



My story, our Europe empathy game for schools and video series on migrant influencers

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Type of best practice

Audience and Local Community Engagement

Keywords

community, youth, co-creation, gamification, education, empathy, advocacy, visual media, digitalisation

Participation is a key part of The Helinä Rautavaara Ethnographic Museum. Community engagement and involvement is nurtured through free admission, enabling all community members to enjoy the collections, exhibitions and events organized. Various co-creation and co-curation activities also support the goal of participation. Young people are activated through various activities such as school visits. A concrete recent example of youth engagement is the development of an empathy game, a video series and a campaign featuring young asylum seekers. The aim of the empathy game was to increase young people's understanding of migration and to develop the empathy they felt for other people.

Organisation in charge of best practice

Helinä Rautavaara Ethnographic Museum, Espoo, Finland

Location

Espoo, Finland

Dates

2020-2021

Description

The Helinä Rautavaara Ethnographic Museum, founded in 1998 is based on the collections of explorer, journalist and collector Helinä Rautavaara (1928-1998). It houses Finland's largest collection of West African objects, tens of thousands of photographs, hundreds of hours of recordings and dozens of hours of film and is the only ethnographic museum in Finland. The mission of the museum is to bring together different people and working in a variety of ways to increase understanding and dialogue between cultures. Participation, pluralism, reciprocity and topicality are key values.





In 2021-2022 the museum created an empathy game as part of the broader European project “I am European; migrant Stories and Facts for the 21st Century”, which aimed to increase young people’s understanding of migration and to develop the empathy they felt for other people. The concept also included a series of videos and a campaign in which young influencers of migrant background talk about influencing, dreams and wishes, identity issues, studies, working, residency permits, racism and what it is like living in Finland.

The theme of the empathy enhancing game is the process of applying for a residency permit in Finland. Young asylum seekers were interviewed to collect their experiences, feelings and thoughts on being a refugee, being relocated and going through the process of getting a residence permit. They were also involved in other development stages of the game and were part of the team that ran the game in schools. For students and teachers the game gave them new perspectives on being a refugee. Young people of refugee status felt that the game was an important way to increase dialogue and understanding. The Helinä Rautavaara Ethnographic Museum was the first museum in Finland to take advantage of gaming methods. A first attempt at this was the development of an escape game dealing with climate change, also developed for young people.

Participation is a key part of the museum’s activities. A guiding belief is that by involving communities the museum increases wellbeing, reduces marginalization and helps to nurture peace within society. This is also why the museum does not charge an admission fee because it believes everyone has the right to enjoy cultural activities. Community involvement and co-creation activities with the ethnically diverse groups that reside in the greater Helsinki area is actively maintained through co-curation, getting people involved in planning and doing, facilitating various activities, and sharing the resources of the museum. Active involvement with the originating communities is key, as the museum believes they are the true holders of the Collection. Another form of community engagement that the museum is involved in is its internship programme. The museum offers internships to people of migrant background, who often have a hard time finding employment in Finland.

Links

<https://www.helinamuseo.fi/en/study-and-learn/projects/i-am-european>

Resources needed

30 000 euros

Challenges encountered

The project My story, our Europe was launched during the Corona Pandemic which restricted and delayed its use in schools. The original target was to reach 600 students, but the actual numbers were around 300.

Evidence of success

The videos and publications on the influencers of migrant background reached 2,911 viewers on social media. In addition, 453 people engaged (commented, liked or re-shared) the posts. In the greater Helsinki area, more than 300 secondary-school students played





the game and gave it very good feedback. The museum has received several awards; Honorary Mention, Global Education Award (Global Education Network Europe) 2020-2021; Finalist, Museum of the Year Award, 2019-2020; Honorary Mention, Annual Award in Museum Pedagogy 2017.

Potential for transfer

The empathy game can be used in other countries after translation. Content would need to be adjusted to local conditions through involvement of young asylum seekers and testing with them. According to European surveys, young people have become sensitive to the heated debate on migration and long for positive, personal narratives and facts. In light of these facts, not only is transfer of this Best Practice possible, but also highly relevant and topical in the current societal and political climate in Europe.

Further Information

<https://www.helinamuseo.fi/en/> Ilona Niinikangas, Museum Director,
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