Access to Culture
An effective instrument towards European citizenship

In times of economic difficulties and the social problems that these bring, access to culture can function as an effective instrument to bring Europe and Europeans back to the forefront in the process for sustainable development. It can also strengthen the sense of citizenship and of social cohesion. Indeed, access to culture is an essential right of all citizens but becomes fundamental in the case of those with economic and social challenges such as young people and the elderly, people with disabilities and different minority groups.

In June 2008, the DG for Education and Culture launched, in the framework of the European Agenda of Culture and the structured dialogue with the cultural sector, three thematic platforms to cover the following areas: cultural and creative industries, intercultural dialogue and access to culture.

Like the other two platforms, the Platform on Access to Culture has a mandate to propose recommendations for policies that can foster the access of all to cultural life in its different dimensions. It also aims to represent the needs of the sector and identify suitable action in the different stages of policy formation.

In order to cover as many aspects as possible, the platform has chosen three areas of access that have been examined in respective working groups. The Working Group on Education and Learning explores the benefits of the interaction and synergy between education, learning and culture and the role that access and cultural participation play in different educational levels. The Working Group on Creation and Creativity advocates for the best conditions for artistic creation, to ensure access to the creative process for all. Finally, the Working Group on Audience Participation advocates the importance of taking audience participation into account in all levels of policy making based on the added value that a participative audience brings to the cultural sector and to society as a whole.

“Access to culture can strengthen the sense of citizenship and of social cohesion.”

There is still a notable gap and a lack of political and public debate.

Although access to culture is not mentioned explicitly in the European Agenda for Culture, setting up a Platform that specifically addresses this issue clearly reflects an interest by the European Commission to include this issue in its working agenda. If other objectives such as cultural diversity, interculturality or creativity are to be pursued by all political and civil actors at European level, strengthening access to culture – within education, cultural production and participation – should be indeed mainstreamed in public policies at all levels, be it on a European, national or sub-national level.

Supranational institutions such as the European Union as well as its Member States have come a long way towards incorporating strong cultural normative practices and principles in their policy-making. However, there is still a notable gap and a lack of political and public debate on and between commitments and principles, and everyday practice of fostering access to culture.

By | Mercedes Giovinazzo
First results on ‘Education & Learning’

The Working Group of the EU Platform on ‘Access to Culture’

The European Agenda for Culture has introduced new cooperation methods with various stakeholders in May 2007. First, a more structured system of cooperation between the Member States and the EU institutions, a so called open method of coordination (OMC) with working groups of ministerial representatives on certain predetermined topics. Second, a reinforced mainstreaming of culture in all EU programmes and policies through enhanced synergies between the departments of the European Commission, and third, a structured dialogue with the cultural sector.

With the aim to establish this structured dialogue, a large number of cultural organisations with a European dimension were invited in spring 2007 to express their interest in participating in two new thematic civil society platforms: access to culture and creative and cultural industries.

The composition of these two platforms is wide ranging and gives a unique opportunity for organisations from the sector to work together on thematic issues of common interest. They are expected to act as the channel for cultural stakeholders to provide concrete input and recommendations and – in this way – actively contribute to the implementation and further development of the European Agenda for Culture.

Within the Platform on Access to Culture, 3 sub-groups were formed to address the following issues:
1. Education and Learning
2. Creation and Production
3. Participation and Audience

During a first meeting and through subsequent work, the Working Group on Education and Learning, which includes representatives from NEMO, produced the following documents: a document with recommendations to the various stakeholders (the OMC working groups, the European Commission, the EU member states, etc.) on the importance of a closer synergy between education and culture in a European context, and a first collection of case studies that would underpin these recommendations. When collecting and discussing the case studies, the working group attempted to make the educational aspects of these cultural projects more explicit by making a direct reference to the ‘Key Competences for Lifelong Learning’, as developed by the EU in 2006.

Subsequently, the working group also established a direct contact to the OMC working group of ministerial representatives entitled ‘Working Group on a Closer Synergy between Education and Culture’, which has been meeting since last year. This way, information between both groups is being exchanged and common issues can be identified.

The working group also used its recommendations paper to influence the text of a report on artistic education published by the European Parliament some weeks ago. This can be seen as a first small political success achieved by the group so far.

The working group sees these activities as the beginning of a long-term process, in which case studies will be collected and conclusions will be formulated on how to benefit from a closer synergy between education and culture in a European context on the basis of such studies as well as other information. The first preliminary outcomes of the group’s work will be presented at the EU Cultural Forum in September 2009.

More information about the Open Method of Coordination and cultural sector platforms can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index_en.htm.

By | Martin Prchal
A Letter from the NEMO Chairwoman

For nine years Mechtild Kronenberg has held office as director of the German Museums Association and for more than three years she has been in charge as Chairwoman of NEMO. Mrs. Kronenberg has been deeply involved in the developments of European culture policies and was very committed to pushing forward museum related topics. As she has left the German Museums Association on 1 March 2009 to take up a new job at the National Museums in Berlin of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, she will not be able to carry on as Chair of NEMO.

The NEMO Executive members have asked me to act as interim Chair of NEMO until the next elections will be held at the annual meeting in November in Linz, Austria. I am very glad to take up this honorable assignment and to represent the network to European institutions and our partners during this year. The German Museums Association will continue to administer NEMO’s secretariat in Berlin until the end of 2009 and will guarantee continuity in the network’s activities for European museums. Together with the executive board NEMO will be able to carry on its function as a spokesperson for the community of European museums.

In one of its major projects NEMO has been highly involved in formulating a policy paper in cooperation with other civil society representatives of the European culture field, which will be discussed in Brussels in early June for the purpose of discussing it at the Cultural Forum in September. This paper by the Civil Society Platform ‘Access to Culture’ refers to various dimensions of the term and brings up several problems and questions that have to be solved in the different fields of work. By addressing these issues, the paper intends to contribute to the future culture policy of the European Commission. In similarity to past discussions NEMO expects to pursue its role as advisory body to the EC and as representative of European museums by this initiative, ensuring the visibility of their fundamental role as keepers of cultural heritage.

By | Elizabeta Petruša-Strukelj

NEMO Activities

NEMO Annual Meeting 2009 in Austria

The upcoming NEMO Annual Meeting will be held in Linz, Austria from 27-29 November in cooperation with the Austrian Museums Association, that has invited the network to convene the meeting in the Cultural Capital City of 2009 (for more details visit www.linz09.at). The meeting’s venue will be the State Gallery, a specialised scientific institution for modern and contemporary art in the Province of Upper Austria. The Gallery forms part of the Upper Austrian State Museums.

The meeting’s first day is dedicated to the hosting country and will focus on the museum landscape, culture policies and running projects in Austria, including a presentation about ongoing activities in the museum sector in regard to Linz being the European Capital of Culture this year.

NEMO has decided to take the opportunity for focusing more closely on the topic of ‘Museums and Innovation and Creativity’ at the meeting, succeeding the ‘European Year of Creativity and Innovation’, exploring museums’ potential in the creative and innovative area, presenting progressive concepts and giving insight to the European activities in the field. Various opportunities for joint projects between different culture sectors, such as tourism and museums, shall be discussed also in regard to Linz being the Culture Capital. Additionally, the network’s members will elect a new chair and board for NEMO, which will be in charge of NEMO’s activities from 2010 on.

The NEMO Annual Meeting serves as a platform for national museum associations and other bodies dealing with museum matters to exchange their ideas and views on European topics of concern and to forward these thoughts to their countries’ museums. More than 30 representatives of national museum collegiates from more than 20 European countries traditionally attend the meeting.

For further information visit www.ne-mo.org.
The European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009

To raise awareness on the importance of creativity and innovation for personal, social and economic development, the European Commission and Parliament has jointly initiated the European Year of Creativity and Innovation (EYCI). Both skills can help develop economic prosperity and wellbeing of individuals and a society in general, especially in times of crisis. It urges EU institutions and governments to invest in the creative capacities, most importantly in artistic creation, education and mobility, thus pushing under-exploited innovation potential. A broad programme of events aims to communicate these goals and perspectives. This includes public discussions in order to also stimulate a policy debate of which the first took place in February in Brussels and was opened by the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth Ján Figel. Several prizes will be awarded to creative individuals, such as the Mies van der Rohe Award for contemporary architecture and the first European Union Prize for Literature.

For more information about the EYCI 2009 and a list of events visit: http://create2009.europa.eu.

European Heritage Label

Cultural heritage forms part of our European identity and of our common values and principles. Today’s European culture is based on cross-border exchanges and dialogue, on the interaction and mutual transfer of people and values, ideas, art movements and works of art.

The European Heritage Label (EHL) was created to promote the transnational dimension of European cultural assets, monuments, natural and urban enclaves, tangible and intangible heritage, contemporary and traditional heritage and places that have played an essential role in the construction and consolidation of Europe. It intends ot increase citizens’ knowledge, consideration and support for their heritage.

Its aim is to strengthen the support of Europeans for a common European identity and to promote a sense of belonging in a common cultural space, thereby strengthening cooperation between European states and creating a means of protecting and promoting our cultural heritage with the aim of identifying this heritage and leaving a legacy for future generations. The European Heritage Label shall lay the foundations for establishing a dynamic network of cultural assets, monuments, natural and urban enclaves, as well as places that have played an essential role or occupy a prominent position in European history and territories.

At present, this initiative is working for the European Union’s support. With the aim of becoming an EU programme, a survey has been sent to the directors of sites currently part of the European Heritage Label scheme – numbering a total of 64 sites across 18 European countries. The survey should provide the Commission with a set of perspectives relating to possible social, economic and environmental impacts of the EHL in the future, and the potential of sites which are currently included within the scheme. In 2009, Spain is technically Secretary of EHL. The primary objective for every state is now to participate in creating and expanding a network of European Heritage sites. First results can be found on the new website which is linked to the Spanish Ministry of Culture’s page at: www.mcu.es/patrimonio/MC/PatrimonioEur/index.html.

By | Pilar Barraca de Ramos

The Swedish EU Presidency begins on 1 July 2009

With the Czech Republic’s EU Presidency coming to an end, Sweden has taken over the office as successor on 1 July 2009. Many of the planned activities are taking place within the cultural sector. While the opening ceremony was held in Stockholm, Swedish institutions and embassies in different European countries are joining with special programmes. Activities of the Swedish Institute in Paris video art and exhibitions in different public spaces, involving even the metro system. The embassy in Brussels is making possible free concerts by leading Swedish artists and has contributed films of their country to the Brussels Film Festival.

Sweden itself will of course be host to a variety of cultural events, for example the International Biennial for Contemporary Art in Göteborg. One of the announced conferences will focus on creativity and cultural habits of children and young people. The aim is to create conditions on a European level under which children and young people gain the rights and possibilities to access culture in all its forms.

For a detailed programme visit http://sweden2009.eu.

The EACEA’s new Head of the Unit Culture

Since 1 July 2008, Corinne Mimran is the new Head of the Unit Culture within the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), following-up her predecessor Marc Jorna. The EACEA manages European funding opportunities and networks in the fields of education and training, citizenship, youth, audiovisual and culture. Their mandate covers a variety of Europe- and worldwide funding opportunities.

The ‘Audience Policies in Europe’ working group was initiated by ENCATC in 2007 to structure the exchange of knowledge, methodologies, experiences and comparative analysis within the network. Selected from the consultation of the membership, eight thematic workshops aim to stimulate analysis and debates by professionals, researchers and academics belonging to the network, but also representatives from other institutions like UNESCO or the European Council. The ENCATC working groups are closely linked with the policy priorities of the association and those of the European Agenda for Culture. The eight working groups are: Creative entrepreneurship and Education in Cultural Life, Interpretation/Mediation applied to Heritage sites, Cultural Observatories and Cultural Information and Knowledge, Audience Policies in Europe, Europe International, Bologna Process, Arts and Health, Urban Management and cultural policy of city.

The ‘Audience Policies in Europe’ working group is involved in understanding the museums’ policies addressed to visitors, which nowadays play a key role within cultural projects in museums and the cultural heritage. Cultural institutions enhance their training and social role; they pay extra attention to their local audiences, and they have to integrate their financial and economic model’s transformations. The group wishes to contribute to the European practical and theoretical problems of mediation training, management and audience policies in museums, fostering knowledge and evaluation of European cultural policies.

Three meetings were organised last year in Paris, Lyon and Venice involving representatives from Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom. These meetings are devoted to analyse the general frame of audiences’ policies, questioning territory equipment, education or pricing policies. The first meeting in Paris introduced French audience policies and the concept of democratization. The second one compared and discussed the Italian, Dutch and Spanish audience policies’ models. The last one took an interest in the Venice audience policies’ model: confronting public and private museums’ policies presented and analysed by representatives from the Fondazione Museo Civici di Venezia, the Peggy Guggenheim museum and the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities.

The following questions along with others permanently occur in the European debate: what audience segment has to be treated as priority? Who has to be reached? What are the effects of public policies in terms of enlargement and access to culture? Do European policies have common stakes and results? The working group gave prominence to the lack of relevant academic works and literature about audience policies, conversely to the numerous discourses produced by museums themselves to legitimise their actions, because of their specific identity as non-profit organizations producing goods for individual experience.

Some specific tensions and constraints were clearly identified. For instance, audience segments need to be categorised and prioritised in order to elaborate suitable programs for these segments, particularly those with a low level of education or a low taste level for the museum experience. The lack or even drop of financial and human support in medium and small size museums should be compensated by a clear and efficient pricing policy and by informing and attracting new visitors.

For more information visit ENCATC’s homepage under www.encatc.org.

By | Anne Krebs
Why is equal access to culture important for European Citizens?

Culture has a role as a vector of cohesion and integration, facilitating social inclusion and dialogue between generations. Access to culture has several important capacities. Firstly, it can build skills. One example for this is participation of young people in drama and theatre workshops, which can enhance their confidence and develop team-working and interpersonal skills and other generic transferable skills. Young people disaffected by formal education and training systems can be encouraged to seek employment or additional training in the performing arts sector or in the creative industries. Secondly, access to cultures can enhance self-esteem and identity. Involvement in cultural activities can lead to greater self-confidence and higher self-esteem, increased participation in society and in the labour market and a positive sense of identity for many groups at risk of exclusion, such as disadvantaged young people, disabled people and minority ethnic groups. Thirdly, access to culture can help overcome discrimination and promote social integration. The integration of immigrants can be promoted through language classes, drama or dance in schools, celebrating different cultures.

What actions does access to culture require on the local, national and European level?

Questions related to education and culture are above all the competence of member states, according to the subsidiary principle of the EU Treaty. EU actions complement or support those of member states and their regions. Several actions by Member states are aiming to extend access to culture for young people. These include initiatives to reduce the price of cultural activities for adolescents, or to improve information services on cultural activities. Education also has an impact here, helping to determine whether – and which - cultural activities are seen as „the norm“ by the young generation.

European programmes also aim to bring young people and culture closer together. The Youth in Action programme is for young people aged 15-28 and aims “(...) to inspire a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union’s future”. It promotes “mobility within and beyond the EU borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background”.

We expect national organisations to raise their concerns and share their experiences in a broader forum so that their views can also be heard at European level.

Why are policies and legal framework important for access to culture and how can they guarantee and improve it?

Promoting access to culture is one of the priorities of the European Agenda for Culture, in particular through the promotion of cultural heritage, multilingualism, digitalisation, cultural tourism, synergies with education, especially art education, and greater mobility of collections. Recently created national expert working groups are discussing these issues and are expected to develop practice-based suggestions for policy improvements in these fields.

An Interview with Odile Quintin

Since 2006, Odile Quintin is Director General for DG Education and Culture. Together with the Slovak Commissioner Ján Figel she is responsible for policies on education, training, youth, culture, sport and citizenship. In this role, she has played a major part in increasing the recognition of these fields at Community level.

Odile Quintin, a lawyer of French nationality, entered the European Commission in 1971. Over the first eleven years at the Commission, she held various positions at DG Agriculture and then at DG External Relations. She joined DG Employment in 1982, where she spent a large part of her career. From 2000 to 2005, she was Director General for DG Employment.

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Coherent policies, covering issues such as pricing and culture-education synergies, can be built upon lessons learned in practice, through project and programme-led activities. As mentioned above, member states are sharing experiences in this field, with a view to develop policy recommendations.
How can the EC ensure that the programmes and policies formulated reach the local level?

To effectively engage with the local level, we have to rely on the combined efforts of the EU, of member state national and regional authorities and of the cultural sector itself. Of course member states have quite different administrative structures and in some cases responsibility for culture policy is a regional matter. Within culture civil society, we also rely on European level organisations disseminating information towards their national members – and vice versa, we expect national organisations to raise their concerns and share their experiences in a broader forum so that their views can also be heard at European level.

How can the cultural sector be motivated to policy making? How can civil society assist and improve policy making?

One important element of the European Agenda for Culture adopted in 2007 was the suggestion of a more structured dialogue between the European Commission and culture civil society. As a result, three „platforms“ have been created, bringing together organisations at European level active in the field of culture. One of these platforms, chaired by Interarts and with around 40 members including NEMO, is dedicated to issues of access to culture.

Museums are a link between Europe's heritage and the citizens of today and tomorrow.

The platforms act as a channel for cultural stakeholders to provide concrete input and practice-based policy recommendations and – in this way – can actively contribute to the implementation and further development of the European Agenda for Culture.

In which way will the platform's recommendations be part of future EC policies?

The platforms are expected to produce policy recommendations to be discussed with the broader culture sector; one upcoming opportunity for such a discussion will be the next European Culture Forum taking place on 29-30 September in Brussels. Recommendations can be addressed to the EU or, in many cases, to national or regional authorities. Policy making in any field has to take account of views and proposals from a wide range of stakeholders; a more structured dialogue with the culture sector should help ensure that the experience and voice of the sector is heard more clearly.

How can especially museums and the heritage sector contribute to a safeguarded and equal Access to Culture for all European citizens?

Museums are a link between Europe’s heritage and the citizens of today and tomorrow. They can bring the riches of our cultural diversity to the fore, bridge different cultures and raise awareness of the common elements of our cultural heritage. The long tradition of sharing the cultural heritage in their custody with other museums and institutions is one means by which museums can make a major contribution to improved access to culture for all EU citizens. Improving the conditions for mobility of collections is a priority area for action identified by member states and a national expert group is working to propose measures aimed at creating facilitating and promoting the mobility of collections between EU museums. This includes a wide range of issues, from incentive mechanisms for the mobility of collections and how to tackle legal and administrative obstacles to mobility, to exchanging best practices in the prevention of theft and the return of stolen goods.

The digitisation of works from European museums is another means by which access to culture can be promoted. Digitised cultural assets are important in sustaining and promoting cultural diversity in a global environment. The European Commission has co-ordinated work on Europeana, the multilingual and digital access point to Europe’s cultural heritage. Through this point, users can search different collections in Europe’s cultural institutions in their own language, without having to visit multiple sites.

The traditional sharing of cultural heritage with other museums and institutions is one means by which museums can make a major contribution to improved access to culture for all EU citizens.

The European Commission highlights excellence in the field of the preservation of cultural heritage and awareness building through its annual European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/ Europa Nostra Awards. In the 2009 edition 138 applicants from 24 countries across Europe competed for a prize. In the final selection 28 of these, from 15 countries, were chosen. A number of these are specifically aimed at raising people’s awareness about cultural heritage. They create dynamic links between the past and the present by involving people in their culture. Together with the Council of Europe the Commission contributes to the organisation of the yearly European Heritage Days which take place in 49 participating countries. This event makes known cultural heritage to masses of people across Europe. During the 2007 event 25 million people visited the heritage sites which opened their doors for these days to the general public. Furthermore, the Commission stimulates cultural cooperation through its Culture Programme. In 2008 a total of 264 projects were chosen from 819 applications. 52 of these had a focus on cultural heritage, many of which contribute to the opening of Europe’s cultural heritage to the broader public through a variety of means.

By | Johannes Schmitt-Tegge
A short history and future outlook

A group of nine high ranked institutions from eight European member states recently received a grant from the European Commission for their project ‘Collections Mobility 2.0’. The grant has been awarded within the content of the European Culture Programme (2007-2013). Nemo is associated member of the project.

Exhibitions and museums play a vital part in spreading knowledge of and appreciation for our richly varied European culture. Sharing our heritage is of great importance to the European idea and stimulates intercultural dialogue within Europe. Therefore we should enhance the right of EU citizens to access common cultural heritage by improving the mobility of our collections between member states.

In 2003, this topic appeared for the first time on the European agenda. At conferences in Greece and Italy initial ideas were delivered on the purpose to stimulate a stronger circulation of museum objects for the benefit of European citizens. Large parts of Europe’s museum collections are kept in storage and are presented rather seldom which means a low profit for cultural property.

The ideas on collections mobility fell on fertile ground. After the kick offs in Greece and Italy, a number of conferences were held on the topic by the subsequent EU presidencies: the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Finland and Germany. In 2005, the expert report ‘Lending to Europe’ was published which identified obstacles for the exchange of cultural moveable heritage between member states. This report and the conferences resulted in ‘The Action Plan for the EU Promotion of Museum Collections’ Mobility and Loan Standard’. During the Finnish Presidency in 2006, working groups were set up to produce documents, procedures and proposals related to specific areas of the lending and borrowing practice.

A number of dedicated museum professionals and policy makers evolved from these networks who took the initiative to further promote and accomplish the full mobility of museum collections. The project ‘Collections Mobility 2.0’ (CM 2.0) aims at implementing the progress made so far into the daily practice of museum workers at all levels. ‘Getting practical’ is the main ambition of this programme.

Furthermore, an innovative training package will be developed covering best standards and practices on lending and borrowing. The package will be made available to each member state by a ‘train the trainers’ principle: CM 2.0 provides three-day expert courses that will cover subjects like insurance, legislation, indemnity, long term loans, standards, safety and environmental conditions. The courses are open to delegates of each country. After the course all delegates can implement the training programme in their own countries using the training package. This approach is quite different to the classical way of organising international conferences.

To sustain the information of the training package and to centralise the relevant information in a practical and accessible way for all trainers, trainees and other professionals a digital platform will be operated. Additionally, a handbook providing theoretical background on the subjects will be published. It goes without saying that NEMO plays an important part in spreading information on the content of the CM 2.0 programme and that the organisation therefore has been chosen as ‘sustainability partner’.

By combining the training package, portal and handbook and by promoting all three together, the different layers of museum workers dealing with collection mobility on a professional level will be reached. The outcome will be a change of mindset as well as an improvement of knowledge throughout the EU. Ultimately, this will result in more mobility of objects and collections throughout Europe.

The institutions cooperating in this project are:
- Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN)
- Erfgoed Nederland (The Netherlands Institute for Heritage)
- General Directorate of Fine Arts and Cultural Goods of Spanish Ministry of Culture
- Hellenic Ministry of Culture-Directorate of Museums, Exhibitions & Educational Programmes – Department of Exhibitions & Museum Research
- Finnish National Gallery
- The Romanian Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs
- Agency for the Arts and Heritage of the Flemish Community
- Department of Culture Media and Sports of the UK
- State Museums Berlin, Institute for Museum Research
- Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

The project is also supported by associated partners from eleven different member states.

By | Frank Bergevoet
euromuse.net enhances its exhibition portal with more languages

English, German, Italian and, starting in July 2009, Spanish and Portuguese languages will strengthen the character of the euromuse portal as a truly European service. In order to attract the museum audience in even more countries, the website navigation will also be enhanced with French, Dutch, and Finnish by the end of the year.

Currently, euromuse.net presents more than 180 museums and their exhibitions from 19 European countries – a considerable increase of about ten percent within the last months. Among the latest entries are the Finnish National Gallery in Helsinki and the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana. All given information on the exhibitions is available in English as well as in the local language from the museum’s area. The website navigation is available in further languages.

The portal feeds internet search engines multilingually. Every exhibition or museum entry on euromuse.net is enriched by keywords and related to a list of topics in all of the website’s languages. With many internet users looking for exhibitions and related content through search engines like Google only in their mother tongue, exhibitions can normally only be found, if the languages of the search query and the description coincide. By joining the portal, exhibitions of the participating museums will also be indexed in the other major languages, thus increasing their visibility across the European continent.

Euromuse.net is always on the lookout for new participants who organise exhibitions of international interest. Membership is free of charge for museums. Each museum simply delivers several images – which will be presented only for the duration of the exhibition – along with descriptions in their local language and English. To join the service or to receive detailed information about it, please visit the portal at www.euromuse.net and click on ‘how to join euromuse.net’. Alternatively, please contact the project managers in English, German, Spanish or Italian language at contact@euromuse.net.

By | Thorsten Siegmann

PRACTICS: See Mobile See Practical

Cross-border mobility of artists and other cultural professionals is not only one of the objectives of the European Union’s Culture Programme but also a priority on the European Commission’s Agenda. Therefore, in June 2008, the European Commission published a call for proposals for “Networking of existing structures supporting mobility in the cultural sectors”. Four projects were selected under this call, one of which is PRACTICS, subtitled ‘See Mobile See Practical’. PRACTICS is the follow-up of the project ‘Mobile Home’ which was carried out in 2006 and resulted in a study on ‘Impediments to Mobility in the EU Live Performances Sector and Possible Solutions’. It is a three-year project coordinated by the Finnish Theatre Information Centre which joined forces with twelve other cultural organisations from six EU-countries.

The main aim of the project is to develop so-called ‘EU Cultural Mobility Contact Points’ (CMCPs). The CMCPs are first entry-points to a country for cultural professionals and their objective is to offer concrete administrative support to help artists and cultural workers overcome obstacles in pursing an international career. This involves answering questions, providing handbooks and advice on legal, fiscal and social matters.

The task of the CMCPs is to offer user-friendly information to both incoming foreign cultural workers and also to outgoing nationals who want to work in other EU-countries. The information service is, however, not only limited to the mobility of individuals. The CMCPs cater for all cultural sub-sectors and are also concerned with the mobility of works of art. The project therefore invited NEMO and the Romanian Museum Network as associated partners to contribute to the development of the CMCPs with specific input from the heritage sector.

Four CMCPs are piloted by Kunstenloket in Belgium, Stichting Internationale Culturele Activiteiten SICA in the Netherlands, Arts Council of Wales and Interarts Foundation in Spain. On the basis of these concrete cases the project will identify key mobility stimulators and formulate recommendations for keeping up the network of CMCPs in the future.

For more detailed information on the project and its partners, to contribute mobility experiences or to subscribe to the project newsletter, please visit www.practics.org.

By | Martina Marti
As the museum landscape in Europe broadens and competition between cities grows tougher, countries struggle to find their place and recognition for their museums amongst the international community. In Finland museum professionals are working hard to direct attention of Finns and foreigners to new developments and recent improvements in the nation’s museums. In fact, the predicted visitor increase for 2008 was 9 percent with special exhibitions and buildings most contributing to this growth. In questions of museum density Finland beats many other European countries with it’s more than 1,000 museum institutions for only 5.3 million inhabitants. One third of these is professionally run and receives 4.5 million visitors annually. They are funded by the state and municipality by 136.1 million euros and have a total spending of 171.3 million euros, breaking down to 37 euros per visitor. Many of the institutions financed by the state and municipalities are private companies, foundations or associations and therefore could also be called private-public partnerships.

Even though the museums’ share of public funding has increased of late, libraries and performing arts remain the dominant sectors of cultural spending, since the Finns think highly of their public library system, and classical music and opera are flagships of Finnish culture abroad. However, the state also grants financial support with its system of partial state aid (PSA) if museums meet certain standards. Although there is no fixed system of accreditation or certification, the Finnish Museums Association has set several standards as general outline for professional work in the museum field. Institutions who meet these standards can apply for single state funding programmes, making government aid possible even to those museums that are not part of the PSA system.

Similar to capitals in other countries, Helsinki still holds the majority of highlights in the nation’s museum landscape. Nonetheless, the Finnish government has recognised the need for decentralisation of cultural institutions in order to promote regions outside of the capital area. Though Helsinki is still the major hotspot, interest for professionally run museums is spreading to other parts of the country. One important yet inconspicuous example for decentralisation is Sarka, the Museum of Agriculture. After 60 years of political debate on the matter of how and where to build an agricultural museum, the contract was awarded to the city of Loimaa, situated in the southwest of Finland. The house of brick and red tiles is typical of the traditional style of rural architecture, while a modern interior explains the history and development of Finnish agriculture to the visitor. Exhibition design reaches beyond merely praising new media and instead follows a philosophy of ‘hands on’, waking visitors’ interest by an interactive approach. Sarka is maybe the most radical way of decentralising: it is located in the remote countryside and only accessible by car, since the only way of public transportation is a bus line on the Turku-Tampere highway and does not stop near the museum.

Another example of decentralisation is the Maritime Centre Vellamo in the city of Kotka close to the Russian border and home of the country’s largest export harbour, now housing the Maritime Museum of Finland and the Museum of
Kymenlaakso under one roof. The modern glass construction by architects Lahdelma and Mahlamäkit, recently opened in July 2008 and counting 71,000 visitors in the first five months, resembles a passenger ship in which strong, curved lines evoke the wavy motions of the seas. As the Maritime Museum was originally based in Helsinki, relocating it to Kotka into an impressive building was a major step for scattering museum potential into a still developing region.

A noteworthy phenomenon in Finland’s museum landscape is the attempt to merge several museums with different collections and distinct content under one roof. The WeeGee Exhibition Centre in Espoo, a neighbouring city of Helsinki, combines five separate museums in one complex along with other services. Here it is EMMA, a large museum for contemporary art, which serves as visitor magnet and driving force of the four other, smaller units on cultural history, cultures from outside of Europe, toys and horology. Although each unit works by itself, the directorate still counts on guests being driven into other exhibitions after finishing their first visit. The strategy seems to work at least partially: an average visitor enters 2.5 of WeeGee’s museums. An expansion of the centre and a new design museum are in planning.

The Museum Centre Vapriiki in Tampere works with the same approach and emphasises the potential of a ‘family centre’. Here, about a dozen exhibitions with quite diverging content are shown every year. Currently Vapriiki is simultaneously showing rock photographs, dolls and toys, an exhibition on the civil war in Tampere, another on electric innovations, a third on the province of Pirkanmaa and sports collectibles in the Finnish Hockey Hall of Fame; a shoe museum, artefacts of the Sioux-Indian ‘Sitting Bull’ and an exhibition on Christmas trees starting in October. As one tickets grants admission to all museums, Vapriiki hopes to create a family experience, attracting visitors of all age groups with its wide-ranging themes.

As the brochure notes, Vapriiki offers “something for everyone”, where a large restaurant bridges the gap between two visits. Despite the possible tendency of accumulating an arbitrary jumble of objects, directors are still aware of the need to follow a strict collection policy. As Kalle Kallio, the director of the Finnish Labour Museum Werstas in Tampere, puts it: “The question is not what we collect. The question is what we don’t collect.” It is not clear whether or not the Finns prefer this museum centre-system to separated, individual institutions, but the financial advantages of cost-sharing for combined administration, educational and other museum services are clear.

The Finnish National Gallery (FNG) works with the opposite approach: the Ateneum Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, the Sinebrychoff Art Museum and the Central Art Archives coexist under the FNG as umbrella organisation without presenting themselves to their visitors as a collective. Instead, each institution has established itself as individual brand while the FNG remains in the background.

As Finland’s museum potential grows, cultural policy is also keeping pace. For instance, a pilot project for abolishing entrance fees to museums has been started and the planned budget for the next two years has been increased. The future of the museum sector will depend to a great extent on how the recently reformed government subsidy system will actually improve the financial situation in the museum sector.

By | Johannes Schmitt-Tegge
In the course of two centuries, state archaeological museums have grown to be the largest and most homogeneous group of museums in the country; they operate under the direct control of the state and still remain at the heart of state policy in the sector. With the exception of a handful of institutions of national scope established by the state (Museum of Greek Folk Art, National Museum, state museums of contemporary art in Athens and Thessaloniki), museums of other categories, including art, ethnographic, local history, natural history, maritime, technology and science museums, have largely been established on the initiative of private individuals, foundations and associations. A large number of these museums are financially supported by the Ministry of Culture.

Today, the Ministry of Culture portal (www.culture.gr) lists 232 museums and galleries. However, in the absence of a recent comprehensive museum survey, this number must by no means be supposed to represent the total of museums in the country. A national accreditation scheme was provided for by recent legislation, but its implementation is still pending. A national Museum Council serving as an advisory board to the Minister of Culture on museum policy began operation in 2006.

Developments of the last 20 years demonstrate the growth and increased visibility of the museum sector, such as the organisation of international conferences, the growing amount of literature on museum theory and practice, the publication of museum magazines and the establishment of postgraduate museum studies courses.

At policy level, a growing recognition of the importance of the sector combined with a new emphasis placed on increased access to cultural heritage was manifested in various ways, most notably the modernisation of infrastructure: new museums were built and a large number of museums throughout the country were expanded, upgraded their visitor facilities, improved accessibility for the disabled and redisplayed their permanent collections using funds from the 2nd and 3rd Community Support Framework Programmes (CSF). The Athens Olympic Games in 2004 sped up the transformation of many museums in the capital. In addition, several major archaeological museums were given some sort of autonomy from central government management, the most notable example being the New Acropolis Museum.

Moreover, alongside the strategic development of educational resources for children and young people and the launch of special events and annual celebrations in museums and sites, free entry is adopted as an additional measure to attract and engage local audiences. State museums are free on Sundays during the low season. Under a special programme of the Ministry of Culture, free entry is provided for sensitive social groups (e.g. low income elderly, unemployed, people with disabilities, drug addicts in rehabilitation etc.) all year round. Furthermore, several museums in Athens offer free entry on a special day of the week on which they stay open until late in the evening.

During the last ten years, museums have slowly begun to explore the opportunities provided by new technologies for making better use of their collections. Interactive exhibits and educational applications, multimedia titles, information kiosks and museum websites have proved extremely popular and are still in high demand today. In the next years, an ever-growing number of digital collections will become available online through a national portal intended to offer integrated access to distributed cultural assets and Europeana.

By | Sofia Tsilidou

Greece is situated in the south of the Balkan Peninsula and is a part of the European East Mediterranean Region. It has a population of 11.2 million inhabitants, with over one third of these living in Athens, the capital and largest city. Tourism is the country’s second largest industry after shipping. Greece is a member of UNESCO (1946), the Council of Europe (1949) and the eurozone (2002).