





# Searching for Excellence

European Museum Academy  
2009—2019

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# Foreword

Massimo Negri  
Andreja Rihter  
Wim van der Weiden

When we came to the decision to establish an Academy, we knew that the fundamental capital of this enterprise would be our experience in the museum field, our network of colleagues with a proven expertise, our mutual trust. Our friend and distinguished colleague, the late Jorge Wagensberg, immediately wrote the following lines which reflected exactly our intentions and our feelings:

*“...the Academy is the scenario where innovations are deeply discussed and widely validated. Innovations concerning the museological philosophy, the museographical language and practice as well as the role of museums in contemporary society. Although museums started a long time ago, they are still searching for their own identity. Europe has probably given the main contribution to the big family of museums. That’s why this is the very moment when a European Museum Academy is needed...”*

His words are still valid and have proved to be prophetic as the Academy has grown and it is actively involved in a variety of projects. On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the European Museum Academy Foundation we would like to express our gratitude to all partners — individuals or institutions — who have believed in us.



x.



y.

# Building Bridges

EMA 2009-2019

Andreja Rihter  
*President of European  
Museum Academy*

The Berlin Call to Action from November 2018 is one of the most important outcomes of the European Year of Cultural Heritage. It is a statement directed to the member states of the European Union and in a broader sense the 48 signatories of the Council of Europe.

“Cultural heritage must be given a much bigger importance in education activities – both formal and informal – for all ages. This will stimulate stronger public engagement for the safeguard and transmission of our cultural heritage. Special attention must be given to history education and heritage interpretation placed in a broader context of Europe’s past, present and future. This will equip Europe’s citizens, and especially our children and youth , with the necessary tools for gaining a deeper understanding of the ongoing encounters and exchanges within Europe as well as between Europe and other cultures of the world. All of these activities will help build more respectful and meaningful relationships between

people and the places where they live, work or visit. This will also facilitate a better understanding, respect and inclusion of new inhabitants in Europe.”

The European Museum Academy, member of the European Heritage Alliance, endorsed the Call wholeheartedly. One can say, it did so from the very beginning of its existence. After all Article 2 of EMA's statutes is as follows:

“The foundation aims at promoting the development of researches in the field of museum innovation, at stimulating new ideas and experience, offering its services as an indicator for (new) professionals in museums and cultural professionals in Europe. The foundation attempts to realize its aims by offering a platform to museum professionals of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds in order to distribute the experiences of museums based on successful, innovative projects of museum, by encouraging museum visitors' studies in order to better adapt the quality of museum collections to a wider audience.”

In practice it means that EMA always collaborates with other organisations/institutions in order to achieve its aims and goals, as the contributions of my colleagues in this booklet make clear.

Besides being the President of EMA I am, in my daily life, director of the Forum of Slavic Cultures: an international foundation uniting 13 Slavic countries. Its main objective is to connect Slavic cultures and give them presence in the global cultural and social arena. To that end FSC has involved EMA in its training programmes and its Award scheme. The contributions of EMA experts are indispensable in the courses of the International Summer School of Museology organized by FSC at the Piranova Centre in Piran, Slovenia, with the

cooperation of the Primorska University in Koper.

EMA is also actively involved in the Živa Award competition. This annual Award for the best Slavic Museum, dating from 2012 onwards, was launched by FSC with the aim to promote Slavic Museums and to establish their presence in the world of museums, and to strengthen the impact of museums at the local, regional, national and international level. In the jury of the Živa Award, two jurors are always experts from EMA. Together FSC and EMA are building a new network of museums that almost remained hidden or even were forgotten. Since 2014 we have been recording an increasing number of candidates/museums who decide to run for the EMYA, DASA, Luigi Micheletti, Hands On!, Europa Nostra Award. The Živa award serves their purpose well and the partnership between EMA and FSC is growing, as we have recognized our shared vision also in other projects, in particular in education and training projects, the organisation of colloquia and Kenneth Hudson seminars.

The above described partnership between FSC and EMA is just one example that EMA is a foundation that networks and forges partnerships. What differentiates EMA is its pursuit on creative partnerships of equals working on recognizing excellence in museums. The experts of EMA are united through mutual trust, respect for efforts in different regions and diversity of goals of our profession that is always subject to the particularities of one's national policy. Different developments in our profession will not keep us from building bridges, that constitute the core of our activities.





x.



y.



z.

x. EMA Lesvos, 2016  
y. EMA Augsburg, 2016  
z. EMA Lesvos, 2016, Haig Balian, Microproia



a.



b.



c.

- a. Bologna 2013, LEM project
- b. Jorge Wagensberg
- c. HOI 2015, Amsterdam

# The European Museum Academy

2009 — 2019 and onwards

## 1. Origins

Brussels, Central Station, 29 June 2009, 7 p.m.

Two gentlemen in a simple bar, drinking a beer after an exhausting, but inspiring brainstorm meeting. Subject: what do European museums need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The meeting was over, but not the thinking. That's how at that very moment in a Belgian bar the notion of an academy was born.

Four months later, 28 October 2019 the European Museum Academy was founded. What had these founding fathers in mind? Soon to include 10 museum experts from all over Europe as well?

They considered the time right to establish a dynamic and forward-thinking organisation to stimulate innovative thinking in European museums. To that end a first meeting was held in Strasbourg, on 28 November 2009.

This enthusiastic group of professionals in the museum field and the wider cultural sector wanted to keep alive the legacy of the distinguished museologist Kenneth Hudson (1916-1999) on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. All members of the "Strasbourg Group" has worked with Kenneth Hudson for many years in the European Museum of the Year Award scheme, in the area of industrial archeology and in other fields which benefitted from the pioneering contributions of Kenneth Hudson.

In 1977 Kenneth Hudson created, with John Letts, the European Mu-

seum of the Year Award (EMYA). As he always said, he was the first cosmopolitan who had "museologist" as his **profession** in his passport. And rightly so: he had an unequalled knowledge of museums and of European culture. His views on the museum world were and still are refreshing, and more often than not provocative. He was a highly independent-minded museum guru. (*See the EMA publication "A tiger in a museum is not a tiger", Ljubljana, 2017, ISBN 978-961-94274-1-5 and the quotations throughout this booklet.*)

Assuming Kenneth Hudson was the first "museologist" means that he was the first "scientist" in the world of museums. It might have been the very moment that a museum academy was needed.

The Akademia was historically a school dedicated to Athena, the goddess of wisdom, outside the city walls of ancient Athens. Today an Academy is an institution of higher learning and research (and sometimes of honorary membership). An institution where innovations are deeply discussed and widely validated. Innovations concerning the museological philosophy, the museographical language and practice as well as the role of museums in contemporary society.

There are scientific academies, art academies, cinema and music academies, academies for languages etc. Museums were founded a long time ago, but they did not have their own academy. Europe has about 38.000 museums, more than on any oth-

er continent. It deserves, it needs an academy: a **European Museum Academy**. That was the unanimous conclusion during the constitutional meeting in Strasbourg.

An academy is based on its reputation of knowledge, insights and experience. Naming it academy means that we know what we are talking about and that we strive for higher and new levels in museological thinking. 10 years of EMA has confirmed our view!

## 2. The growth

The philosophy behind EMA linked up pre-eminently with the Dutch type of a foundation. That is why EMA is a foundation under Dutch law. Defined as “a legal entity created by a legal act which has no members and whose purpose is to realize an objective stated in its statutes using capital allocated to such purpose”. Organisations like Europa Nostra and Europeana for instance are foundations under Dutch law because of its clear and simple structure. And it happens that these European organisations have also their headquarter in The Hague!

In the 10 years of its existence the starting group of 13 museum experts has grown considerably. Nowadays EMA consists of experts, advisers and representatives from 36 European countries and 4 from outside Europe, 83 people in total (as at May 1, 2019).

EMA is not an educational organization although its members are regularly involved in professional train-

ing and exchange programmes. EMA is a society of museum experts of different national and cultural backgrounds, united for the advancement of museological knowledge.

## 3. Activities

What have the EMA experts -all volunteers by the way- done in the past 10 years? Based on our extensive expertise we intended to set up a new organisation to stimulate innovative thinking in European museums, disseminating the results among the present and future generations of museum professionals. To achieve this goal we focused mainly on three lines of activity:

### a.

#### International training programmes.

EMA has participated or participates in many mastercourses/training programmes. They cover different aspects of contemporary museological debate while sharing a common basis in terms of an in-depth overview of recent developments in the European or global museum panorama. EMA provides lecturers, didactic materials and organizes study visits for students (all at postgraduate level and frequently already working in museums or similar institutions).

Long lasting collaboration has EMA with the International University of Languages and Media (I.U.L.M.), Milan, Italy. Since 2010 the Mastercourse in European Museology has attracted students from all over Eu-

rope: the online edition of the course “New Media and Museum Communication” got from its start in 2017 students from all over the world.

The International Summer School of Museology in Piran, Slovenia is organized by the Forum of Slavic Cultures, EMA and the Primorska University since 2011.

In the past 10 years EMA has also been involved in the International Course of Scientific Museography, CosmoCaixa, Spain, the International School of Museology of the Museum of Recent History in Celje, Slovenia, the mastercourse Public History of the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Italy and so on..

#### b.

### European seminars and professional meetings, publications.

Workshops and focus groups meetings have been organized during the past 10 years. A great variety of subjects characterized them: from the role of Bank Foundations creating or supporting museums to Intercultural Dialogue and European Museums. The most recent one “The Art of Attraction: Audience Development for Museums” was a cooperation between the Bavarian Museum Academy and EMA.

EMA played an active role in the EU financed LEM project (The Learning Museums) — lecturing, contributing to the publications and attending the conferences were all part of our duties. The final conference took place in September 2013.

Lectures by EMA experts have been provided for example to the Courtauld Institute of Arts in London, Museum Agbar, Barcelona, the University of Palermo and at the annual Best in Heritage conference in Dubrovnik.

Every year the Kenneth Hudson seminar is held somewhere in Europe, always dealing with a hot item concerning the museum profession. “Museums and Digital Creativity” and “Heritage of Totalitarian Regimes” have been cycles of focus group meetings/ Kenneth Hudson seminars.

Contributions to many publications has been delivered by EMA experts, too many to recall. And in a wide range of subjects. Two examples: “Banks and Museums Beyond Sponsorship: an Overview of Museums created by Bank Foundations”, Bologna 2011 and “Proceedings of the Kenneth Hudson Seminars 2009-2010”. Bologna 2011.

In preparation is a publication of a research project “The museum of the future- Between Physical Place and Virtual Space”. And a very practical handbook about how to develop a museum concept: “The Methodology of Building Exhibits”. At the latest these EMA publications will be available in 2020.

Most interesting because of its diversity in museum matters is the online series of *Articles of the Month*. EMA has the intention to publish the most striking ones in printed form. All articles are available on the EMA website.

## c.

## Awards.

EMA jurors are active in 5 award schemes; the Micheletti Award on behalf of the Micheletti Foundation, Italy, the Živa Award in cooperation with the Forum of Slavic Cultures, the Children in Museums Award together with Hands On! International Association of Children's Museums, Heritage in Motion in cooperation with Europa Nostra and Europeana and the DASA Award on behalf of the Federal Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, Germany.

In 2011 the EMA Prize was launched. This prize is not given each year and is not drawn from lists of existing candidates. The aim is to recognize outstanding results of organisations, researchers and cultural institutions in creating pioneering museums or producing studies and carrying on projects of European relevance. It is an award presented at the discretion of the EMA Board, based on recommendations received.

## Winners:

2011: Galileo Museum, Florence

2013: Europeana, The Hague

2016: Polin, Warsaw

The EMA Board honoured Ioanna Papantoniou with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

(for information about EMA and the Awards see the chapter "The meaning of the Awards as providers for scientific research.")

## 4.

## Never walk alone

EMA is the most independent museum organisation in Europe. And so it will remain. At the same time it looks for cooperation and collaboration with other (cultural) institutions in different fields.

From the very beginning EMA has built up an impressive network of organizational or individual partners, also outside Europe, which are active in a variety of different areas of museum-related issues - organisations with the same interests in the museum and cultural sector. Examples are the Network of Museum Organizations (NEMO), the Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning and Creativity (NCK), the State Agency for Museums and Collections in Poland (NIMOZ), the Piraeus Bank Group Foundation, Athens and many others. These are mostly formalized by agreement, contract or memorandum of understanding.

Among the founding members of Europeana were successively three experts of EMA.

12 Associate Partners support EMA also financially.

Finally, from conviction EMA joins the European Heritage Alliance, an informal platform of about 45 European or international networks and organisations active in the wider field of cultural heritage. In this capacity played EMA its role in the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage.

## 5.

**The future of EMA**

In the autumn of 2014 the Board installed the EMA 2020 Task Force. Members belonged to the new generation of EMA experts. They were asked to redefine the strategy of activities of EMA and to develop a clear vision of what EMA intends to be in 2020. In other words, to sharpen the profile of EMA as an academy and to make clear for instance that awards are used for academic purposes/research.

The final report with a lot of very useful advice was presented to the Board in November 2019. Discussions about it and the implementation of the advices are now part of the daily running of EMA. The organizational structure has been redefined: duties of the Board, Experts and Representatives are described.

The Ionian University of Corfu will store the digital archive of EMA, consisting of competition entry details, photographs and videos etc. It will be also available to scholars and researchers.

## 6.

**The future of museums:  
hot items**

The number of museums has increased enormously in almost all European countries. And the subjects dealt with in museums has changed considerably. Nowadays there are museums on innocence, imagination, peace and so on. In this kind of museums Keith Thomson's words become true:

“In the future museums will no longer be defined by their collections, but collections will be defined by museums”. (Keith S. Thomson: *Treasures on Earth*, London 2002).

Museums are not seen any more as places in which to preserve and exhibit collections. The emphasis is now on the social dimension of the museum's mission. Museums must offer safe environments, stimulate intellectual curiosity, be meeting places where learning and enjoyment are combined. Museums reflect social change and they are at the same time actively involved in social processes.

The impact of multimedia/social media is already important, but will grow considerably in the near future.

All these matters will influence the policy of EMA and will play a role in our activities. In particular EMA will keep an eye on the following items:

## a.

**Return of cultural property to  
the countries of origin**

Many years ago UNESCO accepted a resolution about what nowadays is called “plunder art”. The only country which used the resolution was Greece, reclaiming the so-called Elgin Marbles. Since the former colonies of European states become more and more stabilized and are looking for their own identity they want their cultural property returned. Collections from former colonies are not only on show or in store in museums of Ethnology/Antropol-

ogy, but also in institutions like the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

The willingness to return “plunder art” has been built up by the speech of President Macron of France, who promised that France will be a fore-runner in doing so. How to do it must be a matter for serious research.

### b.

#### The mushrooming of private museums

Private collectors usually donated their collections to existing, mostly public museums, during their lifetime or after their death. That is almost over. Europe counts 317 private museums in 2018. 70% of them have been opened since 2000. Examples: Fondation Prada in Milan, Louis Vuitton Museum, Paris, the Garage, Moscow, the Broad Collection, Los Angeles, Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar, The Netherlands. The majority charge no entrance fee.

What will be the impact of private museums on the European museum scene? Can ICOM Ukraine for instance continue to refuse private museums membership of ICOM?

Private museums have Freedom in Collecting, Freedom in Showing/ Displaying, Freedom in Loans, Freedom in Employment and Freedom in Finances.

What influence might the rise of private museums have on the policy of “regular” museums?

### c.

#### Deaccessioning

The problem of ever growing collections, packed into over-full storerooms, is widely recognized by museums today. Since the 1990s of the former century museum professionals all over the world are wondering how selective acquisitioning and deaccessioning can be part of their museum’s policy.

But the problem has not been tackled yet. Many museums are still building new storerooms because the collection has grown.

Disposal is an extremely delicate subject. The existing guidelines for disposal are extremely severe.

Deaccessioning must become a widely accepted instrument enabling museums to survive.

How to achieve this?

These hot items will keep the experts of the European Museum Academy busy during the coming 10 years!



Bursa 2013

*The museums which do well are likely to be those which possess charm and which stimulate questions and discussion. Those which simply provide information have no future, because today one can get the same information in other and easier ways. A museum's activities may quite well become more important than its exhibitions.*



x. Lesvos, 2016  
y. Micheletti Award, Glasgow 2014  
z. Museu Chapelaria, 2015

# The principle of the communicability of unintelligible complexities

Massimo Negri  
EMA Scientific Director

In July 2018 NEMO – the Network of European Museum Organisations – published online a book to which also EMA largely contributed titled ‘European Museum Awards – A guide to quality work in museums’, for those interested it can be downloaded from their website <https://www.ne-mo.org/>. In a very appropriate wording the publication is presented as follows:

*“The publication presents an overview of existing award schemes together with easily accessible information of how museums can apply to the awards. The aim of the publication is to encourage museums to become acquainted with some of the most important award schemes in Europe and to consider the idea of competing for one of them. As a museum applying for an award, it has to scrutinize itself and reflect over their past years’ achievements as well as where it is heading in the future. After all, assessing the quality of museum work also means assessing how the role of museums and the meaning of the word “museum” itself have changed over time.”*

In its 86 pages, eight schemes are examined and it is interesting to note that in six of them EMA is involved in one way or the other. Of course in the EMA Awards, but (just to offer an example) also in the Children in Museums Award, where EMA manages the application process and provides some of the Judges or in the Živa Award where EMA has trained the Jury and every year designate a few members of the Jury. This means that running an Award and assessing candidates has become during the years one the main skills of our Academy

recognized by several other organizations which have wisely benefited from our long experience in this kind of activity. It is a very special kind of experience, one which needs not only a good basis in terms of personal experience in doing things (more than merely writing about them), but a wide knowledge of the evolution of the European museum scene year after year. To be a member of a Jury (whatever the subject, if any, or the format of the award scheme and its procedures) means to reach a certain balance between being a specialist and a generalist. In the report written by Ben Boersema of the discussion on ‘Museum advisors, generalists and/or specialists?’ held at the 3rd Emac Conference on Wednesday 9 October 1996 this question is approached in the following terms:

*“A museum advisor is a specialist and a generalist. He has to know the gaps in his own knowledge, and he has to bring in the specialism of others when needed. A museum advisor should have an overall helicopterview, but even as an generalist he will have his own specialism. The larger the organisation of museum advisors, the more specialisms will be represented. But even a museum advisor in a large organisation sometimes has to refer a museum to a specialist. The specialism of the museum advisor seems to be his ability to define and analyse a problem and to find the right people to solve it, due to his knowledge of the ways outside his own organisation.....*

*When a museum advisor starts his career he acts as any specialist, but the confrontation with many differ-*

*ent problems and finding the solutions makes him a generalist in the long run. The wide scope is the surplus value of the museum advisor."*

There are many aspects of this job description which can be adopted also for the EMA experts when playing the role of members of a Jury (which of course it is not the one and only role they are requested to play, as they are frequently involved in lecturing, teaching, writing etc.) and especially the vision of the job as a 'dynamic process' which requires a certain openness to change and a long-term growth in his/her knowledge both from the point of view of consolidated or emerging theories and the fieldwork. That is to say, visiting and experiencing meeting the people who have created something which is now under the critical eyes of the judges, but before this was an idea which became a project and at a given moment has turned into reality. Here psychology and a certain degree of human curiosity is essential if one wants to understand better 'the case' and to put it correctly within the more general framework of the so-called European museum landscape.

Nevertheless to understand is something different from to describe or to be informed. Einstein used to say that:

*"the incomprehensible thing about the world is that the world is comprehensible"*.

As our colleague, the late Jorge Wagensberg, wrote in his formidable book 'The Total Museum', SACYR, Barcelona 2006:

*"What does understand mean? Complexity is intelligible if it's possible to compress it within a certain category, if it's reducible to a more compact essence."*

And although he continued, making some examples of the intelligibility of certain processes and their implications such as the fact that

*"to classify is to understand ....a fundamental equation in physics is the comprehension of all those phenomena that it is capable to compress..."*

In the end he notes:

*"Other forms of knowledge elicit the opposite, even: unintelligibility exists, mystery exists."*

And Jorge was the same person who solved the never-ending discussions about criteria in the assessment process, saying more or less something like this: we define our criteria year after year through our choices. In other terms we cannot divide a certain set of criteria from the actual process of selecting, picking up, adopting a given number of practical cases (one could say 'museological events') as the concretization, or if you prefer the embodiment, of a general concept, of a working hypothesis or of a process. The temporary conclusion, and it cannot be than temporary, is that the criteria are generated by the abstract knowledge as well as by the observation of the "museological phenomena" in a dialectical process. That's why frequently is not easy to explain the reasons why a certain museum has been selected and another one (often with great regret) has been excluded. There is

something more than the inevitable “game” of the negotiation and mediation among the judges who inevitably share some basic visions, but have different experiences and personalities (not to mention the national and linguistic backgrounds which are always very important aspects) and it is the intimate conflict between feelings and rationality, intelligibility and .....mystery, science and art.

*“Art is a form of knowledge whose method is based on a single principle: the principle of the communicability of unintelligible complexities”*

Once again Jorge is speaking and the term ‘art’ has to be taken into account in the widest possible sense, including the design of an exhibition or the approach to the collection and its ‘manipulation’ in curatorial terms when preparing the path of the permanent exhibition in a museum.

It is a matter of fact that the unrestrainable proliferation of museums all over the world and especially in Europe in the last decades has gone together with a more and more complex structure of the exhibition environment, namely due to the possibilities offered by technological developments, not only in terms of digital devices but also of new materials and equipment (think about the fast and radical evolution of lighting systems in the past 10 years with the advent of the LED technology and its impact on exhibition design).

The shift from the collection to the public which, simplifying, has meant from an informative and classificatory approach to a narrative one, is

at the basis of such a growing complexity which brings me to define the XXI century museum as: a specific environment (i.e. with its own methodological statute) with a narrative approach to the understanding of collections and related cultural contents.

I am not pretending to offer this as a univocal definition, but hopefully a useful contribution to a re-positioning of the core of the museum activity, its *raison d'être* one could say, in the more general stream of tumultuous cultural changes of our times. It is a precarious definition, being deeply aware of the insecurity of any paradigm at the beginning of the XXI century, while the XX century, in contrast, paid a great tribute to the ‘firmitas’ of ideologies with their clear architecture of paradigms.

An interesting contribution to the understating of the reason for the emerging of a sort of dictatorship of the narratives (see the abused term: storytelling) was given by Jerome Bruner (the American cognitive psychologist, 1915- 2016) when defining the relationship between scientific/ logical - paradigmatic thinking and narrative thinking. He stressed the undeniable fact that the first human form of access to reality is through narrative thinking and this is complementary (or sometimes even conflicting) to the Aristotelian logic based on sound argument, tight analysis and proofs when the narrative mode adopts a strategy based on a good story, inspiration, association and intuition. This dialectic has been - mostly unconsciously - at the basis

of the changes in contemporary museology and especially in contemporary museography urgently requiring new methodology ( and here the word 'holistic' sounds more than a solution, an escape) and new, unexpected skills from museum people in general (curators, educators, designers, etc.).

What has all this to do with awards and with the role of an institution like EMA in award schemes? It seems strange and perhaps it is, but there are at least three elements that could help in clarifying things: first, awards are by definition volatile programmes, the knowledge accumulated year after year to be fruitful MUST find a home, a repository. Otherwise there is no advancement of learning , but simply a sort of red carpet for museums soon archived in our memories of the recent past (that notoriously are weaker than the ones concerning the distant past which have been consolidated by the 20 or more years of sitting in a classroom). So the first element is aiming at being a repository of knowledge. Second element: this material is rough material if not critically scrutinized in the light of the process of assessment taking place, once again, year after year. Information without a critical organization of knowledge and a comparative approach has a limited value and runs the risk to be a sterile exercise. Third: sharing, disseminating, transmitting from one generation to the next, call it what you like, but knowledge without its transmission is a poor thing. Knowledge transfer is as important as technology transfer in museums too. This means training, teaching,

lecturing, writing, networking, familiarizing yourself with your potential audience, sometimes simply talking. Whatever the form, the important thing is that knowledge does not remain secluded somewhere in the geographical space or in cyberspace. That's why, within our limits, we try to be as articulate as explained by Wim van der Weiden's contribution to this publication. For a small organization like EMA, with small resources, the explosion of the communicative universe is a challenge which is very hard to cope with. You need to make choices and allocate your energies attentively, trying to get out the most of them. So, I see the three priorities of EMA for the future in these terms: to give an order to the amount of materials gathered and to the amount of knowledge based on the experiences of the EMA members as well as on their thinking so that all this is potentially accessible without too much effort (a certain amount of effort is inevitable if you want to learn something!), to concentrate on the transfer of knowledge via teaching, publishing etc. especially experimenting with new formats more adequate to the learning styles of contemporary life - as it is the case of the Kenneth Hudson Seminar and of our Online course. Finally, to work more extensively on the contamination between the museum communication linguistics and the logic of the new media as it will be on those grounds that many aspects of the future of museums will be determined.

It is a vast programme, considering that to reach ten years of life for a cultural organization exclusively ded-

icated to the European scene is already in itself quite an achievement, we are aware of that. But also when , moving to a more personal side of this discourse, when I was recruited by Kenneth Hudson as a member of the Jury of the European Museum of the Year Award and the Council of Europe Museum Prize in 1983, I

would have not even dreamt of being involved with such continuity in this kind of business for such a long time: decades!

Last but not least: I was the other gentleman in a Brussels café ten years ago as mentioned in the first sentence in Wim van der Weiden's text.



x.

x. EMA Skopje, 2017  
y. EMA Skopje, 2017  
z. EMA Augsburg, 2012



Y.



Z.

*One could almost translate “public quality” as “the sum of a museum’s public virtues”. These are not necessarily the same as its professional virtues and in many museums the two are often seen to be in conflict.*



y.



x.



z.

x. Brescia, 2015  
 y. Brescia, 2015  
 z. Brescia, 2015

*Museum visitors, especially tourists, are demanding museums which can be satisfactorily digested and appreciated within a maximum of two hours. The days of the museum dinosaurs are coming to an end. The productivity of their staff is low and their overheads are correspondingly high.*



EMA and FSC Budva, 2019



x.



y.

z.



x HOI Annemies Broekgaarden  
y EMA Brescia, 2015. Giovanni Tampalini and Andreja Rihter  
z EMA Dortmund, 2011. HRH Princess Sibilla and Karl Murr

*“National governments and municipalities will contribute less, probably much less, to museum finances. Mixed public/private funding will become much more common, perhaps normal. More and more museums will have to be run by Foundations and Trusts, in order to survive. Politicians are influenced only by the need to get votes and there are more votes in hospitals, housing and schools than in museums.”*

# The Museum of the Future – a Participatory Museum

Karl Borromäus Murr  
EMA Chairman

The European Museum Academy sees itself as a museological think tank that reflects in particular the role of museums in society for the present and the future. The democratization of the museum since the 1970s has materialized and developed in different directions since then. In the current discussion, a concept is becoming more and more central, which has become a term of great importance in many other social discussions: participation. Whether in the process of making political decisions or in urban planning - participation - in terms of more civil activism - is considered the one and only way to meet a growing demand for civic involvement, when it comes to public affairs. There are good reasons to call the years since 2010 the 'decade of participation'.

### Participation in a different guise: A History of Participation

Participation in the field of museum work, however, is not a new phenomenon and the corresponding terminology has been distinguished in the past. In reaction to a substantial criticism of a lack of democratization, the international world of museums slowly opened up to a broader social audience in the 1970s. The two French museologists Georges Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine were the pioneers of this movement and coined the term the 'Ecomuseum' in 1971. The concept of the Ecomuseum was to provide an integral understanding of the museum, which was now focused on building an identity of a certain place or a local commu-

nity. Involving local citizens was of great significance during this cultural process.

Since the 1970s, a gradual democratization of the museum could be observed in an increasing orientation towards the visitor, which became the main area of focus for museums. This led to a transformation of the museum into an educational space. Furthermore, a turn towards more socially inclusive exhibition-motives took place. As a result, more and more exhibitions or new museums portraying the history of labour (such as the National Museum of Labour History in Manchester UK, which was renamed The People's History Museum in 2001) were founded, followed by exhibitions and museums regarding the history of women. The theoretical debates since the 1980s have further contributed to the opening-up-process of museums. According to the 'New Museology', awareness has been raised for a museum's function as a symbolic place of re-interpreting and preserving collective identities.

The realization of building a collective identity, was connected to the view of museums applying mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion. According to this, representations in museums used to represent a balance of power in terms of social hierarchies. Critical voices arose, evoking a 'Crisis of Representation' for the museum which needed to be deconstructed by matching exhibition formats.

## The Participatory Turn in the Field of the Museum

The demand for an even stronger democratic opening of the museum is reflected in the superordinate concept of participation, in which some observers seem to recognize a paradigm shift in the most recent development of the museum. We therefore speak of the ‘Participatory Turn’. This concept has been made available to the public in Nina Simon’s groundbreaking book *The Participatory Museum* in 2010. Following this concept of participation, society as – in most cases – the owner of public cultural goods obtains an active role in developing public museums.

An important factor for this particular form of participation for the world of museums lies in the result of the digital revolution around the turn of the millennium. Since then, social media have been connecting a growing number of people and have greatly increased social interactivity among its users. Participation in museums can be based on the model of common principles that are prevalent in social media such as self-organisation, free association/connotation, personal responsibility and ‘user-generated contents’. Reaching out to groups of visitors who previously haven’t been within reach, can also be seen as a politically attractive method of ‘Audience Development’ for museums.

Considering the increasing cost pressure – in most cases – of publicly sponsored museums, political demands call for an extension of social acceptance and relevance of

museums. In order to enable this type of participation, museums must provide access for interested parties and enable involvement on a legal, geographical, financial as well as a social-educational level.

In all of these reflections, the term ‘participation’ is used normatively, which means, it implies positive political-social dimensions, for instance activity, dedication as well as participation and inclusion.

### Stages of museum participation

Regardless of the moral suasion, let’s now take a closer look at the concept of participation and explore its opportunities and limits in the field of museum work. First of all, one will discover the various types of activities in museums hidden behind the term participation. There are basically two types of participation: active and passive participation. Carole Pateman, British political scientist, distinguishes between “partial participation” and “full participation”. There is a whole spectrum of ways to participate, from simply receiving information through a museum newsletter to actively taking part in shaping museum contents and programmes by, for instance, curating an exhibition for visitors to the museum. Some ideas of participation even call for involving museum visitors in democratic participation processes or completely opening up the conventional hierarchies of the museum, which are often perceived as illiberal.

Why not make the positions of curators, directors or museum-technicians participatory? Analogous to the slogan of 'Occupy Wall Street', the motto 'Occupy Museums' could be heard. The participatory museum of the future will disengage with the existing buildings and architectures of museums in the imagination of its representatives and networks with the community, which will appropriate the cultural treasures as its own.

### Possibilities and limits of participation

After this introduction to the topic, it is important to stress that, when balancing the pros and cons of participatory projects for museums, a further democratization in terms of more public involvement is highly recommended. The idea of a hierarchical-authoritarian institution, which presents content and messaging to its visitors - regardless of their actual interests - is fast becoming a thing of the past. The museum of the future will adopt a participative character or none at all. Notwithstanding moral suasion it is still necessary to differentiate regarding museum-practices.

Some critics fear a reduction of standards will lead to a 'Nightmare of Participation' (Markus Miessen), others predict a communization of the museum experience. However, such criticism can often be a result of cultural pessimism, which sets the appreciation of art in museums exclusively in the realm of the highly educated. Similarly, a condemnation of fun in a museum is invalid, so

long as this fun is a component of an overall valuable concept.

### Participation: A challenge for museums

Due to the unpredictability of the results of projects with public involvement, participation poses a particular challenge to the classical museum. The differing levels and intensity of the involvement of the participants can make it difficult to control the outcome. When consciously choosing the path to more participation, a museum must be prepared to forfeit some measure of its institutional authority, based on the trust in the abilities of the participants. However, this does not imply that participatory projects automatically lead to anarchy! There are, nevertheless, increased demands on the museum personnel involved in such projects, as their recognized role within the museum changes. Curators, previously occupied with scientific research, will become moderators, facilitating open and creative processes, in which content and form are developed. In this process, the museum transforms from an omniscient institution to an interactive and relational platform for discourse. The aim is to motivate the participants to take part, to contribute, to the process. The curators guide, rather than control. They provide the framework for the project and enable creative developments, which demand both routine and spontaneity of the museum personnel. The challenge is to transport the symbolic capital, typically in the domain of the museum, while also awakening an apprecia-

tion or awareness of the value of this capital to the participants. The principal task of the museum staff is to make the museum more accessible to the visitors.

### How far can participation reach?

Although strongly encouraging emancipatory participation it is important to note that a completely authority-free museum would represent a Utopia.

There will remain a structural difference between museum personnel and visitors, between scientific expertise and a good general knowledge of the visitors, between a more or less impressive museum architecture and private space, between responsibility for public budgets and decision authority for realizable projects. However, the classic difference between the curator and the visitor should not be artificially reinstated. The aim must remain to dissolve the borders between institution and society.

However, it would be naive to believe that in such a participatory project all participants act under the same conditions, as this would disregard power discussions, which are in reality almost unavoidable.

### The players in the participatory process

So long as culture revolves within a hierarchical space, those responsible for museums should choose a pragmatic, democratic solution. Typically, any form of participation involves

three groups: representatives of the museum, the participating visitors and all other museum visitors.

Group one: Any participatory project should reflect the model of the museum. The goal is not simply interactivity. An enjoyable activity without a relevance to the museum would be meaningless. It is therefore imperative to ensure that any participatory project will deliver value in accordance with the orientation of the museum. This requires a clear definition of the guiding principles of the museum. The values and goals of the museum must be a component of every participatory project for those involved.

Group two: At the same time, the participatory project must offer some value to the involved visitors. They must be able to recognize significance and meaning of their contribution. This cannot be achieved, as Nina Simon correctly observes, in tasks which can be fulfilled much quicker and better by the museum staff. Moreover, the visitors should be perceived as every-day experts, whose expertise and skills allow them to contribute to the project. The aim of participatory projects should be, to be beneficial to both participants and the museum.

Group three: besides the groups directly involved in the process, a successful participatory project should also deliver a value to other visitors of the museums, not involved in the projects.

Experience has shown that it is essential to communicate the signif-

icance, the value, the expectations and available resources that will form a framework for the project. An important component of this communication, during and after completion of the project, is the recognition of those involved. The museum should make the results available to the public, in order to achieve full participation.

### Participation as one of many strategies

An advantage of participatory projects is their reference to the present, which allows visitors to enrich the museum with their experience. The more visitors can contribute from their own perspective to an object in question, the higher the probability of achieving a more valuable result through the interactive engagement. However, there is also a risk that the focus on the present may lead to a reduction of interest in historical topics from earlier eras. The challenge

for museums and historians is, to relate the cultural relevance of the different eras to the present.

A critical acknowledgement of the demand for more civil engagement in museums must also recognize that participation cannot be seen as the one and only strategy for the museum of the future. There will always be a significant number of visitors who prefer not to experience the museum through engagement in participatory projects. However, among the various areas of activity within the museum, participatory projects pose an important forward-looking component, which should be encouraged and supported with all means for socio-political reasons. A lot will depend on how the principle of participation can be applied to all aspects of the museum, such as collecting, preserving, researching, publishing and exhibiting – functions that are entirely for the “service of the society and its development”.

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*Art is a form of knowledge whose method is based on a single principle: the principle of the communicability of unintelligible complexities.*



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x CMA Meeting Amsterdam, 2016  
y Lesvos, 2016  
z The Hague, 2018. Wim van der Weiden  
a Skopje, 2017. Massimo Negri, Andreja Rihter, Karl Murr

# The Need for the European Museum Academy in the 21st Century

Henrik Zipsane  
EMA Managing Director

Museums as we know them today and as most people imagine them are a relatively new phenomenon in history. From being a prerequisite which demonstrated social status and belief in science for the few in 17th century museums, they have in the 21st century become centres of activities designed to provide and develop knowledge and reflection for everyone about who we are and where we are going. Thoughts about museums may one day lead us to associate with exciting postmodern theme parks and the next day make us associate with places of contemplation such as mosques, synagogues or cathedrals.

The number of these strange organisations, places or virtual spaces which see themselves as museums is growing on a rapid scale. Developments around us and the growth in numbers is certainly proof of the growing need for museums in today's world. The meta question which rises from these observations is what do museums actually provide which is so badly needed? And why and how is that specific quality in museums related to the development of society today? How do we develop the best possible quality in museums?

This is where we find the need for the European Museum Academy as the organisation which brings together academic research, practices and museum professionals.

What could the European Museum Academy look like 10 years from now? The following are my thoughts and reflections on that question, and I ask readers to be aware that nobody else should be held responsible.

The European Museum Academy is in my mind based on two perspectives – which can be perceived as two dialectic power fields – on museums which hold the work together.

Firstly, we bring researchers who are interested in museums together with practitioners from museums. The complexity in this meeting is created by the diversity in both camps. The researchers have a huge variety of academic backgrounds. The number of colleagues calling themselves museologists is growing but we too see a growing activity among historians of all kinds, art historians, anthropologists, ethnologists, archaeologists, researchers in economics, tourism, sociology, education and so on. The many different academic perspectives meet the practices in the museums and find there an equally enormous and growing variety in the perspectives which the staff use as their governing competences in daily practice and strategic planning.

This meeting of perspectives from the academic side and the practice side needs facilitation for many reasons but maybe the most important is the need of both parts to meet, listen to and understand the other in order to develop.

Secondly, we see the dialectics between European museum development in all its diversity and the diversity in museum development on a global level. The international development during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially with the formation of the United Nations and UNESCO has shaped an organisational infrastructure of conventions, regulations,

principles and policy recommendations which through organisations like ICOM, OECD, the Council of Europe and the European Union drops down to national governments, regional and local authorities and to individual museums.

In ways which are difficult to define in a few words we can say that these principles mainstream the museums. To the extent that the museums in Europe get their international influences primarily through European organisations mainstreaming of aims, priorities and other matters shapes a European museum community. The European museum community shares many things but not all with other museum communities throughout the world.

So, we have two interesting dialectic fundamentals for the European Museum Academy from which to build our priorities and actions for the Academy. The relation between diverse research perspectives and mutually diverse museum practices, and the relation between diverse European museum policy development and realities and likewise global policies and realities. From these fundamentals the Academy shapes the vision of our governing principles. The European Museum Academy works with the production, preservation and dissemination of unique knowledge about and for European museums, and the business-model is securing that all work is carried out independently, transparently and professionally.

The three dominating fields of action for the Academy have from the be-

ginning been and still are research and development projects, education through specially designed master classes and the European award schemes for best museum performances in several different categories. The Academy is taking on all these fields in the spirit of the above mentioned fundamentals and business model.

A few examples may illustrate how the Academy addresses the principles above.

Since 2018 the Academy has collected National Museum Reports from its network of national representatives. It may appear to be a strange and useless initiative as we all know about the fantastic job done by the International Council of Museums, the European Union and national governments. Is it necessary? The material collected and presented by the mentioned organisations is almost solely of a statistical nature and produced primarily for the purpose of stimulating policy development on a national or supranational level. The European Museum Academy's national representatives are instead asked to write a short report on what is actually going on. Do they see new legislation, financial issues, trends, policies in their countries which are important for museums?

From this kind of report we get material which provides a qualitative impression of the situation and often even makes the above-mentioned statistics understandable. In the long run this material provides a good empirical base for research. Together with the judges' reports collected

from all the visits to museums which over the years have been nominated for awards it is possible to make solid empirically based analysis on museum developments at national and European level.

The Academy is working together with several organizations, among them the Pascal Observatory which is an international network of universities and regional authorities which engages with research and policy development related to regional development. We are now engaged in developing a two-year full-time European Master programme in heritage studies which is thought to be led by University of Glasgow. The role of the Academy will – if plans are successful – be to provide experts as guest teachers and summer school programmes. That could make the master programme genuinely European and up-to-date practice related. This is an example which illustrates the Academy's ambition to bring research and practice closer to one another.

The European Museum Academy is at the time of writing involved in preparing research projects on participatory governance in heritage and heritage impact assessment. Both research projects address issues which are central for heritage policy development from the European Union now. It is important that the Academy makes clear use of the special competences we bring in to these kinds of projects. Participatory governance in arts and culture in general and in heritage in particular is the key word in the terminolo-

gy from the European Union in the third generation of policy development from the European Commission on wider interaction between heritage and people. This has been a slow process of policy perspective from access to participation and now participatory governance which is important for museums to grasp in depth. The Academy hopes to help with that through this project.

For heritage impact assessment the focus of the Academy will be on the investments done through the European Regional Development Fund. The Academy chooses to focus on these investment projects as they represent approximately 70 percent of European Union resources allocated to culture. For the museum community in Europe it is naturally therefore very important to get a clear understanding of the principles used for assessment, and for researchers it is interesting to clarify trends in how the European Regional Development Fund is invested.

In such research projects the Academy has the important asset to offer of closeness to the practice and the profession and that is valuable for the universities too. The Academy 'trades' that asset for influencing projects in directions which assure that their outcome is relevant to museums.

The award schemes which European Museum Academy has administered for a number of years cover a wide field of museum practice. To collect eyewitness impressions from the visits made by the Academy's experts shapes a huge amount of material

about best practice.

Combining participation in adequate and relevant research projects with the award scheme work provides a broad and up to date empirically based overview which is unique for the Academy. That in turn makes it possible for the European Museum Academy to shape and conduct advanced courses and other events.

I foresee the European Museum Academy in the coming years sailing forward on the ocean of museums in Europe as a centre of excellence which builds bridges between practice and science.



EMA 2018 Denmark

*A museum of science is a space devoted to providing stimuli, for any citizen whatsoever, in favour of scientific knowledge, scientific method and scientific opinion, which is achieved by firstly using reality (real object and phenomena) in conversation with itself and with the visitors.*



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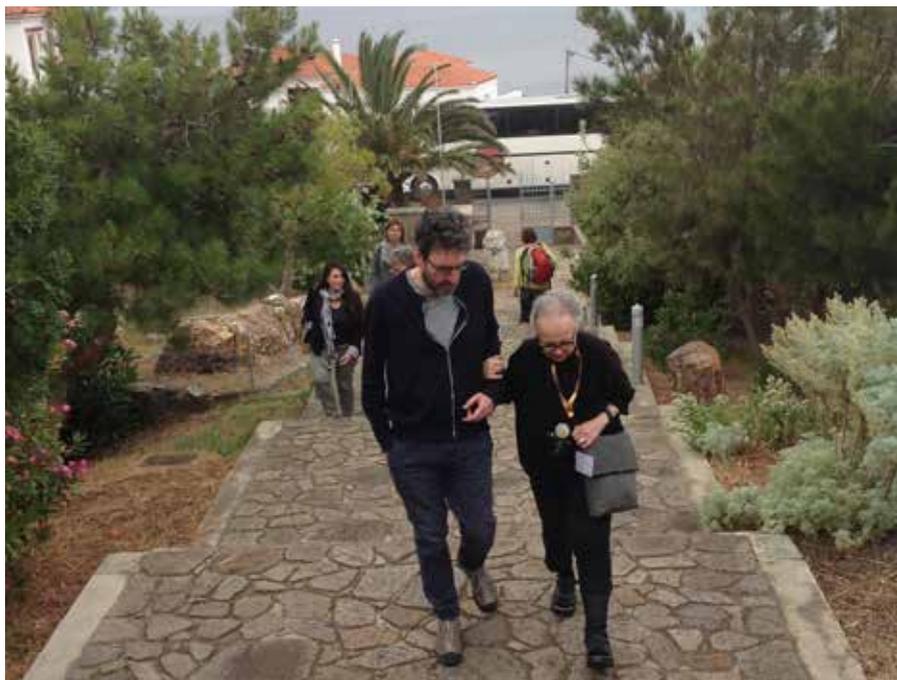
x. Brescia 2018  
y. Brescia 2018  
z. Brescia 2018



CMA, Trento 2018 Muse Museum

*The best museums, in our judgement, think of their visitors first and their employees second or, put another way, of taxpayers and the entrance-fee payers first and the entrance-fee consumers second.*

*All types of museum objects, including works of art, will be increasingly presented and interpreted within their social context. Art museums, the backward children of the museum family, will have to change more than most.*



EMA, Lesvos 2016

## Luigi Micheletti Foundation

Luigi Micheletti Foundation (established in 1981 in Brescia, Italy) is a research centre specialising in 20th-century history. Scientific research covers ideologies of the 20th century, wars, the ambivalence of technical progress, industrialization and labour, conspicuous consumption, the origin of environmentalism. The ideological, social and material contemporary history, led by international researches and conferences, is linked to a rich collection: writings, postcards, photos, posters, videos, audio documents, but also objects, furniture and machines. It is in this context that the musil – Museum of Industry and Labour – was created, in order to focus on the recovery of productive plants and whole urban areas. musil is a system, including a spectacular open storage, a museum of hydroelectric power and a museum of iron. The main center is under construction.

One of the leading activities of the Foundation is the Luigi Micheletti Award. Launched in 1996, it is the European prize for innovative museums in the world of contemporary history, industry and science.



# The DASA Working World Exhibition

The DASA Working World Exhibition in Dortmund presents past, present and future worlds of work on an exhibition area covering no less than 13.000 square metres. It is the permanent educational facility of the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Care (Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin) and informs the general public about the world of work, its status for the individual and society, and the importance of tailoring work to human requirements.

The exhibition consists of 12 units, each of which places technical exhibits in an artistic scenography alongside multimedia presentations. In this way it can put over its themes in an exciting and lasting way, and visitors can experience at close hand the solutions which contribute to improving the world of work.

The three terms „People“, “Work” and “Technology“ define DASA’s “playground“. Technology and work affect people. The relationship between the three is demonstrated and explained in a variety of different ways in the DASA Working World Exhibition. The central theme is to establish human values at work, like good health and dignity. DASA focuses on people and their physical, intellectual, social and cultural needs.

Every year more than 200.000 people visit DASA. DASA is a huge permanent exhibition covering 13,000 square metres. In addition it presents changing special exhibitions and regular thematic events for specific target groups.

The exhibition concept aims at providing individual sensual experiences rather than trying to put over a message with a raised finger. DASA is a place of discovery, a place for you to reconsider your ideas and ask new questions.



**:DASA**

Arbeitswelt Ausstellung

# International foundation Forum of Slavic Cultures

The Forum of Slavic Cultures is an international foundation, a non-profit and non-government organization whose idea emerged in the cultural circles at the turn of the 21st century. It was officially founded in 2004 and today unites more than 300 million Slavs in 13 Slavic countries: Belarus, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Montenegro, Croatia, North Macedonia, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia and Ukraine.

The central commitment of the Foundation is implementation of joint cultural, educational and research projects that promote Slavic cultural heritage and creativity.

The Forum of Slavic Cultures is more and more referential global platform of intercultural dialogue as well as taking over the role of the key hub of Slavic countries in the field of art and culture, education and science and cultural tourism.



## The Children's Museum Award

The Children's Museum Award was established in 2011 by the European Museum Academy and Hands On! International for the recognition of excellence in the specific sector of international children's museums. In 2014 the name of the Award was changed to the Children in Museums Award, to reflect the wider range of provision for children in today's museums. Applications are welcomed from children's museums and from education, children and youth departments in museums and science centres, both long-established and recently opened.

Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums (HO!I), is an international professional organization. It actively stimulates the creation and development of children's museums (including science centres and large collections-based institutions serving young visitors) and more space for cultural and educational activities for children and young people. HO!I supports the important role of children's museums as centres where play inspires creativity, informal and lifelong learning. [www.hands-on-international.net](http://www.hands-on-international.net).

A panel of 10 experienced judges consider carefully all the material submitted by the candidates, paying special attention to the ways in which a candidate is likely to change the course of museum thinking or museum practice, nationally and internationally, with imaginative interpretation and presentation being marked highly. The Award itself is a bronze statue of Miffy. The CMA is supported by Mercis BV.



# NEMO - The Network of European Museum Organisations

[www.ne-mo.org](http://www.ne-mo.org)  
[office@ne-mo.org](mailto:office@ne-mo.org)

NEMO, the Network of European Museum Organisations, is an independent network of national museum organisations, networks and museums within the member states of the Council of Europe. Together, NEMO's members speak for over 30.000 museums across Europe.

NEMO strives towards ensuring that museums are an integral part of European life by promoting their work and value to policy makers and by providing museums with information and through networking opportunities for co-operation. NEMO makes sure to put forward the cause of museums by advocating at the EU level.

Apart from its yearly European Museum Conference, NEMO fosters exchange and capacity building through a number of trainings. Building on the capacity of the national museum organisations and individual museums is one of NEMO's main priorities. In this context, NEMO aims at internationalising, professionalising and strengthening the capacity of the museum sector in Europe.

The network focuses on four key strategic areas and two transversal themes that it considers important for the museum sector; collection value, social value, educational value and economic value as well as digitalised museums and professional development.



“In May 2018, MEP Julie Ward participated in NEMO’s museum advocacy programme NEMO Political Internship in Museums at the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht, The Netherlands”.

Avtor foto Ester Wagemans (NEMO)



Network of European  
Museum Organisations





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