



EU Presidency Trio Conference

Museums and Social Responsibility: VALUES REVISITED

17 – 18 SEPTEMBER 2020

Funded by



Federal Government Commissioner
for Culture and the Media



Network of European
Museum Organisations



Museums must promote democracy – What!?

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Topics

1. Why should democracy be promoted?
2. Is promoting democracy a museum task?
3. Do we have a problem here?
4. How to promote democracy?
5. Museums' opportunities to promote democracy
6. Finnish museums and the promotion of democracy
 - a) Museum policy 2030
 - b) Museum Act 2020
7. Promotion in practice

A definition of democracy

Democracy is the reconciling of interests and ideologies from different directions through open debate, choices and compromises.

The key values of democracy are equality, transparency and justice.

A functioning democracy requires the opportunity for a balanced debate and confidence in the commitment of the parties to the compromise reached.

Why should democracy be promoted?

Democracy is the foundation of social peace.

- maintaining social peace has been by far the most significant achievement of the EU
- social peace has guaranteed an increase in social welfare

Why should democracy be promoted?

Democracy is in crisis

- Participation in societal issues is decreasing.
- Less commitment to political parties (only 6% in Finland belong to a political party).
- Voting turnout is decreasing.
- The means of implementing democracy have not kept pace with change.
- The expansion of the democratic system has stalled: for the above reasons, non-democratic systems seem to be on the rise, especially in the economic context.

Is promoting democracy a museum task?

ICOM international
council
of museums

“A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution **in the service of society and its development**, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”

The logo for ICOM, international council of museums, featuring the acronym 'ICOM' in large blue letters and the full name in smaller blue letters to the right.

“Museums are **democratizing**, inclusive and **polyphonic spaces** for critical **dialogue** about pasts and futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee **equal rights** and equal access to heritage for all people.

Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and **transparent**, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and **social justice**, global **equality** and planetary **wellbeing**.”

Do we
have a
problem
here?

Yes, if...

- we want to promote democracy worldwide.
- we think that democracy is something to import or export.
- we think that museums' role is to be neutral, objective holders of information about the past and only to be "in the service of society and its development" without the right and the responsibility to have an opinion.
- we think that a museum is only for cultural policy purposes.

Do we
have a
problem
here?

No, if...

- we believe that museums have economic, social, educational and social policy tasks and impacts, and that museums have to be active in fostering those impacts – not only in preserving and exhibiting heritage.
- museums are located here in Europe.

How to promote democracy?

- Build trust and activate civil dialogue
- Prevent inequality (social, economic)
- Reform the ways to participate
- Raise the level of education - Lifelong learning

'From the difficulties of democracy to future inclusion',
Elina Kiiski-Kataja, 2017, SITRA

Museums' opportunities to promote democracy

Build trust and activate civil dialogue

- place an emphasis on people and identity
- give different groups of people and political parties a voice
- become integrated into the lives of different communities
- give communities the opportunity to participate in defining their cultural heritage
- take initiative and participate in public debate, acting as forums for bold and open interaction
- make the content and competence in museums openly available to help foster new ideas and increase understanding

Museums' opportunities to promote democracy

Prevent inequality (social, economic)

- have social goals and programmes
- provide possibilities for free admission
- attract diverse audiences that are representative of society at large
- remember that cultural heritage belongs to everyone and is equally available to all
- aim at increasing social and economic welfare

Museums' opportunities to promote democracy

Reform the ways to participate

- make museums a space for debate and expressing diverse opinions
- involve different groups in creating content

Museums' opportunities to promote democracy

Raise the level of education - Lifelong learning

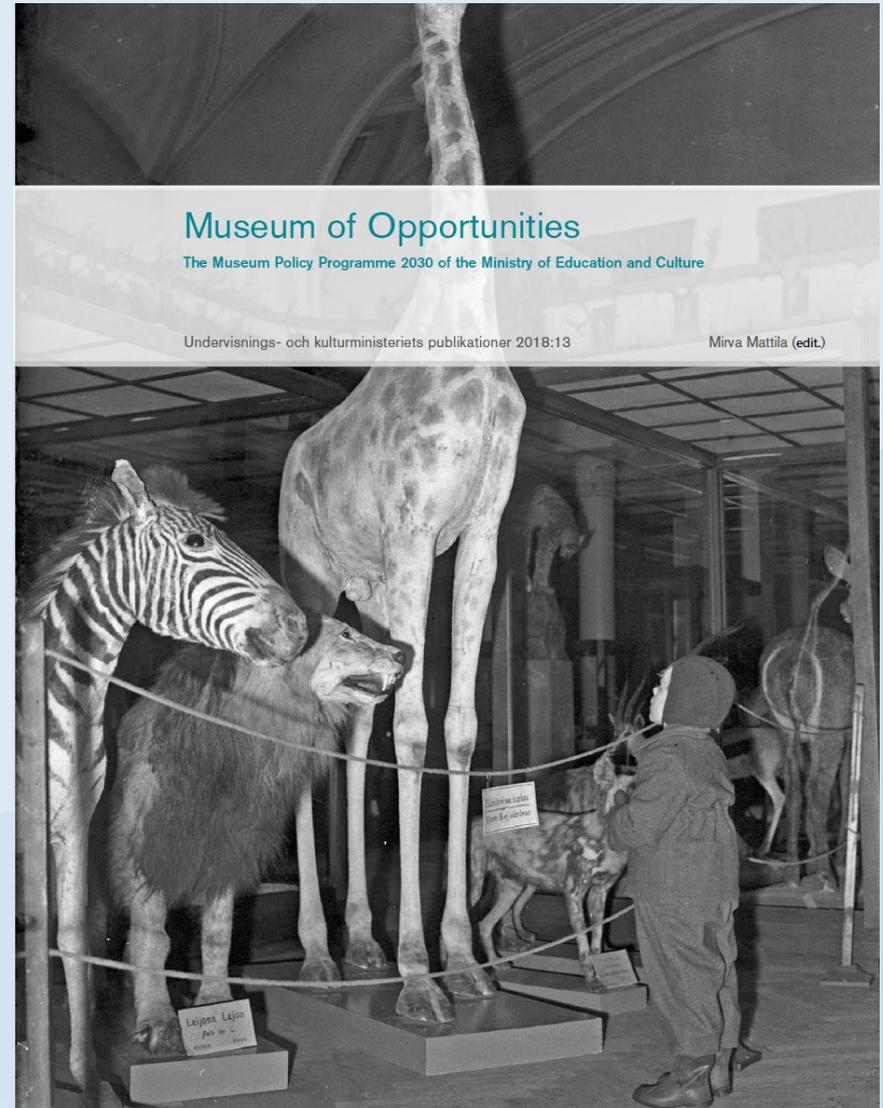
- attract diverse audiences that are representative of society at large, through diverse programmes that operate on many levels
- encourage people from different age groups to visit museums regularly



Finnish museums and the promotion of democracy

- Finland has a great history as a model country for democracy. Finnish women were the first in Europe to gain the vote in 1906. It was possible to preserve democracy despite the wars that followed.
- In 1941, there were only 11 functioning democracies in a world dominated by totalitarianism. Finland was one of these democracies.
- Finland is a model country for a free press and freedom of speech.

Finnish museum policy 2030 - Museum of opportunities



“The greatest challenge of our time is finding the means and creating the structures for ecologically, culturally and economically sustainable growth in welfare.”

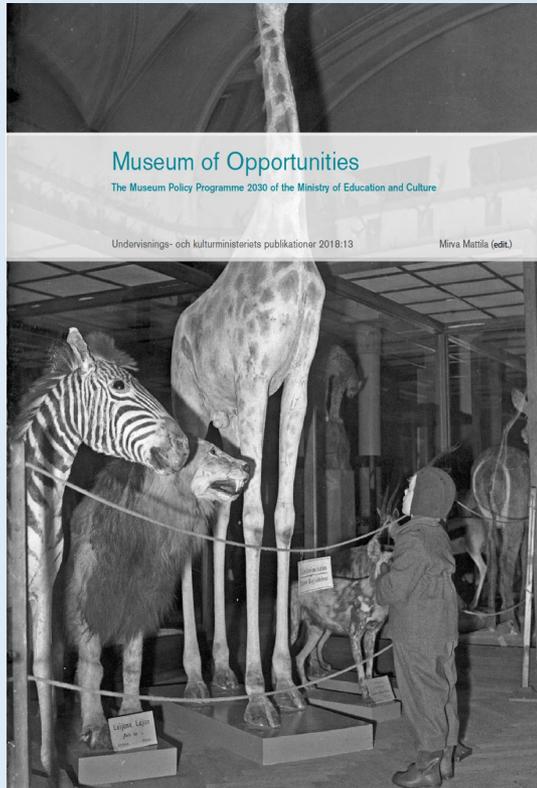
Museum sector values 2030

- **Community and interactivity**
- **Reliability and continuity**
- **Courage and open-mindedness**
- **Pluralism and democracy**
 - Cultural heritage belongs to everyone and is equally available to all. Museums play an important part in supporting and developing a culturally diverse society with many different voices.

6 key social impact objectives for museums

Museums will

1. highlight socially important and current themes in their operations and exhibitions.
2. build understanding between people.
3. experiment with and search for new ways of participation and engagement.
4. participate in cooperation projects, partnerships and network-based activities.
5. work towards increasing social equality by lowering the threshold for using their services for all segments of the population.
6. become learning environments that support broad competence and lifelong learning.



The success of the museum policy programme will be evaluated for the first time in 2020.

The first step in achieving the goals of the Museum Policy 2030 is the new Museum Act.

Museum Act 2020 (entered into force on 1.1.2020)

The purpose of the Act is to:

- 1) maintain and enhance the understanding and inclusion of individuals and communities in culture, history and the environment;
- 2) promote the preservation of cultural and natural heritage and art for future generations;
- 3) promote community, continuity and cultural diversity;
- 4) **promote civilization, prosperity, equality and democracy.**

Promotion in practice



The Museum of Freedom, Finland

- The Museum of Freedom is a major exhibition organized by the Finnish Labour Museum, **Werstas**, which examines Finnish society and the history of the period of independence from the perspective of freedom and welfare. The main characters of the exhibition are ordinary Finns and various minorities instead of great statespeople.
- The museum is a **part of the International Social Forum**, whose aim is global solidarity, which respects the universal human rights of all people and peoples, as well as the environment.

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Asylum Museum project, Finland

Fifteen museums published a guidebook on creating activities for asylum seekers. It provides examples of concrete measures cultural institutions can take to increase social peace.

The Finnish publication can be downloaded [here](#).



TURVAPAIKKANA MUSEO

Museot turvapaikanhakijoiden kohtaamispaikkana

Museum of communication, Switzerland



2019 Council of Europe Museum Prize

The Culture Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe presented the prestigious Museum Prize to the Museum of Communication on 9 April 2019 in Strasbourg. According to Nino Gogvadze, committee representative for the Museum Prize, the Museum of Communication **stands out as a very interactive, multisensory, participatory, accessible, playful, open and democratic museum.**

The Democratic Museum, Sweden

100 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY IN SWEDEN

Sweden is celebrating 100 years of democracy. The Swedish Museums Association has launched a programme for democracy called “The Democratic Museum”. It includes 100 discussion events for democracy in Swedish museums and a digital toolbox that museums can use to help build democracy.

- Demokratimuseum
- [Digital toolbox for promoting democracy](#)

Democratic Museums by David Fleming

“And let’s be absolutely clear: the democratic museum is not anti-scholarship; not anti-collections; not anti-research; not anti-quality; not anti-intellectual.

In fact, the democratic museum demands scholarship, collections, research, quality and intellectualism. We must not be deceived by people who claim that popularising museums means rejecting these things, who claim that democracy equals dumbing down, who claim that creating social value through access and inclusion is uncivilised.”

‘Democratic Museums: The Importance of Broadening Audiences’, David Fleming, Museum ID

- <https://museum-id.com/democratic-museum-importance-broadening-audiences-david-fleming/>



The American Presidency; the Power of the People

Coming Soon, New York

[More Info](#)

The Museum of Democracy, USA

The Museum of Democracy preserves a collection of historical and political campaign material. The collection presents material from presidential campaigns, and major social causes and movements pertaining to freedom and democracy.

The collection reflects the history of politics and political reform in America and illuminates central issues of civil rights, women's rights, and social justice.

Google

- Museum and democracy: 82 million hits
- Museum and freedom of speech: 126 million hits
- Museum and social justice: 145 million hits
- Museum and human rights: 200 million hits

Conclusion

- Museums must promote equality, transparency and justice.
 - participate in discussions
 - provide space for dialogue
 - ensure economic and social accessibility
 - offer social programmes
 - define measurable goals
- Democracy will follow.

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Museums and Social Responsibility:
VALUES REVISITED



Thank you
for your
interest
and, yes, the
era of
independent
cultural
policy is
over.