



Survey on the impact of the COVID-19 situation on museums in Europe

Final Findings and Recommendations

The global Coronavirus crisis has had and will have an unprecedented impact on museums all over the world. In order to better understand the situation over the past weeks confronting museums, particularly in Europe, the [Network of European Museum Organisations](#) began documenting and analysing the economic impact on museums, while also demonstrating digital opportunities that museums have seized and continue to make full use of.

The report has analysed nearly 1,000 survey responses collected between 24 March and 30 April 2020 from museums in 48 countries, the majority from Europe. The survey findings result in recommendations for immediate action, for mid-term considerations and for long-term strategy urging:

1. Economic support for museum operations;
2. Investment in digital cultural heritage; and
3. Making museums fit for crises

that NEMO is directing to stakeholders at all levels. There is no fast track back to normal - rather than making a return to normal our goal, we must learn from this crisis in order to effectively respond, mitigate, adapt and integrate.

Summary of Survey Findings

1. **The majority of museums in Europe and around the globe are closed.** A survey of NEMO shows that many museums in Europe are opening their doors to the public again in May/June 2020¹. Museum operations as we used to know them, however, will not be the same for a long time.
2. **3 out of 5 museums reported losing an average of €20,300 a week due to closure and travel halt.** While some museums have found their budget minimally impacted as of yet, many museums reported a considerable **loss of income of 75-80%, with larger museums and the museums in touristic areas reporting weekly losses adding up to hundreds of thousands of Euros.**
3. The majority of museums in Europe have **not had to lay-off staff yet. However, 3 out of 10 museums have put on hold contracts with freelance workers and 3 out of 5 museums have stopped entirely their volunteer programmes.**

¹ <https://www.ne-mo.org/news/article/nemo/an-interactive-map-by-nemo-shows-museum-re-opening-plans.html>

(accessed 12 May 2020)

4. Relying on a diversified spectrum of income sources makes museums agile and resilient. However, private income sources are more susceptible to market changes. **The survey showed that museums relying mostly on private funding reported greater vulnerability in the past weeks.**
5. Museums are **directly and heavily impacted by the global decrease of tourism, beyond the immediate crisis.** OECD has predicted a 50-70% decrease in global tourism activities.² Considering that cultural tourism accounts for 40% of all European tourism and 4 out of 10 tourists choosing their destination based on its cultural offering³, **a long-term dramatic decrease of income through museum tickets, shops and cafes is expected to last until the end of 2020.**
6. **4 out of 5 museums have increased their digital services** to reach their audiences, often by having staff take over new tasks to cope with the circumstances. Almost half of the respondents stated that their museum is now providing one or more new online services.
7. **2 out of 5 museums reported an increase in online visits, ranging between 10 to 150%** during the reporting time.
8. Without additional input, there is no increase in output: Our survey has shown that the **museums that were able to change staff tasks and/or add resources were also able to increase their digital services and observed an increase in their online visits.**
9. People seek museums because of their education and collections related content. Museums reported that next to social media, both **educational and collections related materials**, including video and film content, **were most popular** with online audiences.
10. This survey has evidenced that museums online are important extensions and complements of physical museums, but that a **sound metric to benchmark online visits is missing.**

Recommendations

The implications of the “new normal” will occupy museums and museum professionals for months to come and will touch nearly every aspect of museum work. Current discussions include identifying elements from the current experience that can be beneficial and help to transform museums into agile responsive members of their communities. The changing context calls for stronger investments and revised measures of success.

Economic support for museum operations

- **NEMO asks for adequate support provided by European, national, regional and local bodies to mitigate losses of museums all over Europe**, to guarantee salaries of staff members, to ensure the maintenance of quality core activities through projects and continuous investment

² [G20 Tourism Ministers Extraordinary Virtual Meeting on COVID-19](#) (accessed 6 May 2020)

³ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/cultural_en (accessed 6 May 2020)

in additional actions of museums to connect people to their collections.

- Museums will suffer from income losses and changed visitor behaviour related to the pandemic even after the first immediate crisis is over, due to the considerable decrease in global tourism and new health security measures representing considerable additional costs. **NEMO urges governments at all levels to support museums and close the gap of income losses, enabling them to keep their staff and structures alive during these challenging times. In addition, governments must support ongoing adaptation of museums by providing the resources required by a new post-pandemic environment.**

Investment in digital cultural heritage

- NEMO calls on stakeholders at all levels to **acknowledge that digital cultural heritage and digital engagement have demonstrated its value** in the past weeks by bringing people together, encouraging creativity, sharing experiences, and offering a virtual space to build ideas collectively.
- **The acknowledgement should be translated into investments in digital services and infrastructures in the future.** Considering digital services and activities of museums together with the engagement of digital audiences as factors of success in assessment frameworks has proven essential best practice.
- **Harmonised metrics to measure online visits** can facilitate benchmarking and assist decision-making and resource allocation. Museums lag behind in the digital literacy transformation: Museums have done visitor research and analysis on exhibitions and educational programs onsite, they should be provided with skills and resources to do so in the online environment.
- **Invest in what makes museums unique: their collections and rich content.** Fun, engaging and creative digital offers will be part of museums' digital future. This requires adequate resources to enable museums to compete with other digital services and provide state of the art cultural experiences online.

Making museums fit for crises

- NEMO asks governments to immediately **support museums in preparing their re-opening to the public, equipping the museums with adequate health safety measures and infrastructure.**
- Museums and society at large are obliged to work for **stronger crisis awareness**, preparedness, control and response methods in the future, including emergency plans for both the public and internal work processes.
- New working methods and more flexible work responsibilities in museums that have been sparked by this crisis should be considered for the future, including **more flexible work methods and structures in museums in general.**

- Museums are not islands, like any other work, the success of museums happens in a global context. **In times of crisis it is most important to support transnational collaboration**, to learn from each other, to benchmark, and to create a stronger voice for common concerns. Networks are an important platform for this.