



ARCHITECTURE

*Living and loving
wooden architecture*

PROJECT TITLE	ARCHITECTURE: Ethno-architecture of Fennoscandia in XXI century
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD	02.2019 - 08.2021
ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED	Kizhi State Open Air Museum of Wooden Architecture and Ethnography (RU), Petrozavodsk State University (RU), Oulu vocational college (FI)
PROGRAMME	Karelia CBC 2014 - 2020
TOTAL BUDGET	490.220,00 €

KARELIA

CBC // Cross-border cooperation



The project goal is to preserve the wooden architecture and unique cultural environment of Fennoscandia, improving professional teaching methods and involving local people in the preservation of their native wooden houses and villages. The project includes activities such as researches in the sphere of wooden architecture, training courses, study tours around Karelia and Finland, cooperation with the local community, several publications and international seminars and exhibitions.



Project co-funded by
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CULTURE & EDUCATION

**PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE
COOPERATION**



“Historical wooden settlements should be preserved and developed not as an open-air museum but as dynamic communities that grow and develop. New buildings should be modern and comfortable to live in; at the same time, the spirit and authenticity of villages should be preserved. The creation of the right architectural context is essential”.

Olga Titova, from the Kizhi State Open Air Museum of Wooden Architecture and Ethnography (Russia), head of the ARCHITECTURE project

How to save wooden architecture? How to preserve this heritage and at the same time experience it comfortably in everyday life? The partners of the ARCHITECTURE project – co-funded by the Karelia CBC Programme – have decided to join forces and devote their efforts to the conservation and development of wooden architecture: they have created educational programmes and they train students and professors to prepare restorers able to deal with it. The goal of the project is to protect the unique legacy of wooden architecture, a key feature of cultural identity for the Republic of Karelia but also for the whole Fennoscandia, including Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia (Murmansk and Archangelsk regions).

“This cultural heritage is very vulnerable – explains Olga, head of the project – and needs particular care in its maintenance and protection”. Especially when new buildings are erected next to the old ones: what to do?

Each country of Fennoscandia has its own architectural features, however, all of them are characterized by the presence of traditional wooden buildings. In Finland and Russia entire villages used to be built in wood. The Kizhi island, located on Lake Onega in Russian Karelia, is famous for its unique historical site: the Kizhi Pogost. This ensemble consists of two large wooden churches and a belltower. The Pogost amazes with its beauty and longevity, though being built exclusively of wood by peasant carpenters. Once this was a very prosperous area, densely populated: today, only 35 historical settlements have survived. And they need a special support not only to preserve ancient wooden buildings, but also to maintain the specific architectural environment. “When new buildings appear, their construction should not jeopardise the spirit and the authenticity of the village – says Olga - At the same time, such places should be modern and comfortable to live in”.

To preserve wood building techniques, the training of restorers is the first activity to embark on. “Since 2014 and thanks to the more recent experience of our project part-

ners, the museum training centre has hosted over 400 people – continues Olga - As first institution in Russia, we have organised courses in collaboration with the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCOM), and in 2020, at the premises of our museum, the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation has created the Russian National Centre for Wooden Architecture Preservation”.

The Museum’s educational programmes have a distinguishing feature: the professors are not merely theoreticians but true practitioners, engineer-restorers, carpenter-restorers, etc. Activities run on the Kizhi island itself, among the monuments of wooden architecture, the best tutorials ever. The students can “read” the monuments together with the experts to know the traces of reconstruction; they can practice carpentry techniques with tools such as drawknife, they can develop solutions on how to better preserve monuments, and they can study the running restoration processes. The programmes include the study of the historical village of Kurgenitsy: the students have learned how to explore the village, and to measure it using laser scanning. Now the village 3D model is underway, with the reconstruction of the lost buildings, including a chapel and a wayside cross. But where and how to find information about lost religious buildings? The data can be found at the National Archive of Finland (Helsinki): as part of the project, partners have studied the materials of the Finnish professor Lars Pettersson, who had thoroughly re-

searched wooden churches and chapels in the Republic of Karelia during World War II. Today his writings, pictures, description of territories can be found in the archive and have been essential for the reconstruction of the villages: these materials will end up in the book “Churches and Chapels of Zaonezhie (Karelia)” to be soon published.

Another characteristic of the project is the involvement of the local population. The Kizhi State Museum had started working with local communities long before the project, therefore people are quite responsive to the proposed activities. Now partners are explaining to villagers how to preserve their own historical buildings, and they are also raising their awareness about the uniqueness of their settlements. This has led to conservation works being carried out for example for the Church of John the Baptist, in Lelikovo: “We worked with the upper tier, putting the cross and maintaining the tent-roof of the church – explains Olga - conservation helps an historical building stand until a thorough restoration”.

The ARCHITECTURE project is bringing more than just an investment: it raises confidence of small historical communities to take right decisions and to shape their own future. In summer 2019 and partially in 2020, project partners have gone through all the 35 villages with a detailed questionnaire for the residents. People were asked about the history of their villages, the houses, the families. They were also asked about life opportunities: what would they like to do? Which were the obstacles to be prevented? As a result, the project discovered that local inhabitants have a lot of ideas about improving their environment, and a strong willingness to learn. So, even if it was not planned, the project has introduced a training for local citizens on project development and funding opportunities. Not only the World Heritage site – the Kizhi Pogost – is worth visiting: the entire neighbourhood is rich in beautiful villages and churches, and inhabited by a community eager to stay, resist and flourish. This unique cultural heritage encompasses great potential for tourism development.

