

**NEMO – The Network of European Museum Organisations**  
**Presentation at CULT committee meeting, 1 June 2010**

**The Network**

Cultural Heritage needs a strong voice in Europe. Museums, archives and libraries need to become visible as institutions as part of and serving all our communities! That is our mission. NEMO represents over 30.000 museums in Europe and makes them visible to the EU.

NEMO was founded in 1992 as an independent and informal network of museums associations and similar bodies representing the museum community in Europe and associated countries. Currently NEMO has members in 32 countries.

Many of the museums associations in Europe are carrying out their work with little financial capability – a lot of work is actually done by volunteers. Through the financial support of the European Commission within the Culture Programme 2007-2013 for NEMO (about 60.000 Euros), we are able to give the museums a collective voice in Europe.

How do we give European museums a voice? All information NEMO provides addresses both the European museum community and policy makers. NEMO wants to make sure that the information flows in both directions:

On the one hand NEMO regularly meets with representatives of the Commission and Parliament, other key representatives in the EU, discussing on all issues relevant to museums and promoting the role and importance of museums. The network also takes part in different working groups (such as the Civil Society Platform “Access to Culture”) on European level, co-operating with other institutions in the cultural field and contributes to different EU-programmes and policies.

NEMO's annual meetings – on the other hand - serve as forums for the exchange of members and partners for ideas, best practices, and to discuss topics of interest for museums. The meeting also provides a forum for establishing cooperation and contacts throughout Europe.

All information is disseminated through NEMO's mailing list, the website [www.ne-mo.org](http://www.ne-mo.org) and publications such as the bi-annual newsletter “NEMO News” and other publications that concern museums.

The website is our main tool for communication. It provides information on NEMO's activities and structure and it includes information about museum relevant events, EU calls and other information. For example, information on museums relevant topics such as museum standards and laws, digitisation, intercultural dialogue in museums, or creativity and innovation in museums are collected on the website in order to help the museums to learn from each other.

The partner search provides information on EU projects and contacts to museums. The idea is to provide a platform to find partners for European projects.

One of NEMO's main activities is collections' mobility. NEMO provides entrance portal for museums to the topic providing information about conferences, documents and relevant contacts for museums.

As NEMO is also promoting museums as places for learning, the network supports the project MumAE (Museums meet adult educators) and hosts the project website on its portal.

NEMO has started to broaden the network of partners in Europe and connect the museum community to other cultural sectors and make them more visible. Amongst our partners are the initiatives EUROPEANA, EUROMUSE, COLLECTION'S MOBILITY, EXHIBITING EUROPE, PRACTICS, and HISTORIANA.

### **Topics of the European museum community**

Over 30.000 museums support Europe's cause. Museums are everywhere. Museum collections represent the needs of European citizens and allow them to record and trace back the difference that they make. They provide a sense of place, helping people understand the world around them and their place within it. Museums in the EU are visited by over 500 million people each year.

NEMO wants to take the opportunity to highlight some of the European museums' activities and concerns listed below:

## **Mobility of Museum collections**

Lending and borrowing of objects for exhibitions are core activities of museums. In a united Europe exhibitions can reveal our common cultural roots and histories. "Mobility of Collections" is a priority on the political agenda of the EU and several European Presidencies have taken it up on their agenda. In this context NEMO played an active role and developed a European standard loan agreement for temporary exhibitions which was published in 2007 to encourage the museums' activities in borrowing. The agreement is available online for all museums in Europe – no matter what category or size. The Standard Loan Agreement can be used for creating individual loan documents and is available in 12 European languages. This was NEMO's idea and very a significant contribution to the collections' mobility work and will have a long lasting benefit for all museums in Europe.

NEMO was also part of formulating the *Bremen Declaration* on the "Mobility of Museum Collections" that was published in May 2007 that states that "further funding should be allocated at European level for innovative projects to demonstrate Europe's rich cultural heritage, to support the exchange of museum professionals and their training and thus help develop increased understanding of common origins as well as to develop deeper respect for the different cultures in Europe."

NEMO has been invited to participate at the OMC working group on the mobility of museum collections because of its engagement and expertise in the field. The working group currently works on the following aspects:

- (1) Government indemnity; insurance
- (2) Immunity from seizure
- (3) Professional contacts;
- (4) Long-term loans
- (5) Prevention of illicit trafficking

NEMO believes that the Mobility of Collections need further work to achieve common standards and recommends that this topic is kept as a priority in the next work plan 2011-2013 and encourage the working group to continue to work on the challenges in this field.

In addition, NEMO believes that Europe should be working towards government indemnity for all collections across Europe.

## **Digital access to collections**

But nowadays – and especially for the younger generation – heritage is mainly available on the internet. Museum collections therefore must be made accessible and visible digital.

This has been demanded and supported by the Parliament and the Commission, for example through the initiative *Europeana*. Making European culture available to all European citizens means that museums as keepers of cultural heritage are an essential part of this initiative.

EU funded projects - such as Europeana - take it as a pre-requisite that collections are digitised. In fact, many museums – especially the small ones - still find it difficult to make their collections available to the European citizens. In recent years it has been mostly the task of national or regional institutions to fund and support digitisation in the individual countries, but this cannot be taken for granted Europe wide. NEMO would like the EU to consider support for smaller museums to help them digitise their collection.

Museums are lacking behind in digitising their collections - and it is NEMO's task to encourage them to take action. The network has therefore published an information brochure and a newsletter on Digitisation and regularly informs its members about ongoing initiatives and developments in this area, such as *Europeana* and *Athena*, a project that supports European Museums in making their collections available on the internet and supporting the development of European common standard.

Another issue when it comes to making the digitised material available on the internet is copyright: Museums, Archives and Libraries should not and cannot pay for making available their collections on the web. It should be taken into account that museums are non-commercial institutions that support education and research and Copyright law shouldn't be a barrier neither legally nor financially.

For example, Europeana up to now only contains objects that are either without copyright or where permission has been granted to the institution that holds the object – but does this reflect Europe's cultural heritage? The object holder has to deal with a variety of different national legislations and institutions, when desiring to make the object digitally available.

A common, Europe-wide agreement is needed to help copyright holders and museums work together.

## **Museums and Learning**

The concept of a "learning society" considered to be a priority in EU policies has had a strong influence on the work of European museums in recent years.

Recent European policy documents, such as the two Communications of 2009 "Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training" and "Key competences for a changing world" reinforce the idea that the achievement of a genuine European Knowledge Area will depend on social cohesion, innovation, creativity, an increased access to cultural life. Museums are central to delivering this. Lifelong Learning has always been a part of museums' work, but they wish to play a more active part in discussions on lifelong learning. Embracing a lifelong learning approach opens up a new era for museums and poses new challenges.

NEMO has been supporting museums by being a forum where issues related to lifelong learning are discussed, by creating the pre-conditions for European museums to collaborate in multilateral projects, by informing museum professionals about the funding opportunities offered by the Lifelong Learning Programme, in particular the Grundtvig programme.

A conference "Museums meet Adult Educators" will be held on 23-24 September 2010 in Copenhagen, to coincide with the closing conference organised by the European Commission to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the EU Grundtvig Programme. The conference will bring together museums and adult education institutions and support their joint initiatives.

NEMO and its members have also recently submitted an application for a Grundtvig Network grant. The project, named "LEM - The Learning Museum", if approved, would strengthen ties among European museums and support NEMO's role as a key player in the lifelong learning arena.

## **Mobility of People**

Many programmes on the mobility of professionals between museums have been discussed in the past years but there has yet to be a programme that encourages widespread circulation of museum professionals. It is only through such a programme that the other aspects of museums work we have been discussing can be sustained and built upon.

The new Culture programme should encourage mobility of individual professionals in the museum/cultural heritage fields, not only mobility of individuals within funded projects.

A similar structure as the Lifelong Learning National Agencies for cultural heritage professionals could help to encourage the mobility of museum professionals. A support for these kind of central contact points should be considered when designing the next Culture Programme.

NEMO is engaged as an associate partner in the pilot project "Practics" that facilitates the provision of information about EU cross-border mobility in the cultural sector. Pilots of EU Cultural Mobility Contact Points have been developed to offer relevant and user-friendly information to

- foreign cultural workers who want to work in EU countries
- national cultural workers who want to work in another EU country

NEMO supports the recommendation published in March 2010 aiming to improve the conditions of mobility for individual artists and culture professionals.

### **Museums as Forums for Intercultural Dialogue**

Museums are perfect places to encourage and display the common values and outlook of an expanding Europe and to enhance interaction between individuals, groups and organisations with different cultural backgrounds.

NEMO has supported museums' initiatives in this area: In 2008, NEMO celebrated the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue through conferences and publications and we have provided much material and advice on our website to help museums to be centres of intercultural dialogue. Furthermore NEMO seeks to support museums to develop intercultural competences and skills of their staff.

After presenting the museum perspective on different areas of the EU Culture Programme, NEMO would like to point out a general concern that should be taken into consideration when preparing the future Culture Programme: In this connection NEMO especially wants to speak for small institutions. It has become clear that the structures and rules of many EU funding strands need to be more flexible in finding solutions for small institutions (due to their lack of structure and financial capacity) to take part in the actions. Involving the big national museums is good and can be helpful, but ways must be found to work with the smaller museums that make the majority of museums in Europe and have the closest connection to their visitors.

NEMO would be happy to work with the Commission, Parliament and the EACEA to encourage these small museums that represent their own towns and regions and are often run by volunteers to participate in the EU activities.