

COUNTRYSIDE OF CREATIVE CONTRASTS

A cultural
programme for rural areas
2010–2014



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(Summary)

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Rural Policy Committee

Editor:

Heli Talvitie

Drawings:

Merja Metsänen / Haihatus - house of art

Layout/book cover:

Cosmograf, Forssa

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Summary

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Summary The cultural programme for rural areas 2010-2014 is an action programme devised by the cultural theme group of the Rural Policy Committee. It puts forward a vision for culture in the countryside up to 2020, describes the background to cultural action and makes proposals for measures geared to develop rural culture. The vision stresses the nature of the countryside as a space of creative contrasts. The programme sees the countryside as part of the cultural transition in society and identifies the opportunities this offers.		The programme falls into four main themes: Lively and innovative communities Working cultural services in the countryside A rich soil for the creative economy and cultural entrepreneurship The value of rural cultural heritage and a rural cultural environment. The proposed measures are grouped under these headings. The Rural Policy Committee appointed the cultural theme group (2010-2012) to make proposals for the development of rural culture and to promote networking. The cultural programme for rural areas is informed by the Fifth Rural Policy Programme 2009-2013, the Government's Rural Policy Report 2009 and the proposal for a Government report on the futures of culture ("Culture - Future Force") prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture.



FOREWORD

Countryside of creative contrasts is the second cultural programme for rural areas of its kind. The time-frame of the programme is up until 2014 and it forms a continuation to the first programme for 2005–2008. The programme has been put together by the cultural theme group that was appointed by the Rural Policy Committee and its focus is the current state and development needs of the Finnish countryside from the perspective of cultural activities. The cultural programme deepens and implements the cultural themes included in the Fifth Rural Policy Programme and the Government's Rural Policy Report.

The cultural programme for rural areas is a key rural policy tool. It directs readers' attention to their immediate surrounding, helping them identify the cultural resources of their own regions and provides new perspectives for those drafting national, regional and local cultural and regional development plans. Some of the proposed actions are aimed at the large group of active cultural operators while some are of more value to developers and decision-makers in the administrative and political spheres. The organisations mentioned in the proposed actions include the wide variety of organisations active in the countryside, ranging from youth organisations to cultural and general associations. Listing all the relevant organisations for each action would not have been viable, so they have been referred to simply as NGOs. The actions put forward in the cultural programme are suitable for the local associations of the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, 4H, Live Music Associations, art associations, travel guide associations, support associations for the elderly, local heritage associations, village associations and rural women's advisory organisations, among many.

The programming began in 2008–2009 with five workshops on the future organised for cultural operators in rural areas. The workshops were held in Äänekoski, Paltamo, Parainen, Mikkeli and Hämeenlinna. The objective of workshops on the future was to find common visions for cultural activities in the countryside and to define the actions to realise them. The questions addressed by the workshops were: 1) What are the main problems in rural culture? 2) What could rural cultural activities be like in 5–10 years' time, and 3) What could be the role of each operator in realising the future of rural culture? The main themes of the new programme were defined on the basis of the discussions held in the workshops on the future. The following aspects were selected as the main themes for the programme: 1) understanding the countryside and culture and the related diversity, responding to major cultural change and the role of culture in rural development, 2) the countryside as a culturally and socially sustainable community, and 3) entrepreneurship and an experience economy based on cultural competences and skills.

The programme includes four academic articles on rural culture and cultural activities, providing the theoretical underpinning to the programme. The articles were written on the basis of the themes that arose in the workshops on the future by the following individuals: Katriina Siivonen from the Finland Futures Research Centre of the University of Turku, Mari Takamaa from the Adult Education Centre Järvilakeus, Katriina Soini from the University of Jyväskylä and Kimmo Kainulainen from the Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences. Alongside this cultural programme, an issue on cultural themes should be published in the series of the Finnish Society for Rural Research and Development, with the articles providing further insight into cultural activities in rural areas.

The authors of the programme are Antti Saarenoja, Timo Suutari and Aapo Jumppanen from the Ruralia Institute of the University of Helsinki. The text for the programme has been discussed at the meetings of the cultural theme group and with experts representing various stakeholders. The illustrations for the programme were drawn by Merja Metsänen from Haihatus, the house of art. The cultural theme group would like to thank all those who contributed to drawing up the cultural programme.

This English-language summary includes the introduction, vision and actions presented in the programme.

***Helsinki, December 2010
The Cultural Theme Group of the Rural Policy Committee***



INTRODUCTION

Countryside of creative contrasts. A cultural programme for rural areas 2010-2014 approaches cultural development in Finnish rural areas from the perspectives of material and immaterial culture. On the one hand, the significance of culture is linked to artistic and cultural creative forces, education, the sense of community, people's well-being and regional cohesion. On the other hand, cultural actions are seen as valuable and worth supporting in terms of job creation, strengthening the attractiveness of regions and promoting entrepreneurship. Common to these perspectives is the fact that culture is not merely seen as an intrinsic value in itself, but also as something that could and should be used as a tool in regional development.¹

The cultural programme for rural areas reflects the wider ideological shift in the relationship between society and culture and art, which has been taking place over time. The development of culture must be based on safeguarding favourable conditions for elemental cultural forces to flourish.²

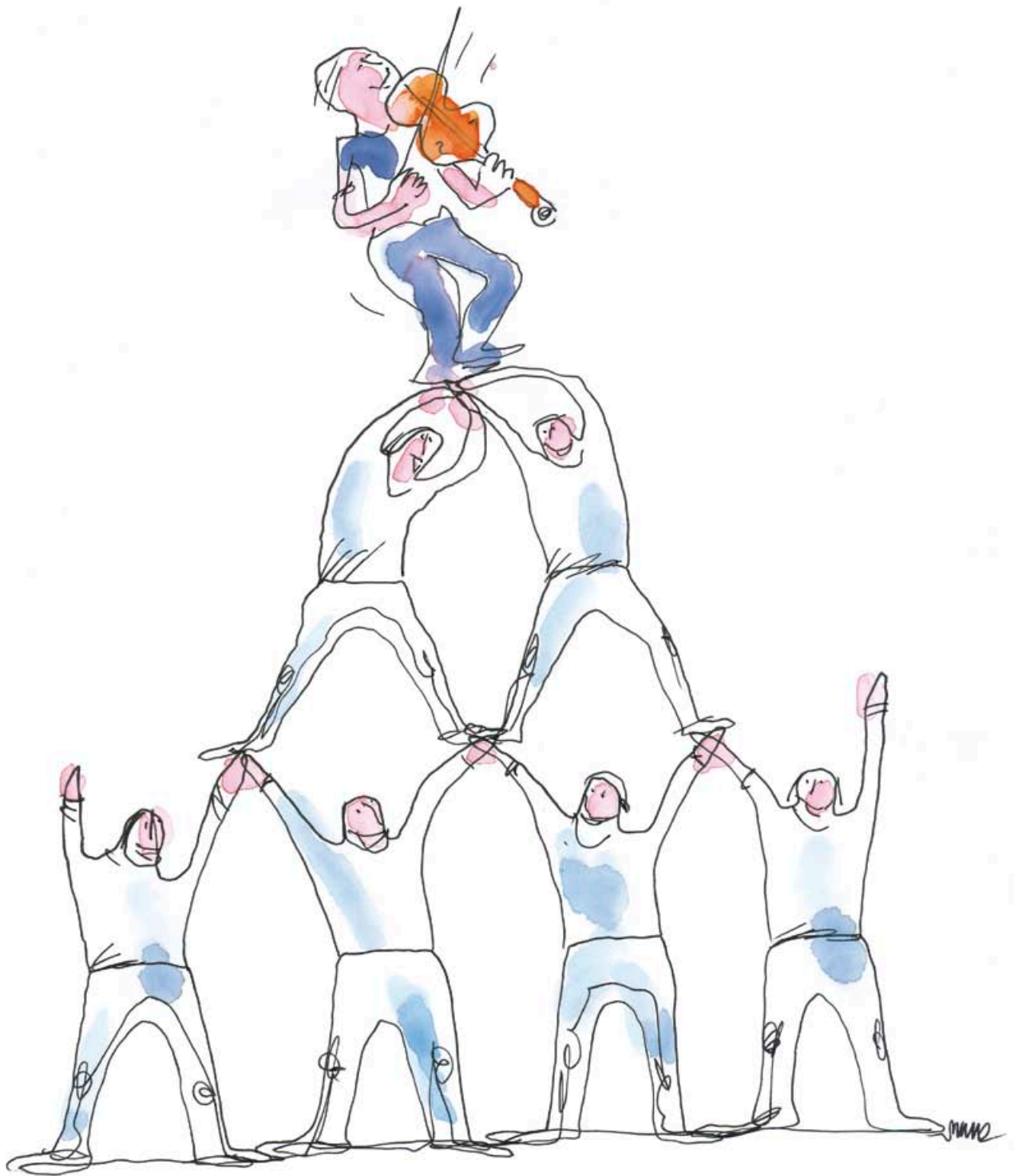
A countryside of creative opportunities puts culture at the heart of the development of society at large by emphasising creativity, cultural heritage and the cultural environment as well as sustainable development. It is linked to other rural policy programming documents³ while complementing programmes specific to a field of art or sector and is aligned with the common cultural policy strategy 2020.

The cultural programme for rural areas 2010-2014 introduces changes that will have an impact on cultural development, the challenges arising from these and proposes a number of means and measures with which to respond to them. The key questions concern how to create preconditions for artistic creativity and cultural development and how to channel creativity into innovative activities and products in rural areas. From the perspective of the countryside, it is vital to ensure opportunities for participation, the availability and accessibility of cultural and library services, support for the various forms of cultural entrepreneurship and creative industries as well as networking between rural areas and urban centres in development work. The programme is beneficial and helpful particularly for cultural actors in rural areas, those in charge of cultural affairs in local administration, cultural institutions and, more broadly, those involved in the development of rural areas development policies.

¹ For the various dimensions of the meanings of culture see e.g. Kainulainen et al. 2008.

² An example of combining the foundation of values for well-being and regional competitiveness is presented in the cultural strategy for South Ostrobothnia 2010-2013 (*Kulttuurisesti kilpailukykyinen ja hyvinvoiva Etelä-Pohjanmaa*; in Finnish)

³ In particular, with the Fifth Rural Policy Programme 2009-2013 and the cultural programme for rural areas 2005-2008.



VISION: RURAL CULTURE IN 2020

In 2020, the countryside should be a space of cultural contrasts. It should be culturally diverse, pluralistic, active and vibrant. The countryside should be a calming space but also alive and vibrant; distant but easily accessible; sparsely populated but a space for intense encounters; a culturally, socially and physically modern environment that respects traditions. The countryside offers user-oriented and sustainable cultural services for all.

The creative diversity of rural culture is a synthesis of three factors: The active and independent activities of residents, empowering and partly mobile cultural services and a good sociocultural and physical environment. Combining cultural services with other services should be commonplace in the future. Cultural activities, even in the most remote regions, receive support from local, national and international co-operation networks. A functioning cultural administration brings actors in the public administration, the third sector and liberal arts and culture together into a single sustainable co-operation network. A well-functioning infrastructure is a prerequisite for the success of cultural and creative activities. Rural areas should be benefitting from a sustainable service structure as well as good transport and data communications connections to the rest of the world.

The ‘we’ spirit and creative diversity, emblematic in rural culture, will support residents’ well-being and satisfaction with their living environment. The countryside is seen as an attractive environment by people of all ages. The flexibility of people’s lifestyles and the growing popularity of living in multiple locations increase the attractiveness of the countryside: it offers short visits, leisure homes as well as place to reside permanently. Cultural activities strengthen the culturally, socially, economically and ecologically sustainable development of the countryside.

The countryside as a space for creative paradoxes provides a rich soil for actors in the creative economy in which to thrive. Enterprise clusters of creative industries will have emerged in rural areas, and other businesses know how to make use of the various competencies to be found within creative industries. The countryside will have competence in experience production, particularly within the travel industry and cultural well-being services.

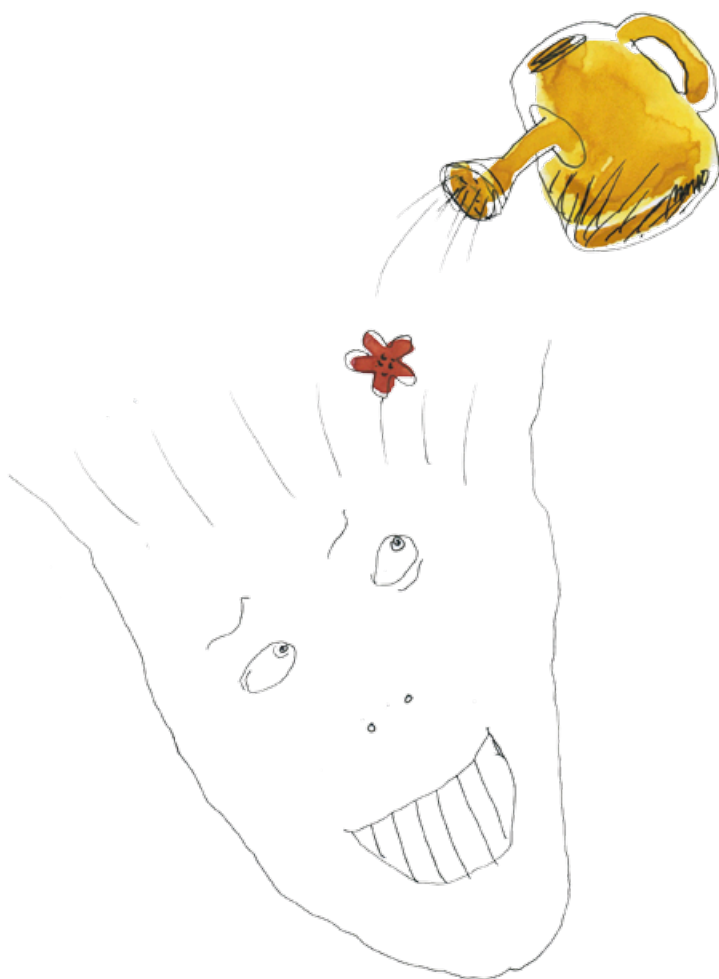
MEASURES

The vision of the cultural programme for rural areas 2010–2014 stresses the nature of the countryside as a space of creative contrasts. The countryside should be culturally diverse, pluralistic, active and tolerant. The countryside should be a quiet and peaceful space but also alive and vibrant; distant but easily accessible; sparsely populated but a space for intense encounters; a culturally, socially and physically modern environment that does not forget the value of nostalgia. The countryside offers user-oriented cultural services for all.

The cultural programme acknowledges the role of rural areas in the cultural transition that Finnish society is undergoing. The programme examines how the cultural transition may be encountered and what opportunities this may offer to rural areas through four themes:

- 1. Lively and innovative communities**
- 2. Effective cultural services in the countryside**
- 3. A productive operating environment for the creative economy and cultural entrepreneurship**
- 4. The value of rural cultural heritage and the rural cultural environment.**

The objectives of the programme are grouped under these headings. Each measure should be designated with enablers, that is, bodies whose actions will have an impact on the realisation of each objective. The objectives also serve as draft measures for all actors involved in the development of rural areas.



Lively and innovative communities

Lively communities are a strength of the countryside, which will change in nature in the wake of the cultural transition. Increasing multiculturalism, changes in lifestyles and the growing popularity of living in many places and the increasing flexibility in combining work and free time will require rural communities to adopt a new kind of tolerance and pluralism. At the same time, the transition in the public sector will strengthen the significance of independent cultural activities.

1. Cultural programmes and the plans of rural municipalities and villages should be linked to wider regional development work and the related documents, such as regional plans and programmes and regional cultural programmes. Cultural programmes and plans recognise the specific features in the respective operating environments and contribute to the co-operation between various levels of actors (local communities, municipalities, regions). (Enablers: Regional Councils, municipalities, village associations, local action groups, Cultural Theme Group.)
2. Pluralistic and tolerant communities should be strengthened in rural areas. The diversity of bilingual areas (Swedish, Sámi) is safeguarded and the opportunities offered by bilingualism are used for enriching rural culture. (Enablers: The Ministry of Education and Culture, municipalities, NGOs).
3. New forms of cultural participation and communality should be created and supported. New groups should be encouraged to take a more active role in cultural activities (e.g. returnees, immigrants, those living in multiple locations) to strengthen the sense of community and local diversity. The potential of contemporary folk art¹ in strengthening rural culture should be investigated. The internationalisation of rural areas should be supported, as this will facilitate cultural encounters through various international events and meetings. (Enablers: e.g. regional arts councils, municipalities, local action groups, village associations, NGOs)
4. The need for cultural services of those who live in rural areas on a part-time basis should be investigated, opportunities for participation should be created and residents should be engaged in organising various events. (Enablers: e.g. the Cultural Theme Group, research institutes, adult education centres, event organisers, village associations, NGOs)
5. Adult education centres and other actors in liberal education should be invited to contribute more to strengthening local independent cultural life. (Enablers: Adult education centres and other actors in liberal education and rural organisations)
6. The opportunities for cultural actors in rural areas to participate in virtual communities should be safeguarded and enhanced by promoting the provision of fast and reliable data communication connections for residents in rural areas. (Enablers: The Ministry of Transport and Communication, municipalities, web-co-operatives)
7. Support and training in the development and implementation of new forms of activities, such as virtual cultural communities, should be provided to third-sector actors and cultural operators in rural areas. (Enablers: e.g. adult education centres, educational institutions, local action groups)

¹ The Finnish term for contemporary art is *ITE-taide*, derived from *itse tehty elämä*, self-made art.



DRAMA CLASS FOR YOUTHS in Adult Education Center Järvilakeus. Photo Hanna-Leena Metsävainio.

Effective cultural services in the countryside

According to the Finnish constitution, Finnish citizens have the right to cultural services as well as educational services. Effective cultural services promote the health and well-being of people in rural areas and increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of rural municipalities. The deterioration of municipal economies and the centralisation of customers and production in large urban centres presents a threat to the ability to maintain the provision of cultural services in rural areas. The demographic trend in rural areas will also lead to the geographic fragmentation in the demand for services. This in turn will reduce the economic viability of services and make it more difficult to bring together adequately large audiences as well as a sufficient number of participants, resulting in the need for new and innovative service concepts.

8. The basic resources for cultural services in rural areas should be guaranteed through an adequate number of competent staff and funding for cultural services in general and basic cultural services. Co-operation and dialogue among cultural services staff in rural localities should be promoted and attempts made to find ways of integrating the objectives of various services sectors. (Enablers: The Ministry of Education and Culture, municipalities, rural organisations).
9. The library and liberal education networks should be strengthened so they can act as innovators of rural cultural services as well as provide customer-oriented services. (Enablers: Municipal library administration, actors in liberal education)
10. The cultural vitality of rural areas should be increased by directing public funding towards non-institutional cultural activities. (Enablers: The Ministry of Education and Culture, municipalities).
11. Joint regional forums for municipalities, Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, Regional Councils, arts councils and other regional bodies for cultural development should be established for developing cultural services and their activities should be ensured. (Enablers: The Cultural Theme Group, the Ministry of Education and Culture, Regional Councils, municipalities, NGOs)
12. Regional co-operation among cultural and arts organisation should be consolidated so that they can represent themselves as one unified front in issues and development relating to the cultural field. Regional umbrella organisations may be established if necessary. (Enablers: NGOs)
13. New facilities for cultural encounters should be created, and services should be taken to the people and where they move about, such as traffic hubs, stations and social media environments. (Enablers: Municipalities, cultural organisations, NGOs)
14. The use of existing facilities for a variety of purposes and the establishment of multi-purpose services centres (e.g. libraries, village halls, film theatres, well-being and tourist services, cultural environments) should be encouraged when providing cultural and leisure services in rural areas, as this will enable a new kind of co-operation between actors. At the same time, this will create opportunities for new, cross-sectoral service innovations and the development of a stimulating, interactive and creative operating environment. (Enablers: municipalities, local action groups, village associations)
15. The accessibility of services provided by publicly funded art institutions, such as theatres and orchestras, should be improved in rural areas through, for example, workshops and tours. (Enablers: The Ministry of Education and Culture, publically funded institutions, municipalities).



POETRY-INSPIRED DANCE production “Wading Girl and The Wanderer” at the 2008 Pentinkulma literature festival in Urjala.
Photo Tiina Kurikka.



ARTS AND CRAFTS is one of the art forms taught in basic education in the arts, provided for instance by the Finnish Crafts Organization, Taito Group.
Photo Johanna Aydemir/ Taito Group.

A productive operating environment for the creative economy and cultural entrepreneurship

Art and culture support the economy and employment. When converging with other fields, new interfaces with new growth potential are created. This will enable the diversification of the economic structure in rural areas and the development of entrepreneurship in creative industries. Rural areas have a wealth of cultural competence and thus the potential for exploiting cultural business opportunities, for example, in tourism. Rural areas could offer a suitable context for business clusters in creative industries and product development for customer- and user-oriented experience production. The development of a creative economy and cultural entrepreneurship requires effective business development services.

16. Multidisciplinary and innovative service concepts for experience production should be developed in, for example, the fields of social welfare and health and tourism, whereby cultural competencies should be applied in new ways (including design, branding, programme services, information and media technology, cultural environments). Crossing boundaries between the fields of culture and social welfare and health is encouraged, and the development of entrepreneurship and service concepts based on culture, especially in the well-being sector, should be supported. (Enablers: The Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes), centres of excellence, municipal and regional development corporations, Regional Councils, local action groups, NGOs, the Cultural Theme Group.)
17. The provision of business services specialising in creative industries and experience production should be increased and incorporated as part of existing business consultancy services so that these services can also be accessed by cultural entrepreneurs residing in sparsely populated rural areas. The development of the competence and expertise in the existing business service network is key to this. The spearhead project is the productisation and extension of the Jalostamo concept to make it available to cultural actors in rural areas. (Enablers: Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, regional business service points, municipal and regional development corporations, technology centres. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy, ESF programmes, the Regional Cohesion and Competitiveness programme 'COCO', the network of creative industries, business networks.)
18. The establishment of business activities by professionals in arts and culture should be supported through extension studies and continuing education in entrepreneurship and it should be ensured that business administration and entrepreneurship are available as optional studies for students in the fields of art and culture. (Enablers: Educational institutions, ESF programmes)
19. The emergence of microclusters in creative industries and the networking of different kinds of actors in rural areas should be supported, enabling the formation of competence clusters in experience production and, for example, that multidisciplinary cultural clusters spring up around cultural institutions. The development targets may include locally specialised but nationally significant event production, the utilisation of cultural facilities as multidisciplinary experience service centres or the development of experiential environments in co-operation with the travel industry by, for example, increasing experiential elements in museums and culturally historic sites. Co-operation between cultural and travel industry actors should be increased by integrating the design, arts and crafts industries and museums more closely with tourism and events. (Enablers: The Ministry of Education and Culture, centres of excellence, Regional Councils, Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, the Finnish Tourist Board, regional marketing and development organisations for tourism, the network of creative industries within COCO, event organisers, design, arts and crafts associations.)

20. User-oriented product development environments ('Living Labs') should be developed to facilitate the building of experience services in rural areas. This requires the systematic collection of user experiences of rural cultural and leisure time services in the various stages of product development as well as wide-reaching co-operation between the public sector, companies and research and educational organisations. (Enablers: local action groups, research institutes, the Cultural Theme Group, the network of creative industries within COCO, technology centres, municipal and

regional development corporations)

21. The capacity of NGOs and cultural co-operatives to offer support services to creative industries should be improved. To support this work, a study on the role of third-sector actors in creative industries should be produced and the provision of advisory services for the third sector initiated. (Enablers: adult education centres, research institutes, municipal cultural administration, municipal and regional development corporations, the Cultural Theme Group)

"CINDY BAKER" takes part of the town festival in Nilsjö.
Photo: Anna Vilkkuna.



HÄNHI DESIGN owner Hanna Hirvonen makes use of Outukumpu history in her works.
Photo Emil Bobyrev.

The value of rural cultural heritage and the rural cultural environment

The cultural heritage of the countryside has both material and immaterial dimensions. The role of museums as experts and educators in cultural heritage and its preservation will be emphasised because the definitions and values attached to cultural heritage are in constant transition. The cultural environment in the countryside is part of both the national and local identity. Maintaining a high-quality, attractive cultural heritage requires measures both at the grassroots and the political levels. In addition to protecting the historical cultural environment, attention should also be paid to more recent cultural environments around us.

22. The transfer, preservation and development of cultural heritage should be safeguarded by supporting the independent cultural heritage work carried out by residents of rural areas and joint projects of regional and local museums. (Enablers: local action groups, regional museums, local museums, Regional Councils, arts councils, the Finnish Crafts Organization, NGOs)
23. The typical characteristics of cultural environments should be documented at the national, regional, municipal and local level. (Enablers: e.g. Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, Regional Councils, municipalities, NGOs)
24. The attainment of environmental statuses and political commitment towards the preservation of the cultural environment and heritage in rural areas should be enhanced. Various environmental statuses and local cultural environment and heritage programmes garner significant publicity for rural cultural heritage. They also increase the prestige of local natural and cultural environments, improve the attractiveness of rural areas as a living environment and strengthen local identities. (Enablers: Municipalities, Regional Councils, Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment)



LOCAL MUSEUM SAGALUND in Kemiö passes traditions from generation to generation by means of play and activity. Photo Sagalund museum.



OLD TRADITIONS are interesting for tourists. Kulma-project of Metsähallitus arranged an old time moving event in Oulanka. Photo Hannele Kytö.