures necessary to ensure this work continues to evolve and deepen beyond the seminar itself.

### **4.7.2 An Evening of Cultural Resonance and Connection**

The seminar day transitioned into a warm and convivial evening reception hosted by the City of Oulu in the Banquet Hall. This gathering provided a vital space for participants to deepen conversations, forge new connections, and reflect on the day's intensity in a relaxed atmosphere.

The reception was elevated by a live performance from **Ulla Pirttijärvi & Ulda**. Their contemporary Sámi music, weaving traditional yoik with acoustic instrumentation, created a powerful, living dialogue between Northern cultural heritage and its modern expressions. This performance served as a resonant, artistic bookend to a day dedicated to discussing the very nature of inclusive cultural identity.

### **4.7.3 Optional Cultural Visits: Embedding Learning in Local Context**

For participants remaining in Oulu on Wednesday, 8 October, an optional programme of cultural visits was offered. These curated visits to local institutions provided tangible insights into how Oulu's cultural sector operationalises commitments to accessibility, participation, and community engagement, grounding the seminar's theoretical discussions in the local context. (Please see the official programme for detailed venue information.)

## **SECTION 5: Synthesis of Cross-Cutting Insights**

The Nordic Diversity Connections seminar brought together a wide range of voices from across the Nordic and Baltic regions, policymakers, artists, cultural workers, researchers, and institutional representatives, creating a space where structural challenges and practical approaches could be addressed in a shared context. Although each session had a distinct focus, the collective discourse revealed a set of powerful, recurring themes that illustrate both the shared challenges and the directions in which the region is moving.

### **5.1 Slow Structural Progress and the Persistence of Barriers**

Across the plenary and the panel discussion, speakers repeatedly noted that despite years of dialogue, policy development, and pilot initiatives, **structural change remains slow**. The morning's first keynote underscored regional discrepancies in data and capacity, while panellists gave this analysis a human face, describing the realities of political short-termism, societal resistance, and the unequal burden of advocacy placed on marginalised individuals. This was powerfully reaffirmed by Critical Friends Finland, who highlighted the emotional labour required to dismantle entrenched power structures.

## 5.2 The Democratic Imperative: Beyond symbolic inclusion

Ceyda Berk-Söderblom's keynote introduced a crucial dimension that resonated across later discussions: the framing of **diversity as a democratic necessity**, not an optional value or symbolic gesture. She emphasised that democracy depends on everyone having the power to shape cultural life and warned against treating diversity efforts as detached from broader societal developments. Her reflections on intersectional sustainability, shifting political climates, and declining trust in democratic institutions provided an important context for understanding why structural change in the cultural sector is urgent. The themes raised in her keynote reappeared throughout the day in debates on artistic freedom, tokenism, and leadership, reinforcing that cultural inclusion is a barometer for democratic health.

## 5.3 From Visibility to Power: The Risk of Tokenism

A recurring theme across sessions was the difference between **visibility** and **meaningful influence**. Discussion on the panel highlighted that representation often remains symbolic rather than structural, and that this can place individuals in vulnerable positions without adequate support. Multiple sessions stressed that genuine diversity requires ensuring co-ownership, involving communities from the earliest stages of planning and co-creating processes.

## 5.4 Data, Knowledge, and the Limits of Measurement

The Data and Research session deepened the conversation by examining how cultural diversity is documented, or not documented, across the region. Participants reflected on the limitations of administrative categories, the invisibility of lived identity within register-based systems, and the need for **qualitative methods** to complement quantitative indicators. This echoed Sadjad Shokoohi's call for stronger evidence-based practices and the CFF plenary's emphasis on understanding the texture and depth of community engagement rather than focusing solely on counts or percentages.

## 5.5 Leadership, Accountability, and Organisational Culture

Several sessions emphasised that **sustainable change requires leadership cultures that recognise their own power and foster psychological safety**. The Leadership and Gatekeeping session highlighted the importance of emotional competence, openness to feedback, and transparency in decision-making. Participants repeatedly noted that inclusive leadership requires shared responsibility rather than relying on individuals from marginalised groups to drive change alone. This was echoed during the Reflection Plenary, where panellists stressed accountability, long-term commitment, and team-based responses to incidents of harm or discrimination.

## 5.6 Accessibility as a Structural and Cultural Principle

Throughout the day, accessibility was constantly framed as **a foundational practice embedded in every aspect of ethical cultural work**, not an optional add-on. This shifted the concept from a technical checklist to a philosophy aimed at creating spaces where everyone can participate fully and which, in doing so, benefit the entire ecosystem. Speakers emphasised that accessibility benefits everyone by reducing barriers, improving communication, and fostering more equitable participation. The CFF plenary reinforced that accessibility is connected to collective care, relational work, and ongoing learning.

## 5.7 Artistic Practices as Modes of Inquiry

Artistic interventions, including “+12” and the TaikaBox distributed performances, helped illustrate how creative practices can reveal blind spots, model new ways of relating, and challenge assumptions about inclusion. These interventions supported the idea that the arts themselves are **tools for exploring structural dynamics**, emotional responses, and new forms of collaboration, a theme that was also present in sessions on games, digital tools, and the creative economy.

## 5.8 Digital Futures, Technology, and Emerging Inequalities

The session on collaborative futures highlighted that technological developments are creating both opportunities and new inequities. Emerging platforms such as games, AI systems, and Web3 tools offer avenues for audience engagement and new income models. At the same time, they introduce risks related to data extraction, digital divides, and bias. Participants expressed a shared desire for the cultural sector to play an active role in shaping technological norms, ensuring that digital transformations support, rather than undermine, cultural equity.

## 5.9 Intersectionality and Regional Specificities

Intersectionality surfaced repeatedly as **a framework for understanding how identities such as race, disability, indigeneity, class, gender, and migration background interact and influence experiences within cultural systems.** At the same time, speakers noted that these issues manifest differently across national contexts. For example, Sámi cultural rights and governance structures vary significantly across Finland, Norway, and Sweden, complicating the development of unified strategies. Meanwhile, Baltic panellists described distinct histories and ongoing challenges that differ from those in the Nordic countries.

## 5.10 Shared Momentum and the Need for Long-Term Commitment

Despite acknowledging the slowness of institutional change, participants expressed a strong commitment to continuing the work. Many noted that this seminar served as a moment of reconnection after years of fragmented efforts across the region. The Reflection Plenary, in particular, emphasised that while change may be incremental, **shared accountability, community-led processes, and long-term strategies** are key to transforming diversity from an exception into a norm.

## 6: Conclusion

The Nordic Diversity Connections seminar wove together a rich tapestry of analytical frameworks, lived experience, and practical tools, creating a comprehensive portrait of the current state and future aspirations for the Nordic-Baltic cultural field. Throughout the day, participants explored how structural barriers, institutional cultures, and evolving societal contexts shape the conditions of cultural participation and artistic production. The discussions showed clearly that, while progress has been made, sustained, **long-term commitment is required** to translate policy ambitions into everyday practice.

The plenary sessions offered both analytical frameworks and grounded reflections: from cross-country comparisons and democratic imperatives to lived realities of marginalisation and representation. The parallel sessions allowed participants to examine specific themes, such as arts education, data practices, leadership, and the creative economy, each addressing different dimensions of systemic change. Together, these sessions highlighted **the need for intersectional approaches**, centring lived experience, stronger leadership accountability, collective responsibility, accessible structures, **and the integration of qualitative and community-rooted knowledge**. The different reflections echoed a wider sentiment expressed throughout the seminar: **meaningful change requires long-term investment, trust-building, and the courage to examine and reshape existing structures**.

Ultimately, the seminar served as both a mirror and an engine. Reflecting on the complexity of the challenges with honesty, while simultaneously generating the momentum, connections, and shared resolve needed to address them.

The day offered a moment of reconnection and mutual reflection, reinforcing the importance of regional cooperation and of embedding inclusive practices into everyday cultural work. By documenting the ideas, methodologies, and concerns raised throughout the day, this report aims to support ongoing efforts to

build cultural ecosystems that are more equitable, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse communities they serve.

## 7. Recommendations from the Seminar Working Group

The Seminar Working Group prepared the following recommendations, reflecting key areas that require continued attention to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Nordic-Baltic cultural field.



Illustration: Trilce García Cosavaliante

### Introductions

In 2019, the Critical Friends group<sup>7</sup> published the first recommendations for the Nordic cultural sector. They highlighted barriers to equity and called for systemic improvements in funding, representation, education and institutional practices.

By 2025, the sector faces new and complex challenges. We see polarisation, democratic backsliding and economic uncertainty; social fragmentation, intensified by the Covid years and the shifting geopolitical landscape. Added to this are the rapid development of

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.kulturdirektoratet.no/en/publications/critical-friends-recommendations>

digitalisation and AI, the demands of the green transition and growing regional disparities, as well as increasing pressure on freedom of expression and human rights. **At the same time, the conversations held during the 2025 Nordic-Baltic Diversity Connections seminar emphasised that many existing cultural structures – from data systems to leadership models, funding processes and digital platforms – tend to reproduce inequalities unless they are consciously redesigned with communities.**

To respond, the updated recommendations underline five key priorities:

**From ethnicity to intersectionality** – Diversity must be comprehensive. It cannot stop at ethnicity but must also embrace age, origin, nationality, language, religion, disability, gender and sexual orientation. Only then can we build a cultural field that actively co-creates the richness of our societies. This also requires sustained anti-racist work to dismantle structural discrimination. **The discussions highlighted the need to recognise multilingualism, mixed identities and lived experiences, and to reduce reliance on rigid state-defined categories that risk reinforcing othering.**

**From Nordic to Nordic - Baltic** – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are not just neighbours, they are equal partners. Their participation strengthens regional cooperation, broadens perspectives and ensures that diversity policy reflects the realities of the entire Nordic-Baltic area. **Seminar participants noted that this cooperation should also extend to shared methodologies, comparable indicators and more aligned approaches to evaluation and monitoring.**

**Crises and migration** – Artists who move or are displaced bring with them experience, knowledge and competence. Supporting their place in cultural life is both a responsibility and a commitment that enriches our societies and strengthens our shared resilience. **Discussions also pointed to the importance of addressing network gaps, language accessibility and the emotional labour that migrant and racialised artists often carry disproportionately.**

**Democracy and rights** – Democracy and diversity go hand in hand. Economic strain often hits minorities and vulnerable artists hardest. Protecting diversity, therefore, means protecting artistic freedom, cultural rights and democratic values. Democracy is the ability to manage difference. Diverse voices must be centred, empowered, and leading as part of shaping the future we build together. **The seminar emphasised that democracy also requires transparent data governance, fair processes for handling discrimination, and ethical principles for collecting and using sensitive data.**

**Sustainability and accessibility** – The green transition, digitalisation and AI are transforming our societies. Without critical attention to power and representation, these transformations may concentrate benefits in the hands of a few rather than fostering equity. Sustainability also means recognising the often-invisible labour that sustains cultural life – administration, community building, emotional work and care – and ensuring that this labour is made visible, valued and fairly compensated in funding models, institutional structures, and daily practice. **The discussions highlighted the need to address digital rights, ethical AI use, safe digital participation and equitable technological literacy across communities.**

These recommendations build on the work started in 2019 and provide a forward-looking framework for institutions, funders and policymakers across the Nordic-Baltic region to make diversity and equality a lived reality in times of constant transformation.

## **Thematic Recommendations**

### **1. Education and Skills**

Diverse training paths and non-Western art forms must be recognised as equal, dismantling the Western canon as the default. Arts education should be multilingual, open for minorities and all abilities, and reflect the experiences of different communities. National and regional actors should monitor participation, with a focus on marginalised groups. **Inclusive leadership must also be understood as a continuous skillset that involves anti-racist**

**practice, conflict competence, intercultural communication, and psychological safety; these require long-term training and support structures rather than one-off workshops. Education systems should recognise lived experience as legitimate expertise and avoid language policies that unintentionally exclude learners.**

## **2. Data, Research, and Cultural Policy**

Our societies require reliable and diverse information as a basis for cultural policy decision-making. We need more research and studies on different aspects of diversity, and these should include participatory and community-led approaches in which communities are actively involved in designing studies, gathering data, and interpreting results. At the same time, new tools and methods for gathering knowledge should be developed. Both quantitative and qualitative methods should be used in research. **In addition, seminar discussions stressed the urgency of developing new indicators, co-designed with communities, that better capture lived experiences and help address the limitations of existing register-based categories, and by combining register data with meaningful opportunities for self-identification. Ethical data governance—drawing on frameworks such as the CARE and SODA principles—should guide the collection of sensitive data. Nordic-Baltic actors should work toward shared diversity data modules and reporting standards, and institutions should be encouraged to review and, where appropriate, publish analyses of their own internal power structures. Qualitative narratives and artistic research should be recognised as equally valuable forms of evidence.**

## **3. Funding and Accessibility**

Funding schemes must recognise diverse artists, practices and organisations. Fair access to support must be ensured regardless of language, background or methods. Peer reviewers need training on diversity, and decision-making must be systematically monitored and published. Both artistic outputs and ethical practices should be rewarded, and funded organisations held accountable for diversity

in their operations. **To strengthen this, funding systems should operate multilingually across the region, and reviewer training should include clear competencies in diversity, anti-racism and intersectionality. Funding should also support accessibility, translation and the often-invisible emotional labour required for inclusive practice. Reviewer pools should be broadened to include international and multilingual expertise, and all funded organisations should maintain transparent action plans to prevent and address discrimination or harm.**

#### **4. Representation and Leadership**

Diversity must be visible at every level: in art, governance, staffing, leadership and audiences. Power imbalances must be addressed, recruitment practices modernised, and intercultural strategies embedded. Continuous anti-racist and intersectional training is essential. Institutions should develop intercultural strategies that are core to institutional identity, not peripheral and publish open and comparable data on their progress. **Seminar discussions further highlighted that representation alone is insufficient without genuine power redistribution, and that institutions should regularly examine where gatekeeping occurs within their structures. Leadership must integrate vulnerability, self-reflection and psychological safety as core competencies, while recognising and reducing the emotional labour carried by minority staff. Establishing a Nordic-Baltic inclusive leadership network could provide long-term peer support. Recruitment processes should place greater value on multilingual and multicultural competence.**

#### **5. Creative Economy and Technology**

Creative economy and technology are deeply intertwined: platforms, algorithms and AI reshape how art is produced, distributed and valued. Digital transformation is not only progress but also fairness and belonging. It must be linked to sustainable cultural work to avoid reproducing inequalities and exploitative digital labour. Technology can also enhance accessibility, collaboration and creativity – but only if community safety, well-being and digital

rights are prioritised. **Seminar discussions pointed to the need for transparent and ethical AI practices, especially regarding training data drawn from artists' work and fair compensation for digital use. Strengthening digital rights, ensuring equitable royalties in new technological environments, and supporting cultural institutions entering gaming, VR, AR and virtual worlds with ethical and accessible frameworks were all identified as priorities. Digital safety—including harassment prevention, mental well-being and equitable access to technology—must be integrated into sector-wide strategies.**

## **Conclusion**

The voices of Indigenous peoples, minoritised groups and new communities such as refugee artists must be visible. Nordic-Baltic cooperation is needed to share knowledge and track progress. Recommendations matter only if implemented, requiring critical analysis of power in cultural institutions. We must move beyond representation to ask who holds power and defines artistic value. Clear metrics, open reporting and independent evaluation are needed so commitments do not remain words. Accountability demands transparency, cooperation and mutual learning – so that diversity and equality become a lasting reality across our region.

**The expanded insights from the seminar reinforce that only systemic, ethically grounded and community-centred approaches can achieve this transformation.**

*The recommendations have been prepared by the Seminar Working Group*

## 8. Complete program: Nordic Diversity Connections in Arts and Culture

Monday, 6 October 2025

### ARRIVAL AND GET-TOGETHER EVENING

Venue: **Oulu Theatre, Theatre Restaurant Aulis** (Kaarlenväylä 2, Oulu)

18.30–21.00 Dinner and networking

Host: **Julian Owusu**, dancer, spoken word artist, educator

Music: **DJ Dee-C**

Welcome words:

- **Alma Lehmuskallio**, Artistic Director, Oulu Theatre
- **Priyanka Sood**, Project Manager, Oulu for All Project
- **Lisa Kalkowski**, Producer of UrbanApa Art Platform  
#StopHatredNow

Tuesday, 7 October 2025

### SEMINAR DAY

Venue: **Oulu City Hall** (Kirkkokatu 2a, Oulu)

08.00 Registration (City Hall entrance hall) and Breakfast Coffee (Banquet Hall Foyer)

08.30 Opening, Banquet Hall (second floor). The venue is equipped with a hearing loop. Speech-to-text interpretation provided by Evantia. The plenary sessions will be video recorded.

Music: **Hanieh Hadizadeh** (*santur*), **Hamed Jalili** (*tar*)

Host: **Silva Belghiti**, sign language actor (with interpreters)

- **Mari-Leena Talvitie**, Minister of Science and Culture, Finland
- **Ari Alatossava**, Mayor, City of Oulu
- **Piia Rantala-Korhonen**, CEO, Oulu2026 Foundation

*Artistic intervention: **Ksenia Peretrukhina**, Interactive installation “+12”*

09.00 Keynote 1: From Oslo to Oulu: a cross-country perspective on diversity efforts and gaps in the Nordic-Baltic region.

- **Sadjad Shokoohi**, Independent Researcher, Dublin, Ireland

09.20 Keynote 2: Why True Democracy Needs Everyone?

- **Ceyda Berk-Söderblom**, Senior Project Manager and Researcher, Trans Europe Halles (TEH), European network of grassroots cultural centres, Lund, Sweden

09.40–11.00 The panel discussion brings in perspectives from across the Nordic-Baltic region to provide a multi-voiced reality check: How do the keynote’s observations resonate in their contexts? What perspectives might be missing? What does diversity work look like from their points of view? Moderated by **Ninos Josef**, consultant and development strategist, Sweden.

Speakers:

- **Alyssa Bittner-Gibbs**, Vice-Chair, Nordic Migrant Expert Forum and Chair, Ålands Natur och Miljö
- **Elham Fakouri**, Project Manager for events and artistic program, Nordic House Iceland
- **Ilannguaq Petrussen**, Filmmaker, board member at EPI, Greenland
- **Izabel Nordlund**, Cultural Affairs Adviser, Saami Council
- **Gražina Sluško**, Senior Specialist at the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania
- **Lība Bērziņa**, Art therapist, Educator, Designer, Inclusive culture promoter in Latvia

11.00–12.00 Lunch, Council Chamber (first floor)

12.00–13.30 Parallel sessions: **4 sessions, 4 topics**

All sessions will begin with a 15-minute artistic intervention, provided by **TAIKABOX** (Oulu), taking place simultaneously across all sub-sessions.

1. **Privilege and Access in Arts Education**, Banquet Hall (second floor) by the *European Arts and Cultural Education Network*

The session explores how culture and arts education can become more accessible, equitable, and empowering for all. It begins with a youth-led intervention by the Valve Film School's special needs youth film club. Keynote presentations will reflect on the implementation of the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education and set the stage for collaborative reflection and discussion. Key question: *What structures and practices are needed to ensure that arts education is genuinely accessible and empowering for all?* Moderated by **Joonas Keskinen**, Manager of the Art Testers programme at the Association of Children's Culture in Finland.

**Ke Leng**, Programme Coordinator. Cultural Policies and Development, Culture Sector, UNESCO

**Szilvia Németh**, Managing Director and researcher at T-Tudok Centre for Knowledge Management and Educational Research and Leader of Creative Learning and Education Foundation, Budapest, Hungary

2. **Data, Research, and Cultural Policy**, Meeting Room 101 (first floor) by *Center for Cultural Policy Research Cupore*

The session explores how cultural diversity can be meaningfully and ethically monitored in the Nordic context. It

considers the strengths and blind spots of register-based systems, the limits of using “foreign background” as a proxy, and the risks of ignoring racialised experiences by drawing on sensitive data governance principles (e.g. those concerning the Sámi). The session asks how to combine registers with self-identification, and how to design indicators that are relevant for creators, audiences, governance, and funding. Key question: *What information and safeguards are needed to build fair and legitimate cultural diversity data in the Nordics?* Moderated by **Aleksandra Dunaeva**, Independent Researcher, Theatre Educator, Diversity Bridge Builder.

**Marja Alastalo**, University Lecturer, Deputy Head of Department. Department of Social Sciences, University of Eastern Finland

**Malin Weijmer**, PhD, Senior Project Manager, Kulturanalys Norden

**3. Leadership, Power, and Gatekeeping in the Arts**, Board Room 109 (first floor, room with hearing loop), by *Globe Art Point and Culture for All Service*

The session invites participants to critically reflect on power structures and gatekeeping practices in the arts and culture sector. After an introduction to the topic by keynoters, speakers, and participants will explore what inclusive leadership looks like and how we can work collectively towards a more equitable, antiracist, and safe cultural field. Key question: *How can we challenge traditional structures of power and gatekeeping in the arts?* Moderated by **Anna Litewka-Anttolainen**, Project Manager at Oulu2026 Foundation and Diversity Agent.

**Amalie Ørum Hansen**, Executive Director, ASSITEJ Denmark  
**Nicol Savinetti**, Chairperson and Founder, IMMART, Denmark

**4. Equitable and Accessible Arts Funding**, Meeting Room 120  
(first floor) by *Arts Promotion Centre Finland*

The session brings together representatives from funding institutions across the Nordic-Baltic region to discuss how arts funding systems can become more inclusive and equitable. Through short keynote impulses and a facilitated roundtable, participants will share concrete tools, models, and challenges related to peer review, institutional practices, and support for diverse applicants. Key question: *What practical strategies and shared tools can support more equitable and inclusive arts funding across the Nordic-Baltic region?* Moderated by **Emma Beverley**, Director, HIAP – Helsinki International Artist Programme.

**Mika Romanus**, Director, The Swedish Arts Grants Committee  
**Henri Terho**, Head of Arts and Culture Funding, Arts Promotion Centre Finland

13.30–13.45 | Break (*time for networking, mingling, making new contacts – or simply resting*)

**13.45–15.00 Parallel sessions: 4 sessions, 4 topics**

**1. Privilege and Access in Arts Education**, Banquet Hall  
(second floor) by the *European Arts and Cultural Education network*

*(The group work builds on the keynote inputs. Please make sure to attend also the first part 12.00–13.30).*

The session is designed to be participatory, with small group work facilitated by international experts in arts and cultural education. The discussions will draw upon the keynote presentations delivered by Ke Leng and Szilvia Nemeth in the preceding part of the program. Discussions will reflect on the implementation of the UNESCO Framework for Culture and

Arts Education. Key question: *What structures and practices are needed to ensure that arts education is genuinely accessible and empowering for all?*

**2. Data, Research, and Cultural Policy**, Meeting Room 101 (first floor) by *Center for Cultural Policy Research Cupore*

In this session, we use the Timeout dialogue method to create a space for open and equal conversation about cultural diversity data in the Nordic region. The dialogue does not seek consensus but aims to deepen shared understanding. Together we reflect on questions such as: *What are the strengths and blind spots of register-based systems? How to combine different sources of knowledge—from registers to self-identification—and what safeguards are needed so that diversity data is both fair and legitimate for creators, audiences, governance, and funding.*

**3. Leadership, Power, and Gatekeeping in the Arts**, Board Room 109 (first floor, room with hearing loop) by *Globe Art Point and Culture for All Service*

In the second part of the session, the project manager from Globe Art Point will introduce a diversity training module for cultural leaders, *Towards Systemic Change*, a hands-on document designed to create an inclusive and diverse art and culture field. Developed through the AAA Erasmus+ project, this training module is the result of extensive research, international collaboration, and real-world insights from artists and cultural leaders across France, Denmark, and Finland. The document offers practical tools and actionable strategies to help cultural institutions and independent leaders foster equity, diversity, and inclusion in meaningful and lasting ways.

**Alex Kollerová**, Project Manager, Globe Art Point, Finland

**4. Collaborative Futures: Equitable Creative Economy in Arts and Tech**, Meeting Room 120 (first floor)  
by Creative Net project (ESF+)

The session explores how collaboration between the arts and technology sectors can foster a more inclusive and resilient creative economy. Through dialogue and comment speeches, participants share insights from experimental projects and discuss how structural change, digital tools, and new forms of cooperation can support long-term sustainability and diversity in the creative field. Key question: *How can we build creative economies that are both diverse and resilient - and shaped by collaboration across art and technology?*

Moderated by **Katri Halonen**, PhD, Cultural Management Educator and Researcher at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.

**Marja Konttinen**, Expert Advisor in the LUME - Creatives in Web3 age (ESF+) project

**Ali Abaday**, Visiting Expert in the KUVATA Expanded Field of Visual Artists' Income and Work (ESF+) project

15.00–15.30 Coffee break, Banquet Hall Foyer (second floor)

15.30–16.30 Reflection Plenary by **Critical Friends Finland** (CFF), Banquet Hall (second floor)

Critical Friends Finland is an advisory group comprising eight arts and culture practitioners based in Finland, representing a diverse range of artistic expressions, cultural backgrounds, and personal experiences. Its members bring expertise in areas such as cultural diversity, social sustainability, and critical issues, including race, gender, accessibility, and human rights. CFF has been an important sounding board for The Arts Promotion Center during the organisation of the seminar. Moderated by **Kemê Pellicer**,

polydisciplinary artist and poet, who also works with facilitation, education, and consultancy.

Speakers:

**Isa Hukka** does poetry, facilitation, and crip/rampa philosophy

**Julian Owusu**, dancer and spoken word artist, educator

**Monica Gathuo**, researcher of women of colour's digital media use and co-founder of ARMA (Anti-Racism Media Activist Alliance)

**Ritni Ráste Pieski**, Deanu river sámi storyteller, drag artist, choreographer, dancer and performer

**Päiviö Maurice Omwami**, curator and philosopher who works as an exhibition curator at the Finnish Museum of Photography

16.30-16.45 Closing remarks

**Minna Karvonen**, Director, Department for Art and Cultural Policy, Ministry of Education and Culture Finland

19.00–21.00 Evening Reception, Banquet Hall

The City of Oulu is honoured to host the seminar guests. Alongside the city's greetings, guests will enjoy refreshments and live music.

Music by **Ulla Pirttijärvi & Ulda**

Ulla Pirttijärvi & Ulda perform contemporary Sámi music that blends traditional yoik with acoustic instrumentation, reflecting the dialogue between Northern nature and modern Sámi culture.

Wednesday, 8 October 2025

### **CULTURAL SITE VISITS**

Participants will have the opportunity to choose one or two cultural venues to visit in Oulu and learn about their activities. The visits take place at 09.00–10.00 and 10.30–11.30 and include introductions in English as well as time for networking and questions.

All venues are within walking distance of each other. Pre-registration required. Participants may either go directly to the sites independently or together with the group departing from Oulu City Hall at 8.45 and 10.15.

**1. CULTURAL CENTRE VALVE**, at 9–10 and 10.30–11.30  
Hallituskatu 7 (100 m from the City Hall)

Includes presentations by:

**Cultural Centre Valve**

Valve is a centre of versatile culture and a provider of cultural activities in the Oulu city centre. Valve promotes the accessibility and operational preconditions of arts and culture, as well as maintains facilities for event and leisure activity organizers. Valve works closely in cooperation with creators of culture and art, associations, and event organizers.

**Saavuta Project**

Saavuta project (lit. reach, achieve, access) focuses on enhancing accessibility and inclusivity at cultural events in North Ostrobothnia. It particularly supports third-sector cultural event organisers across the province.

**Multidisciplinary cultural cooperative ILME**

At the core of ILME's activities is accessibility to art: reaching out to those who cannot access art themselves. Example projects:

- Community Art Production Centre projects, where artists spend several months in different care institutions creating community art.
- Oulu2026 project "From Here to Art Travel Agency" brings together various travel processes. The idea is to travel from one cultural climate to another. In many of its projects, the Travel Agency goes directly to communities.

**Oulu Comics Center**

Multipurpose center of the Northern comics community. The basis of the Center is to increase comics knowledge and to bring forth both the comics and the makers. The center includes Turku Comics Store, Library of Oulu Comics Center, Comics Gallery! and Cultural Magazine Gallery Oulu. The Comics Gallery! is an open for all application based gallery space.

- 2. OULU HOUSE OF LITERATURE**, at 10.30–11.30  
Hallituskatu 9 (100 m from the City Hall)

Antti Leikas, author and Chair of the Oulu Writers' Association, will talk about the association's activities, and Katri Rauanjoki, author, project manager, and Vice Chair of the Oulu Writers' Association, will present the project "New Tools for the Promotion of Translated Literature."

- 3. EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE OULU2026 & OULU URBAN CULTURE ASSOCIATION** at 9.00–10.00

**EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE OULU2026**, at 10.30–11.30

Oulu City Hall (Meeting Room 120), Kirkkokatu 2a

Presentation of the European Capital of Culture Oulu2026, with particular emphasis on the ways in which the principles of diversity, equality, and inclusion are embedded and made visible within its cultural and artistic programme. The presentation will highlight how these values are integrated into the design, implementation, and outcomes of the initiatives, ensuring that the cultural offering is accessible, representative, and engaging for diverse audiences and communities.

Oulu Urban Culture Association promotes diverse urban culture and supports young adults' opportunities to work in the creative industries. New age groups are continually joining the activities, and the association offers them the chance to carry out cultural projects that interest them. The activities reflect themes that are important to young people and often involve various minorities (e.g., sexual and gender minorities and immigrants).

- 4. OULU ART MUSEUM**, only at 9.00–10.00  
Kasarmintie 9, 800 m from the City Hall

A guided tour at the museum. Exhibitions at the moment:

- Imagine Abstract (collections of the Oulu Art Museum): The exhibition features works by more than 50 artists from 1965 to 2025 and focuses mainly, but not exclusively, on artists from the North.
- Antti Holma: With works from the late 1970s to the present day, this cross-section of the artist's work focuses on works from the 2000s.

5. **OULU THEATRE**, only at 9.00–10.00  
Kaarlenväylä 2, 700 m from the City Hall

On a guided theatre tour, you will get to know Oulu Theatre as an art organisation and as a meeting place for dozens of different working methods and cultures. The tour aims to illustrate the world of theatre in a practical way. It starts from the theatre's lobby and lasts about 60 minutes. The tour can be divided into two routes: one includes walking in staircases and narrow corridors, and the other is a bit shorter tour and accessible (elevators can be used).

Oulu Theatre has invested in cultural diversity and accessibility. The theatre is running a three-year project aimed at diversifying its main stage. The repertoire includes, for example, the world premiere *Perillä – Destination*, a play about multicultural Finland, featuring guest actors with multicultural backgrounds. The performance languages are Finnish, Arabic, and English. The theatre has also begun subtitling all main stage productions that can be subtitled.

## 9. References

### **Full program link:**

<https://okm.fi/documents/1410845/247082032/Nordic%20Diversity%20Connections%20In%20Arts%20and%20Culture%20Seminar-Oulu.pdf/a503486e-70a2-779a-d11a-68d1a726cfd5/Nordic%20Diversity%20Connections%20In%20Arts%20and%20Culture%20Seminar-Oulu.pdf?t=1759728620119>

### **Seminar programme, presentations, keynote speeches link:**

<https://okm.fi/en/events/2025-10-06/cultural-diversity-and-inclusion-in-nordic-cultural-cooperation>

### **Seminar recording link:**

<https://youtu.be/OKFVPrhzA2M>

### **Recording of the parallel session: Privilege and Access in Arts Education, link:**

<https://youtu.be/yJa7TOUBya4>