



# **INCREASING THE MOBILITY OF COLLECTIONS**

A report from the international museum conference  
held in Manchester, UK, on 27-28 November 2005



## CULTURE SHOULD HAVE NO BORDERS: WHY SHARING EUROPEAN MUSEUM OBJECTS MATTERS



Our cultural heritage helps define who we are. It is the cornerstone of an enlightened education system, and it fires and feeds our imaginations and our souls. It follows, therefore, that in an open and democratic society its manifold richness should be accessible to all. It should be there for the many, not just the few.

There is broad consensus across all culture ministries of the member states that, in a Europe of 25 nations, with people of many diverse histories and backgrounds, culture is tremendously important. We need to work together to share our cultures and tell the story of the many people who make up Europe today.

But there are considerable barriers that work against increasing the opportunities for the citizens of Europe to share the marvellous treasures in our 30,000 museums. Only 1 % of these regularly hold major, temporary exhibitions. I find that incredible: collections belong to all of us and we have a duty to aspire to universal access. Lending and borrowing collections is one way of doing this.

We want everyone to be inspired by objects and their stories. This will help strengthen their sense of who they are and where they have come from. We also need to find ways to reach those 50 % of people who do not visit museums regularly and encourage them to visit, engage with and appreciate the role museums can play.

Our governments and the European Union must support museum professionals in developing imaginative ways of allowing greater access to the treasure trove of museum collections and to share these with people in other countries.



*DAVID LAMMY  
Minister for Culture, United Kingdom  
(Pictured above)*



**THE GOAL OF** greater collections mobility between the 25 EU member states will require effort by EU institutions, the national governments of the member states and the museum profession itself. Five presidencies – the Netherlands, Luxembourg, the UK, Austria and Finland – have committed themselves to developing and implementing the necessary plan of action.

In October 2004, the Netherlands organised a conference entitled “Collections on the move” in The Hague to set out key areas of work. This was followed in May 2005 by the report “Lending to Europe”, drawn up by a small group of expert museum directors led by Ronald de Leeuw, Director General of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, one of the world’s greatest art museums which regularly loans and borrows museum objects.

The UK’s contribution, the conference held in Manchester in November 2005, was to examine three issues in depth: indemnity, best practice and building trust. The discussions at the conference form the basis of this report, and follow the organising principle of “Lending to Europe”.

Austria and Finland will continue to develop this work over the next year. This is a real chance to closely examine the issues surrounding loans and to develop and implement clear, practical proposals for action.

## FIVE PRESIDENCIES, ONE GOAL: TO GET EUROPEAN COLLECTIONS ON THE MOVE



European treasures are highly regarded all over the world. But oddly enough, it is sometimes easier for them to travel to the United States or Japan because museums in these countries can draw from larger funds or benefit from advantageous support schemes that considerably reduce operating costs.

We want to stimulate a larger number of European institutions to share in cultural exchange within Europe and to redress the imbalance vis-à-vis financially stronger or better-equipped partners outside Europe.

The stakeholders we need to address are the European institutions, the individual member states and the museums themselves. Their roles are different, so it is essential that problems are addressed at the proper level. There is much that museums, working together, can resolve themselves. But there remains a number of issues where permission or stimuli are needed from higher authorities if we wish to create better conditions for the mobility of objects. For example, the staggering increase of insurance costs is the main impediment for collections mobility and one of our most important recommendations is for the establishment of indemnity schemes, following the Anglo-Saxon model, all over Europe.

In exhibition exchange the keywords are mutual trust and reciprocity. Museums should remember they act in two roles – they are both lenders and borrowers. Often museums act less generously as a lender than as a borrower. We should not make it difficult or impossible to share our common European heritage by charging each other loan fees, for example.

Trust, combined with high professional standards, provides the basis for collections mobility. But we should not leave trust to chance. We must be proactive about it. What needs to be done is to bring the different levels – museums, national governments and EU institutions – together in a continuing process of exchange of information and monitoring of the progress of our ideas. Museums will then be able to act more effectively as a vital link between Europe’s heritage and the citizens of today and tomorrow.



**RONALD DE LEEUW**

*Director General of the Rijksmuseum and chair of the committee that produced “Lending to Europe”  
(Pictured above)*





## THE BENEFITS OF GOVERNMENT INDEMNITY

**MUSEUMS HAVE TO** overcome many practical and cultural hurdles when they loan and borrow objects and works of art, but the biggest hurdle is usually money. Mounting temporary exhibitions or making long-term loans is an expensive business, so keeping costs down and administration simple is vital if more pieces are to travel around Europe.

One of the single biggest costs is insuring works that have a high monetary value. In 2002, Tate Modern in London (pictured above), the Pompidou Centre in Paris and the Museum of Modern Art in New York collaborated on the blockbuster “Matisse/Picasso” show which featured borrowed works with a total value of 3 billion euros. Freda Matassa, the Head of Collections Management at the Tate, told delegates that the exhibition would have cost 3 million euros to insure on the open market – which would have made it unviable. The exhibition was only financially feasible because each of the countries involved had comprehensive indemnity schemes. However, 10 member states – including Malta, Estonia, Portugal, Latvia, Slovakia and Greece – have no government indemnity, while other countries have schemes that are far from comprehensive.

Indemnity and insurance were highlighted as key areas for development at the “Museum collections on the move” conference in The Hague in 2004 and the subsequent “Lending to Europe” report, written under the direction of Ronald de Leeuw. The Manchester conference in November 2005 continued the debate on government indemnity, insurance and non-insurance in some detail. The issues included:

- > The lack of any government indemnity scheme in several member states.
- > The restrictions on government indemnity schemes imposed in some member states and burdensome levels of bureaucracy.
- > The unwillingness of some lenders, particularly private lenders but also some museums, to accept government indemnity.
- > The expense of commercial insurance, based on the high market values of many items, particularly fine art.



The fact that lenders can reject member states' guarantees, contrary to article 151 of the European Union Treaty, impedes the mobility of works of art and prevents access by European citizens to our cultural diversity. The cost of insuring works of art remains a major budget item, making up to 20 % on average of the cost of a temporary exhibition: we must find ways to reduce that cost.



FRANCINE MARIANI-DUCRAY  
Director, Musées de France  
(Pictured left)



Austria introduced a national indemnity scheme for international activities in 2004. One-and-a-half years may be too soon to draw final conclusions, but so far we have issued 334 letters of indemnity and no federal funds have yet been deployed to compensate for damage or loss.



ARMIN MAHR  
Political Adviser, Austrian Federal Ministry of  
Education and Science

## ACTIONS TO REDUCE INSURANCE COSTS

### MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS SHOULD

- > *Accept government indemnity.* Museum staff should accept government indemnity where offered, rather than insisting on commercial insurance. They should also clearly advocate to private lenders the benefits of indemnity and dispel myths (for example, that schemes won't pay out).
- > *Keep insurance values low.* The market prices for some kinds of museum objects, particularly fine art, contemporary art and antiquities, have soared in the past 10 years. But the value of museum objects is different: they will never come onto the open market and are also irreplaceable, so museum professionals should be encouraged to place a lower financial value on the pieces than might be normal for a private owner. The report "Lending to Europe" suggested a value 40 % under market value (though not less than the amount paid by a museum for an item) or even to consider non-insurance. Delegates in Manchester expressed concern that these ideas, although logical, might be viewed by politicians and the general public as negligent in the event of damage or theft. This suggests that museum professionals also need to act as advocates to national politicians and to the media.
- > *Work with professional bodies to share information on indemnity and insurance.* Several delegates in Manchester highlighted the lack of common procedures and differing legislation. Museum staff need to work with professional bodies and their ministries of culture to create a website with comprehensive information about government indemnity schemes, together with best practice in valuations and insurance, as well as standard documentation.

### MEMBER STATES SHOULD

- > *Establish or develop comprehensive indemnity schemes.* These should cover museum objects "nail-to-nail", whether they are for international exhibitions, or for long-term or short-term loans. They should be based on commonly agreed standards, but should otherwise be as unrestrictive as possible, for example,

covering high and low value objects, non-national museums and risks such as terrorism. They should also pay out promptly: the UK Indemnity Scheme, held up as a good example in "Lending to Europe", underwrites an average total risk of 4.5 billion euros at any one time. However, the average payout in claims every year since 1998 has been just 53,000 euros, and claims have been settled quickly and without fuss.

- > *Make their indemnity schemes simple to administer.* Some member states insist that museum objects should be registered six months before an exhibition, which is unnecessarily restrictive and fails to acknowledge the practical realities of organising exhibitions. For the UK Indemnity Scheme, three months is required, but in an emergency cover can be arranged in a matter of days, according to Hillary Bauer, Head of the Cultural Property Unit at the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport, yet the scheme is administered by a team of only three permanent staff and one consultant security adviser.

- > *Accept other member states' indemnity schemes.*

### EU INSTITUTIONS SHOULD

- > *Encourage member states to introduce or develop comprehensive indemnity schemes.*
- > *Commission a feasibility study for a European guarantee.* The EU should investigate the feasibility of underwriting government indemnity schemes as a confidence-building measure for member states without indemnity schemes or with schemes with severe limitations.
- > *Support a website covering indemnity and insurance.* A professional body should be asked to create a website with information on the current range of indemnity schemes, contact points and best practice in valuation and non-insurance.
- > *Consider the subject of waiving subrogation in insurance/ indemnity cover for museum objects and agree on a Europe-wide recommendation.*



## THE BENEFITS OF CROSS-EUROPE STANDARDS

**MUSEUMS HAVE TWO** potentially conflicting obligations: to show their collections to as many people as possible and to preserve their objects for the benefit of future generations. This means that museums need to have robust collection care standards and collection management procedures.

At the Manchester conference David McNeff, Loans Manager of the National Portrait Gallery in London, said: “An increase in the volume of museum lending, assuming only a modest increase in staffing, is only possible if there is a clear understanding of the respective rights and obligations of lender and borrower, and a management framework within which to work.”

To make the process efficient and simple, both the “Museum collections on the move” conference in The Hague in 2004 and the subsequent “Lending to Europe” report noted that common standards are needed. These standards are required for loan agreements, condition checks, transport and packing arrangements, facilities reports, and security and conservation requirements. At the moment, each member state has its own rules – delegates noted, for example, that some countries insist on X-rays of paintings, while others demand police escorts for some items from the border to the museum. Customs procedures were identified as a particular source of aggravation.

Delegates at the Manchester conference discussed a wide range of training issues. A number of member states have registrars’ organisations, including the UK Registrars’ Group, Registrars Deutschland, the Association Française des Régisseurs d’Oeuvres d’Art and Registrarte in Italy. These are all countries with a long history of dealing with loans, but in other countries there is less clear understanding of the skills and role of a registrar and their importance in the lending process.

A good example of developing common standards is the EU-funded Synthesys project, a five-year programme to create an integrated research infrastructure for 20 European natural history museums and botanic gardens. Synthesys is funding a number of networking and shared standards and data initiatives. Participants include the Natural History Museum and Kew Gardens in London, the Museum National d’Histoire Naturelle in Paris, Naturalis in Leiden, the Hungarian Natural History Museum in Budapest and the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna. This could provide a training, skills and systems model.

The key issues delegates identified preventing trust were:

- > A lack of understanding at national and EU-level of the importance of face-to-face networking and joint skills training.
- > A lack of standardised loan forms, condition checks and security/facilities reporting.
- > The need to promote standardised digitisation of collections records.
- > The need for a single point for information in each member state for all aspects of current loans procedures, including national legislation and the scope of various government indemnity schemes.
- > The level of bureaucracy and antiquated customs procedures at a number of member states’ borders, and inconsistent security requirements.





**Delays at borders arise because of inefficient organisation and procedures and unnecessary physical inspections. Customs officials are often not properly trained in the handling of exhibition documentation which leads to extensive delays and a higher level of risk.**



**PAUL WILLIAMSON**  
*Museum and Gallery Director, Constantine Limited*



**It is apparent from this conference that we've got to put a lot of emphasis on training, development and secondments – that none of this works if people aren't skilled enough and confident enough to work with each other. We've also got to look at ways of standardising procedures, to make them more efficient, because we don't have endless resources. Implementing this has got to come from practitioners but the process can be supported at national and European Union level.**



**MIKE HOULIHAN**  
*Director General, National Museums and Galleries of Wales*

## ACTIONS TO DEFINE AND SPREAD BEST PRACTICE

### MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS SHOULD

- > *Work with organisations such as NEMO to produce standard loan forms.* Museums should do their best to co-operate in the production of a standard, modular loan form and other shared procedures such as condition checks and facilities reports.
- > *Co-operate with their member state on standardising digitised content.* The eEurope 2002 Action Plan recommended a number of actions to ensure the interoperability and usability of digitised content which have clear implications for museums. Museum professionals need to comply with initiatives such as MICHAEL and MINERVA which are developing common digital standards.
- > *Emphasise the professional development of and co-operation between registrars and other museum staff nationally and internationally.* European working is not just a responsibility to be left to directors, it needs to be a principle that cascades to all levels of staff. They should support the development of the fledgling European registrars' network.

### MEMBER STATES SHOULD

- > *Agree a single point of contact.* Delegates at the Manchester conference wanted a first point of contact within the museum sector in each country to deal with enquiries about collections mobility. Issues needing discussion at this level might include information on indemnity and further contacts.
- > *Co-operate to improve customs procedures.* Member states need to clarify and simplify national legislation relating to the movement of museum objects. They should also ensure that customs officers are properly trained and that they implement rules and systems consistently across Europe.
- > *Support European networking and training initiatives.* Member states should support and promote the benefits of working in Europe, encouraging networking by museum staff.

### EU INSTITUTIONS SHOULD

- > *Support and promote cross-European networking and training initiatives.* The EU should take note of projects such as Synthesis and consider extending them to other museum subject specialisms. It should also encourage organisations that offer training or access to training, including NEMO, the International Council of Museums (ICoM), Ecsite (the international organisation for science museums) and the European Museum Forum, among others.
- > *Encourage all member states to improve customs and border procedures.* This would significantly improve the mobility of collections and reduce current levels of risk and damage.
- > *Support the development of the European registrars' network.* This could be developed in conjunction with the existing national registrars' groups such as Registrarte and the UK Registrars' Group, and build on the next European registrars' conference to be held in Madrid in November 2006.
- > *Support the standardisation of loan agreements and other information-sharing initiatives.* Following The Hague conference in 2004, NEMO has undertaken to gather together existing loan documentation, plus the European Standard Facilities Report form, to create a standardised modular form. But there is also a need to support standardisation or information-sharing websites in other areas.





**Networking and collaboration between individuals should be encouraged at different levels as this exchange cascades throughout the organisation and enables opportunities to materialise. Forums for this exchange should be broadened.**



**ANTOINETTE CARUANA**  
 Chief Executive Officer, Heritage Malta  
 (Pictured above, right)

## WHY NOTHING HAPPENS WITHOUT TRUST

**WOULD YOU LEND** something valuable that you own to someone you hardly know? Of course not – and museums are just the same. They only lend to people that they know and trust. Getting to know people in other museums is hard enough within one nation, but even more difficult when borders have to be crossed and different languages spoken. With the exception of a handful of major art institutions that work together in forums such as the Bizot Group, few European museums co-operate regularly or know each other very well.

This problem has become more acute since the European Union expanded in May 2004 to include 10 new member states. Museum professionals from these states sometimes feel excluded from the “cosy club” of those who know and understand one another and who are used to working together. They have a sense that there are two Europes – one made up of the well-established EU member states whose citizens are used to interacting together and a second encompassing the new member states whose citizens still feel very much on the periphery of what’s going on.

As Katalin Néray, Director of the Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art in Hungary, pointed out at the Manchester conference: “Many museums in central and Eastern Europe share the feeling of being outside the regular and well-established museum circuit, being part of the periphery... The political barriers have come down, but the mental ones still exist.”

There are many issues that undermine trust across the whole of the European Union, which spring from different customs, practices and regulations. These include:

- > The lack of knowledge about each other and lack of good quality information about other institutions.
- > Different governance models, collection ownership and museum ethics, including immunity from seizure.
- > The confusion and extra work that arises from different loan agreements, customs procedures and security and conservation standards.





It's much easier to develop a trusting relationship with a colleague that you have met face-to-face. Once you have had a conversation and got to know one another you can talk more openly about the issues that you might experience when lending or borrowing a precious artefact and agree a way to resolve the problems.



**PAUL KIRKMAN**  
Head of the Museums and Cultural Property Division,  
UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Photograph: © Jeroen Swolifs



## ACTIONS TO BUILD TRUST

### MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS SHOULD

> *Make more effort to join networks and invite new people in.* There are many groups that offer opportunities for museum professionals to get to know each other across Europe. These include ICoM, the European Museum Forum, Ecsite, the European registrars' network and NEMO. NEMO should lead the efforts to increase networking by spreading information about existing groups, advocating their benefits and encouraging new people to join.

> *Encourage staff exchanges and secondments.* Delegates in Manchester heard about the successes of partnerships such as the Synthesys natural history museums project and the UK's National Maritime Museum and Heritage Malta collaboration. The NMM and HM have not only loaned objects to each other since the 1990s but also built up a strong relationship through an ongoing staff secondment programme at all levels. Staff benefit from a greater understanding of their host organisation as well as gaining new ideas and inspiration for their work.

> *Make reciprocity the guiding principle when dealing with other museum professionals.* Ronald de Leeuw told delegates at the Manchester conference: "Often museums behave as Jekyll and Hyde in acting less generously as a lender than as a borrower." He condemned the practice of asking for fees for individual loans as a way of earning extra income at the expense of colleagues within the museums world.

> *Develop an organisation-wide commitment to co-operation.* It is crucial that relationships are developed throughout all levels of the institutions involved. If a relationship is developed solely between museum directors it will founder when a director leaves. The conference recommended that trust and knowledge should be cascaded throughout organisations.

> *Research and publicise the provenance of objects in their collections.* Collections mobility should not be tainted by

ownership disputes. Museum professionals should do their utmost to research the provenance of objects and inform borrowers of any risks. This will help to avoid disputes arising while objects are on loan and help build trust between museum professionals.

### MEMBER STATES SHOULD

> *Support the museum profession to network at a European level and develop European training and secondments.* This should be an important part of professional development.

### EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS SHOULD

> *Support Europe-wide professional bodies.* These include NEMO, the European Museum Forum, Ecsite, ICoM and the European registrars' network. Support for these bodies would help to extend networking at a European level, enabling museum professionals to share information and best practice.

> *Commission a study into immunity from seizure legislation and make recommendations for Europe-wide legislation.* Some museums in Europe are not confident about lending objects without immunity from seizure legislation to guarantee that ownership claims will not be made. There is no doubt that introducing a Europe-wide system of immunity from seizure would enable more loans to take place. However, not all the Manchester delegates agreed that immunity from seizure legislation should be introduced across Europe as this might prevent people making rightful claims to objects, for example objects wrongfully taken during the Nazi era. Antoinette Caruana, Chief Executive Officer of Heritage Malta, told the delegates: "Museums should not be in the business of legitimising dubious artefacts by preventing claims from their rightful owners."

> *Support an online European museum directory.* This should contain key facts about Europe's museums including contact details and information on the person responsible for loans.



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**THE MANCHESTER CONFERENCE**, “Increasing the mobility of collections”, in November 2005 brought together more than 100 delegates from all 25 EU member states. It featured 20 presentations and three lively, round-table debates focusing on indemnity, best practice and building trust. The delegates made a number of recommendations which should now be taken forward by the profession, member states and EU institutions.

One of the most important points that delegates agreed upon was that museum professionals, member states and EU institutions must understand and communicate the benefits of collections mobility for all European citizens.

### WHAT NEXT?

Delegates at the Manchester conference agreed that museums do not want to lose momentum after the good work of this conference and the conference in The Hague in 2004. The UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which organised the Manchester conference for the UK Presidency, would like to see the project move forward in the following ways:

> We ask the next two presidencies – Austria and Finland – to follow up these recommendations and those in “Lending to Europe”.

> We also ask the next two presidencies to continue the discussions on issues such as immunity from seizure and low or non-insurance which were not resolved at this conference.

> We ask EU institutions and member states to take immediate action on setting up or widening indemnity schemes, and supporting the profession to standardise loan documents and procedures. We ask member states to support the development of national registrars’ groups and the European registrars’ network.

> We ask EU institutions and member states to investigate the feasibility of setting up a single information point at national level for loan and indemnity information, or creating a single website with this information.

> We ask the profession to investigate ways of standardising procedures and sharing information, including a modular loan form to be created by NEMO.

> There was a request for an on-line museums directory, including information on loans and indemnity, which delegates hoped could be managed by a professional body such as NEMO.

## MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS

**INDEMNITY:** In each member state, the museum profession should advocate the benefits of comprehensive government indemnity. They should accept other member states' indemnity schemes, and try to keep insurance values as low as possible. They should work closely with their governments and professional bodies to provide information to colleagues abroad about the current rules surrounding any national indemnity scheme from which they benefit.

**BEST PRACTICE:** The museum profession must seriously investigate ways of standardising loans procedures – from loan forms to security and conservation standards. It should support the development of the post of registrar where it does not exist.

**BUILDING TRUST:** Museum professionals must take active steps to encourage European networking and developing a culture of knowledge and respect for colleagues. They must encourage attendance at European networking events and secondments, and develop an organisation-wide commitment to co-operation.

## MEMBER STATES

**INDEMNITY:** All member states that have not already done so should prepare to introduce indemnity schemes to make lending easier. Other member states should widen restrictive schemes. Each member state should investigate creating a single information point covering national loan and indemnity information.

**BEST PRACTICE:** Member states must co-operate to improve customs procedures and the training of customs officers. They must clarify and simplify national legislation relating to museum loans. They should support opportunities for museum staff to work and train with colleagues abroad.

**BUILDING TRUST:** Member states must support the efforts of the profession to network and develop exchanges and secondments.

## EU INSTITUTIONS

**INDEMNITY:** Encourage all member states to introduce comprehensive indemnity schemes. Encourage all member states to introduce a single loan and indemnity information point at national level and/or support a single website or portal containing this information.

**BEST PRACTICE:** EU institutions should actively support professional initiatives to standardise loans procedures and train staff. They should support the development of the European registrars' network and the European registrars' conference.

**BUILDING TRUST:** EU institutions should support Europe-wide professional associations and networking bodies, training organisations and secondments. They should also support information-sharing initiatives including: a website or portal on national indemnity and insurance; the drive to standardise loan forms and other procedures; a European museum directory to help museums find out about each other.



Here in Manchester, we have got a very clear view on the state of play in the different fields in the different countries. It is important that we now move forward. We at the European Commission want to identify subject items we should take up at European level. We should assist member states in taking the lead in some areas – we can act as facilitators and we can initiate developments, but we cannot set things up at national level. We should leave these processes open so that others can join in if they wish, as this shouldn't become a closed shop.

We cannot deal with subject areas one after the other. We need to do it in parallel because in some areas we might achieve progress more easily. Once every six months we should have a meeting where we take stock.

It is important that the museum professionals work closely together with their national administrations. These can then report to the EU Council of Ministers on progress.

Museum collection mobility is not an end in itself. Museums have enormous potential to bridge different cultures and to raise awareness of the common elements of our cultural heritage. When citizens are searching to build a common future, the potential of museums is crucial.



*HARALD HARTUNG*

*Head of the Culture Unit, European Commission  
(Pictured above)*



The “Increasing the mobility of collections” conference took place in Manchester on 27 and 28 November 2005. It was hosted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as part of the UK Presidency of the EU, and was organised by the UK Museums Association.

