

# Tuuli Lähdesmäki

THE 2017 Prize for the Humanities was awarded to Tuuli Lähdesmäki, an Academy Research Fellow of the Academy of Finland who is working at the University of Jyväskylä. She gained a doctorate in art history from the University of Jyväskylä in 2007 and in sociology from the University of Eastern Finland in 2014. She occupies the position of docent at the University of Jyväskylä.

“I am not especially oriented towards history, and so I thought that I could fulfil my own aims better if I also had a knowledge of the social sciences, and that is why I did a second doctorate in sociology,” she explains.

In practice, she has studied the role of culture as a source and manifestation of various forms of identity and has carried out research into this topic in Italy, Ireland and Hungary as well as Finland. At present she is studying the EU’s cultural heritage policy and the use made of that cultural heritage to build up a European identity. For this purpose she obtained a

highly competitive European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant in 2014 to cover the years 2015–2020. The ERC awards grants only to top-rank researchers and their teams and only for work of a pioneering nature. Lähdesmäki has specialists in six disciplines working in her team. As she puts it, “Our work is truly multidisciplinary, as it is at once cultural research, European research, political research and research within the social sciences.”

Finland is one of the four EU countries which are not involved in the latest EU cultural programme, the European Heritage Label, although preliminary work has begun for entry into the scheme and Finland may well be included in the next round of sites or topics to be nominated. No decisions have been taken as yet, however.

The aim of the EU’s cultural heritage policy is to strengthen the feeling of belonging to Europe, and the heritage sites are one means by which local, regional and national cultures can be linked in with

*Academy Research Fellow Tuuli Lähdesmäki studies the role of culture as a source and manifestation of various forms of identity*



an overall European heritage. Lähdesmäki believes that there are a number of cultural sites or causes in Finland that could apply for and qualify for the European Heritage Label. Work on behalf of equality is something that has a long history behind it, and female suffrage and the right to stand for parliament are significant aspects of this cultural heritage.

“The work of building up a European identity is one means by which the EU is setting out to counteract the rise of nationalism and populist sentiment,” Tuuli Lähdesmäki explains.

She has already published dozens of papers in international peer-reviewed journals, and received an Academy of Finland Award for Scientific Courage in 2015.

*The Prize for the Humanities is awarded to a scholar of humanistic sciences in the beginning of their career who has already earned international renown.*