



European Museum Academy

How are museums doing in Europe?

The European Museum Academy Reports on The Museum Temperature by the end of 2020.

The European Museum Academy is proud to present for the third year in a row the following more subjective inside views about how museums are doing and what the museums experience as their current challenges, be it political, financial, organisational or something else.

We all think we know something about how museums are doing in our own country and we know that we can find statistical information produced for specific research projects and in continuous statistical series from our governments, the European Union, the Council of Europe and even UNESCO.

But what is going on beneath the numbers?

We would like to thank all our dedicated representatives across Europe who make it possible for our independent network to present this report.

Enjoy reading it!

European Museum Academy

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How were museums in Europe doing in 2020?

– an analytical summary by Emek Yilmaz & Henrik Zipsane

2020 was like no other year in recent decades because of the COVID-19 pandemic which has swept over Europe and the world since early in the year, and which has shown little sign of ending when these words are written in the second month of 2021.

That situation sets its clear mark on this report. For the third time the European Museum Academy presents an overview of the situation and the trends in the European museum landscape. The overview consists of reports from colleagues across the continent who have simply been asked “what’s going on?” and “how are you doing?” Because of the special situation with the pandemic the Academy representatives were asked specifically to report what the impact has been on museums in their countries and how museums, the public and the authorities have responded.

The year 2020 became a year of unprecedented challenges for museums as for society in general. As our colleague in Cyprus put it, “aside from all the bad, sad circumstances that this pandemic may have provoked, museums, as in many other sectors, were forced to rethink and reevaluate their policies, strategies, and purpose”. The pandemic threw museums all over Europe into lockdowns for days, weeks, and months, and even repeated as the second wave of the pandemic struck. In many countries this meant that staff were sent home for longer periods, or even lost their jobs, and thereby museums losing competences. The pandemic impact was severe for staff all over Europe, and in some cases, freelancers lost their contracts, in some countries like the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden staff had to be dismissed. Museums tried to encourage people to come by securing safe distance between visitors, lowering entrance fees, and other means, but for most museums it seems to have been a losing battle. Some museums received about half the number of visitors as usual during the summer, but many lowered their visitor numbers by historically 70-80 percent, which was to a great extent explained by an almost total ban on tourism and travel. The financial impact of this set aside, the lockdowns also caused museums to fail to fulfil a key element in their purpose: reaching people and offering the kind of experiences that only museums provide.

For decades digitalisation has been an issue which museums in general seem to have used primarily for modernising collection registration procedures, even though there are of course examples in many countries of pioneering digital presentations, educational offers, and exhibitions. When museums closed across Europe digitalisation became something much more than a tool for registration. The reports reveal how museums were fast to change strategy and adapt to the new circumstances. The digital means and social media suddenly became particularly important tools for

reaching the public, and even to reach the public at all. The reports demonstrate a great variety of digital activities from the museums. Interactive learning experiences, virtual tours and many other offers have been developed, produced, delivered, and consumed in almost all countries. In several countries the governments stimulated the digital development, as does the European Union through several programmes. In other countries governments or museum organisations dedicated 2020 to further education programmes for museums on digital competencies. But in some countries, taking Turkey as an example, smaller independent private museums are still not able to make use of the offers, as they were already poor and in need of basic resources before the pandemic.

Besides handling the impact of the pandemic, and taking opportunities it offered, there have been some remarkable political developments of importance to museums in Europe. In 2019 we saw initiatives in some countries to create politicised control over museums as was the case mentioned for Italy. This year we have reports on how governments can undercut the authority or welfare of professionals. In Hungary, the civil servant status has been taken away from museum staff which has had the unfortunate result that salary development has been negative. Good news comes from the Northern Macedonia, where the staff earned a long-awaited salary increase. In other countries like Sweden the division of financial responsibility and engagement in museums between central government and regional councils is highly criticized by the regions, who claim that the government is increasingly narrowing its financial engagement to cover little more than the central government-run museums. Nevertheless, there took place relief funding by the state in several countries for the hardship museums and actors in cultural sector go through, such as in Austria, Estonia, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, and Ireland. The pandemic was an occasion for museums to review the social role of museums in Slovenia. Migration, globalisation, decolonizing museums were important topics that the sector discussed in Belgium, Germany and the UK. Brexit and its repercussions for the tourism and museum sector was another important topic for the UK.

The importance of museums to the mental welfare and competence development of people may never have been demonstrated as strongly before as during the pandemic. The demand for reopening museums was seen in all countries throughout the year and grew from modest attempts with opening for smaller groups as in Montenegro, excessive safety precautions as in Spain, and demands in national media in France for reopening as soon as possible. The damage done by closing museums was considered in some ways worse than the risks of careful opening. It may be seen as a symbol of the importance of museums that the National Day was chosen for reopening in Slovenia.

Emek Yilmaz & Henrik Zipsane
European Museum Academy

COUNTRY REPORTS

ALBANIA

The spread of COVID-19 has affected our country in a sudden and dramatic way, and therefore the need arose for social and physical distancing, an action taken to minimize contact with other individuals and to respect the measures implemented by the government. The need for social distancing has impacted the implementation of a series of cultural activities and programmes of the Ministry of Culture in the field of art and culture for 2020.

Based on Order no. 132 (08.03.2020) *“For the closing of public and non-public activities and cancellation of mass gatherings in open and closed spaces”* by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, all cultural activities in Albania were suspended. This was publicly announced by the Ministry of Culture on 9 March.

In March, the public cultural institutions quickly raised awareness through sharing the digital official information by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection on safety recommendations and regulations for COVID-19.

The National Historical Museum organised

- *‘Create your sculpture’*
- *‘Build your mosaic’*
- *‘Drawing History from Home’*
- *‘Complete the Puzzle’*
- *‘My Museum’*
- *Sketches of the objects were prepared, part of the National Historical Museum fund to be downloaded and coloured by children.*
- *The treasures of the National Historical Museum were also adapted for the entertainment of children, from home. The children were invited to download the sketch of the object with the help of their parents and to colour it according to the original photo of the object.*
- *Presentation of the objects exhibited in the pavilions of the National Historical Museum, through the sections ‘Parts of the treasure of a nation’ and ‘Journey to the treasures of the National Historical Museum’.*
- *Published videos to visit the exhibitions virtually, organized by the National Historical Museum in recent years.*

- Virtual Tour 3D is an innovative platform, which the Ministry of Culture has made available to the general public and in particular to domestic and foreign tourists, in Albanian and English, in order to promote national assets and numerous attractions in the field of cultural heritage in the country. The official website provides more information: <https://kultura.gov.al/3dsite/>

During 2020, the National Council of Museums in Albania has taken preliminary decisions for the creation of five new museums in Albania, which are:

- Albanian Jewish Museum located in Vlora;
- Local Museum 'Studio Kadare House' located in Tirana;
- Local Museum, Museum House 'Selam Musai' located in Salari village, Tepelena;
- Local museum, 'Diocesan Museum' located in the premises of Shkodra Cathedral under the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Shkodra-Pult;
- Local Museum 'Kadare Museum' located in Gjirokastra.

Throughout the pandemic, many people in the fields of art and culture have experienced a lack of income, work delays and the need to move their businesses to adapt to a new normality. The proliferation of COVID-19 has forced the closure of galleries, museums, and all art activities have been cancelled. Due to travelling restrictions, organizations working with international artists were not able to continue their activities, including residencies and exhibitions. However, many artists increased their online presence by creating and sharing videos with performances, painting, reading, discussions, playing music, etc.

Dorian Koçi

AUSTRIA

In Austria museums had to close between 16 March and the beginning of June. Since then, museums have had to comply with strict hygiene measures. Further lockdowns occurred in the autumn and winter and museums were closed again. Fortunately, many staff members were eligible for a government-funded short-time work scheme. But a lot of freelancers lost their job opportunities.

Due to the common practices of contract structures this particularly hit museum educators. The worst thing, however, is the uncertainty that continues until now. No one knows at the end of 2020 when museums will be allowed to reopen.

But for this report we want to focus on those activities that were possible despite everything. Many museums shifted their offers to the digital space: online-workshops, virtual tours, talks via internet platforms.

In Spring 2020 the company fluxguide asked museums in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland to develop an app. The MuseumStars App is an interactive learning experience based on e-learning, gamification, and innovative technologies. Museums can contribute challenges for children, students, and adults which can be played everywhere on smartphones and tablets.

(<https://www.fluxguide.com/portfolio/museumstars/>)

Here are some of the countless wonderful ideas and offerings for visitors in Austrian museums (not an exhaustive list):

Online Collections:

<https://sammlung.wienmuseum.at/>

Online Tours:

<https://www.khm.at/>

Online exhibition & educational materials:

https://www.nhm-wien.ac.at/digital/evolution_der_minerale

Augmented Reality:

<https://www.belvedere.at/digital>

Online-Workshops:

<https://www.albertina.at/home>

<https://fridaundfred.at/>

https://www.kindermuseum.at/zoom_programmangebot/zoom_trickfilmstudio/aktuelle_workshops_zoom_online

Video Channels, Podcasts and Blogs:

<http://mak.at/>

Experiments and activities to do at home:

<https://www.museumjoanneum.at/cosagraz/spaces>

3D-Tours

<https://www.nordico.at/html/de/633.aspx>

Art & Museum festivals:

Ars Electronica Festival 1st Online Edition

Festival for Art, Technology and Society, annual festival since 1979

<https://ars.electronica.art/keplersgardens/en/highlights/>

- ⊙ not only in Linz but at 120 locations world-wide, partly on-site, partly online
- ⊙ 10500 on-site visitors in Linz, (in previous years 100000), and 300.000 views online
- ⊙ 5 full days, accompanied by 48 days education programme

Lange Nacht der Museen 2020

Annual night of museums was cancelled and changed to a 'week of museums' (3.-10.10.2020).

Museums all over Austria offered reduced ticket prices and special tours, all in accordance with hygienic and safety concepts to counteract the pandemic.

Other Initiatives:

- ⊙ **Sewing children's masks** (when it was not possible to purchase them).

FRida & freD, Graz

©fridaundfred

- ⊙ **Children's chain of solidarity ZOOM** children's museum Vienna

https://www.kindermuseum.at/wir_halten_zusammen

- ⊙ **Wien Museum:**

Picking up the topic of the pandemic and exhibiting online and in public spaces.

<https://magazin.wienmuseum.at/ausstellung-face-it>

- ⊙ **Museums for Future:**

International initiative to support the #Fridaysforfuture movement launched in Austria in November 2019. <https://museumsforfuture.org/>

Austrian Museums Day (annual Conference of Austrian museum landscape:

Space of original objects. New crisis-led chances for museums.7./8. 10. 2020, Krems.

On-site conference with strict Covid-19 protocols.

https://www.museumsbund.at/uploads/museumstag_archiv/OeMT_2020_Programm.pdf

Label of Quality for Austrian Museums

Despite the crisis 18 museums were awarded with the seal for the first time in 2020.

39 seal holders received an extension of their seal until 2025 after their reassessment, which is due every five years. At the moment 283 Austrian museums hold the Austrian museum seal. 775 museums are currently registered in the official Austrian museum register.

Covid-19 Release Funds for Museums:

© **Artists' social insurance fund:** This COVID-19 fund is endowed with up to five million euros and is intended to ensure rapid assistance. In addition to artists, freelance museum educators and tour guides can now also apply for this grant.

© **Hardship Fund of the WKÖ:** The hardship fund, endowed with two billion euros, was set up as emergency aid for all one-person companies, small businesses (up to 9 employees), artists or newly self-employed people whose turnover has collapsed due to the corona measures. The money is intended to help cover the cost of living.

© **Collecting societies:** Artists who find themselves in extraordinary economic distress due to the Corona crisis can apply for financial support from the 'Bildrecht-Bridging' Fund.

© **Corona short-time work:** To cope with the Corona crisis and secure jobs, there is a special short-time work model that can also be used by cultural institutions. When applying the short-time model employers are not allowed to terminate jobs. They receive a refund of most of their staff costs by the government. Employees receive (depending on the model) 80% of the wages and are fully insured.

© **'Foundations help artists' initiative:** In order to help artists in the current crisis, different private foundations have come together to form the 'Foundations help artists' initiative.

© **NPO fund:** The new NPO fund provides Corona aid amounting to 700 million euros for non-profit organizations. Non-profit associations from all walks of life can apply for payments, from art and culture, traditional customs and sport to environmental protection. A fixed cost subsidy is granted - in two tranches - for rent or personnel costs, for example, as well as a structural security contribution, which is capped at seven percent of the 2019 income. A maximum of EUR 2.4 million will be paid out per organization. Money is initially available for six months, specifically from the start of the Corona crisis to December 31.

© **Reduction of sales tax to 5%:** By the end of 2021, sales tax for services that are regularly associated with the operation of a museum, a botanical or a zoological garden or a nature park will be reduced from 13% or 10% to 5%.

Sarai Lenzberger & Nikola Köhler-Kroath

BELGIUM

On March 12, 2020, the Belgian Federal Government decided that the country would go into lockdown from March 13 to April 3 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Non-essential movements were not allowed. The museums were closed as a result.

On May 13, the National Security Council confirmed that phase 2 of the phase-out plan would start on May 18. Museums with a quality label were able to reopen during this phase, albeit under strict conditions (online ticketing, restriction of visitor numbers, one-way traffic, ...). It was only from June 8 that all museums and cultural attractions were allowed to reopen. A museum sector protocol was drafted, which has been updated during each phase of the pandemic.

On July 9 the wearing of face masks was made mandatory in shops, libraries, cinemas, theatres, museums, concert and conference halls and places of worship.

On October 27 the Belgian Federal Government decided that the country would go into lockdown again. Indoor museums had to close once more.

A month later, on November 27, the government decided that all museums could reopen their doors from November 30, albeit under the strict conditions of the sector protocol. Not all museums opened simultaneously, each museum reopened according to its own feasibility and objectives.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Flemish Government set up an emergency fund for the culture, youth and media sector. The emergency fund contains various support measures to partially compensate for the financial damage in the three sectors. The cultural sector can count on almost 65 million euros, the youth sector on 16 million euros and the media sector on 10 million euros.

The legal basis for the emergency fund is the so-called Emergency Decree of 19 June 2020 (in full: Decree to take urgent measures with regard to the emergency funds for culture, youth, sports, media and local authorities, and with regard to the fight against poverty in response to the COVID-19 pandemic).

The cities and municipalities receive 30 percent of the emergency fund, which amounts to 87 million euros. With this they can support cultural centres, local cultural organizations and youth organizations, among other things. As far as culture is concerned, we expect that more than 20 million euros will end up with local cultural associations. This concerns, for example, local non-subsidized, non-commercial organizations from the heritage sector, socio-cultural work, the amateur arts, or the

arts. The cultural sector can therefore count on a total of 85 million euros from the emergency fund.

The Flemish Government approved the following support measures: an additional subsidy for organizations that receive multi-year subsidies; a bonus for vulnerable key players in the culture sector: the culture Corona prize; a lump sum for a number of umbrella organizations with a special assignment.

On October 9 the Flemish Government approved a new premium for the cultural sector: the cultural activities premium. This premium is a fixed subsidy (total: 35 million euros) to stimulate public activities in the Flemish cultural sector for the period September 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021. The cultural activity must always be public and is broadly defined. It may concern activities aimed at presentation, (talent) development, training activities or (participation) projects. Examples of this are a performance, workshop, exhibition, lecture or a socio-cultural activity. In addition, the government wants to support alternative presentation forms during the second lockdown. Think of live streaming, a poetry telephone, virtual workshops or exhibitions, WhatsApp theatre, an in-game metal festival, ... The premium can be an extra impulse to innovate and to deepen those forms so that people in these difficult times can continue to enjoy culture. One can also use the premium to cover non-refundable costs for an activity already planned that has now been cancelled. It was announced at the end of 2020 that the budget had been fully spent.

In Wallonia, the museums also experienced a decline in visitor numbers. For the Walloon part of the country, a 57% decrease of visitors, compared with 2019 was noted. This would correspond with a loss of income (only ticketing-revenues) of 3.733.222 euro, compared with the previous year. This represents of course only an exceedingly small part of the entire economic impact. For the revenues obtained by the catering services, more than 65% of the museums saw a drop of 50% in their revenues. Shop results were down for more than 50% for 53% of the museums. Income obtained by events were impacted even more dramatically, 90% of the museums saw a decline of far more than 50%.

As for recovery efforts, the museums in Wallonia would like to place its emphasis on schools and individual visitors. As a means to achieve this, museums would like to invest in digital communication and promotion in the mainstream media. An improvement of digital and educational museum products is also seen as important.

The Flemish Museum Network is an informal network of professionals working in museums and umbrella heritage organizations in Flanders. FARO, the Flemish Institution for Cultural Heritage facilitates and supports this network. The Flemish Museum Network was established 10 years ago. It started from a small network of museum directors in Ghent, Antwerp and Bruges, and expanded in the course of the

years. Since the pandemic in 2020, the Flemish Museum Network is growing rapidly. Currently, nearly 60 museums participate in the monthly meetings. The goal is to exchange experiences, insights, and Q&A. During these meetings they also discuss shared policy and museological issues, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

2020 was a special year. After the Museum Consultation successfully kept the Belgian Museumpassmusées (in 2018) above the baptismal font and with some success helped to increase the subsidy by the Flemish government, 2020 was dictated largely by COVID-19.

The pandemic led to more intense internal communication. The group of museums involved was expanded without further ado. This is how the Flemish Museum Consultation XL was born: all regional and local museums are now also involved in the consultation, so that more than 60 museums were consulted. Strong mutual communication and thorough consultation with the Flemish and Belgian governments meant that the museums, after having been locked down twice (March and November), twice succeeded in being the first of the cultural sector to be reopened.

The Flemish museum consultation is of course also strongly involved in the substantive deepening and renewal of museum activities, such as museums and charged themes (colonialism, psychiatry, migration, war, and peace). The government's plans for the establishment of a 'digital' Flemish museum 'presents itself as a possible 'major' theme in 2021.

The Belgian Museumpassmusées allows people to visit 187 museums all over Belgium during one year for the price of 59 euro.

This cooperative initiative started in September 2018 with 120 museums. The main purpose is to attract audiences to the museums (including people of disadvantaged groups at a social rate). Next to bring more visitors to the museums by collective marketing campaigns. The Museumpassmusée collects rich data and helps museums with business insights to improve their relationship with their visitors.

In 2020 the Museumpassmusée promoted 187 museums, with 125.334 active pass holders, it generated 278.879 visits and delivered a 1,5 million euro revenue for the museums in Belgium.

Museumpass generates public awareness for museums in Belgium. During the COVID-19 crisis it kept museums digitally on top of mind. The first visitors to return to museums after the first lockdown Spring 2020 were mainly Museumpass holders, proving to be very loyal museum lovers.

The impact of COVID-19 on a medium and longer term is yet to be identified. Yet several concerns are already raised.

The restrictions for travelling in Europe and abroad has diminished the opportunities to create and uphold international networks. With the annulations of colloquia and congresses, or the shift to digital gatherings, some essential part of the networking seems to be lost. This will have repercussions on scientific research and loan negotiations.

Also, all the efforts of co-creative and participation projects are endangered. The past years, a lot of effort was made by museums to enhance the participation-level of specific, hard-to-reach, parts of the population. Due to lockdown-measures, these projects have been halted, and the positive results of these efforts might be totally annulled or even changed towards a negative tendency.

At this point, it is not yet clear what the economic impact on the non-public funded museum sector will be.

Peter Carpreau & Hilde Schoefs

BULGARIA

Lockdown in museums has mobilized some of them to search for their digital audiences. It became clear that the process of digitalization in Bulgaria is at a very low level. Some of the museums focused on memorial events and celebrations of national themes, while others focused on artefacts from the funds. An important moment was the creation of new collections of objects with a story related to communism. Communication takes place mainly through Facebook. Some museums have developed their own YouTube channels for the first time. The active museums from before the pandemic were also active during the restrictions.

During the summer, when people travelled, many museums created events and concerts in open-air museums. One-way traffic was introduced in the halls, visitors were allowed up to 50% of the capacity, thermal cameras appeared. In the second half of 2020 the government took bolder action to support cultural actors, giving museums access to new project application programs. The amounts for activities in these programs were surprisingly high, and the results are yet to be realized.

Museums are looking for partnerships with universities and NGOs, but the constraints of the pandemic have prevented many of the projects from being implemented.

The Museum Exhibition Fair was held for the ninth time in 2020 - a forum for sharing good practices, training and enhancing the mobility of collections. The event was held in a hybrid way - with a live ceremony and presentations online. All presentations at mobile exhibitions are shared in video format.

In 2020 there are no new museums in Bulgaria. Sporadically museum buildings are being renovated in some municipalities as well as reconstructions in existing museum exhibitions.

The Bulgarian Museums Association organizes awards for the best museum in the country, for educational initiatives and public activities. The awards stimulate the work of museums.

It was agreed with the Ministry of Culture that the 2021 budget support of the museums should increase by 8%.

Nikolay Nenov

CYPRUS

2020 has been a challenging year not just for the cultural sector, but also for our everyday lives in general. Nobody can dispute that the entire world is living through unprecedented times, and Cyprus, a small island in the Mediterranean, is no exception. The spread of the COVID-19 virus has led to frequent lockdowns and the closure of museums, schools, universities, theatres, businesses, restaurants, places of worship and sports activities, as well as the end of any form of planning and social engagement. However, aside from all the bad, sad circumstances that this pandemic may have provoked, museums, as in many other sectors, were forced to rethink and reevaluate their policies, strategies, and purpose.

A country with a long history and rich culture that spans more than 10,000 years, Cyprus witnessed for the first time in recent history the simultaneous closure of its numerous museums, archaeological sites, cultural centres, monuments, and galleries. During the first lockdown, mid-March to mid-May, people were surprised – there was a feeling of uncertainty and the huge question mark of ‘What now?’. COVID-19 has undoubtedly had a profound impact on the cultural sector; however, after the initial shock, cultural institutions and artists from all disciplines embraced this unknown situation and searched for new ways of communicating art, music, and literature.

From the start of the lockdown, private museums, such as the A. G. Leventis Gallery in Nicosia, initiated almost instantly free online activities for its young and adult followers; their first digital activity, ‘I Stay Home – I Stay with Art’, reached more than 10,000 people in Cyprus and Europe. Similar digital programmes followed to respond to these arduous times, paired with fresh projects and actions, and social media initiatives, ranging from the more cerebral to the more popular and downright fun. The Fairytale Museum in Nicosia introduced its collections digitally and through its social media platforms by inviting well-known Cypriot politicians, artists and actors to read their favourite fairy tale. Among other digital activities, the history museum of the capital, the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia, took the opportunity to launch a social media-based project, #covidstoriesnicosia, asking the people of Nicosia to post photographs of their everyday life during the lockdown. This was a successful project, with exceptional images of the city enriching the Museum’s photographic archive. Other museums, private or state-run, some more than others, used this time to upgrade their social media platforms and to communicate information about their collections, trying to build a new relationship with their audiences.

Following the end of the first lockdown, museums and other cultural sites reopened their doors to the public, but nothing reminded visitors of the days before COVID-19.

The guidelines issued by the health authorities changed frequently, leaving all scheduled opening events and temporary exhibitions hanging by a thread. A number of museums cancelled or postponed their activities and remained open only for guided tours. The number of tourists was reduced dramatically, affecting not only museum visits, but also the tourist industry and the economic situation of the island. However, it was evident that museum visits witnessed a rise in Cypriot visitors of all ages. People were forced to adapt to the new reality and the social-distancing restrictions and searched for alternative ways to spend their free time. It was proven once again that art can help us through uncertain times.

Demetra Theodotou Anagnostopoulou

CZECH REPUBLIC

Czech museums entered 2020 in good condition and with a favorable perspective. The 18th year of the Gloria Musaealis competition was slowly coming to an end (February 28) and 87 submitted projects (40 exhibitions and expositions, 30 museum publications and 17 museum special deeds) promised an interesting, albeit difficult, selection. News of a new and dangerous disease had been circulating since January, but no one initially expected it to spread with such speed and vigor, and when the government declared a complete lockdown in mid-March the country, including museums and other cultural facilities, grew stiff. Nevertheless, in a short time, museums, whose staff have partially switched to work in the home office system, started moving planned conferences or lectures to the web, offering access to collection items and organizing tours of exhibitions online and then realizing openings in the form of streams. Big institutions with effective capacities and sufficient background started also preparing pre-announced regular thematic programs on their homepages in addition to the long-term offer. At the same time, museums joined programs supplementing school teaching. The closure of the operations for the public was also used by museums for various renovations of their buildings and facilities as far as possible.

Strict lockdown in the Spring months, combined with admirable discipline as well as solidarity on the part of the population (sewing face masks, helping the elderly and neighbourhood assistance to the disabled) led to a significant reduction in the disease, so measures could be somewhat alleviated in June: shops, some services and sports venues opened. The museums could also be opened under careful hygienic conditions and for a limited number of visitors. However, the success was somewhat overestimated, and the consequences were already clear in September. The number of infected people began to rise sharply, and the government announced a halt again on October 8. The Gloria Musaealis competition moved the winners' ceremony, usually held in May on International Museum Day, to October, with the idea that it would be possible to hold it in the autumn without restriction, but it finally had to be held only with the providers/organizers, the competition jury and the winners themselves, while the whole course was made available to museums and the public on the stream. In a similar way, after a three-year reconstruction, those interested could also get acquainted with the North Bohemian Museum in Liberec, the oldest art and industrial museum in Bohemia. The brand-new Museum of Food and Agricultural Machinery in Ostrava has not yet been able to show its whole presentation and possibilities. For a short time, two exceptional exhibitions with foreign loans remained open, albeit under very strict measures: 'Kings of the Sun' at the National Museum, displaying monuments of ancient Egypt, and 'Rembrandt - Portrait of Man' at the National Gallery. It is obvious that it will not be possible to repeat them, yet they had to close prematurely at the end of the year. On New Year's Day, the National Gallery, in

cooperation with the National Theater, organized a unique video project 'Ballet between paintings - Rembrandt and Saskia'

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKmi5bYrcQI&t=3s>).

The pandemic has unfortunate consequences for museums, as it does for other cultural institutions. On the one hand, it partially squandered their efforts exerted on programs for the public, and on the other hand, it deprived them of admission income. At the same time, it forced them to change their concept quickly, greatly enriching employees' skills in using new methods and technologies as well as in contacts with schools and the general public through the online environment. The experience gained will remain very useful in the future and, what is more, will allow much better and more diverse access to museums and cultural heritage in general, also for people living outside large urban centers, as they will reach even the remote places. It will depend on their ingenuity and interest of the addressees.

Jana Soucková

DENMARK

In 2020 Danish museums were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions and economic situation it caused.

The museums in Denmark closed on March 13 and opened again at the end of April but had to abide by a number of restrictions - a limited number of guests and guidelines and regulations to avoid close contact between guests. From October 29 face masks were also mandatory indoors at museums. During the autumn museums in some regions in Denmark had to close again because of a more aggressive COVID-19 infection. From December 17 all indoor areas at museums were closed and have been ever since.

The economic consequences for museums and the influence on museum activities depend on the individual museum's income ratio and how it is organized. The popular and well visited museums with a high income through entrance fee have had particular financial problems. Some of government's financial aid packages for trade and the private sectors have helped museums. An agreement between government, trade unions and employers made it possible for museums organized as independent organizations to cover part of the staff labour costs. 75% of the salary was covered, if the staff member did not work. The museums could not dismiss staff members so long as they received help.

In the summer financial aid packages covered half of the entrance fee for museums, science centers, theaters, and zoos during the children's school holiday (June 27 - August 9) which led to a very high number of visitors in July for some museums. Visitors were mainly domestic because of travel restrictions and a general fall in number of tourists to Denmark in 2020.

A study carried out by the Association of Danish Museums shows that several museums experienced significant cutbacks, staff reductions and lost revenue. 80% of museums had fewer visitors than the year before. Six out of 10 museums had a lower turnover in 2020 than in 2019. Half the museums had a loss of more than 25% and every fourth museum experienced a loss of revenue of more than 40%. Eight out of 10 museums used one or more of the financial aid packages. ([https://www.dkmuseer.dk/sites/default/files/dokumenter/Nyheder/Survey%20resultater museernes%20bes%C3%B8gstal%202020.pdf](https://www.dkmuseer.dk/sites/default/files/dokumenter/Nyheder/Survey%20resultater%20museernes%20bes%C3%B8gstal%202020.pdf))

Despite the pandemic and the lockdowns a number of new museums or rebuilt museums opened in 2020:

The Occupation Museum Aarhus (<https://www.besaettelsesmuseet.dk/the-occupation-museum/the-occupation-museum/>)

The Museum of Danish Resistance (<https://en.natmus.dk/museums-and-palaces/the-museum-of-danish-resistance/>)

HEX! Museum of Witch Hunt (<https://hexmuseum.dk/?lang=en>)

Museum of Copenhagen (<https://cphmuseum.kk.dk/en/indhold/home>)

Deutsches Museum Nordschleswig (<https://deutsches-museum.dk/>)

Klosterlund Museum (<https://museummidtjylland.dk/klosterlund-museum/>)

Holmegaard Works (<https://www.museerne.dk/en/holmegaard-vaerk/>)

Nymindegab Museum (<https://vardemuseerne.dk/museum/nymindegab/>)

The nature activity center Naturkraft (<https://www.naturkraft.dk/eng/home>).

In 2020 a new LAM institution Maltfabrikken also opened with activities from Museum Østjylland (<https://maltfabrikken.dk/english/>).

The year ended with an active and harsh public museums' debate when The Women's Museum announced they would change their name to Gender Museum. During 2020 there were numerous debates about aid to museums, and a number of private donations and donations projects to help museums.

It reminds us that Museums matter!

Martin Brandt Djupdræt & Kitt Boding-Jensen

ESTONIA

In Estonia in 2020 the museums were closed from March 13 till the end of May. After that, the museums having more than 10% own income of the total annual budget could apply for financial support, which was offered by the Cultural Ministry of Estonia. At the end of November, museums situated in some parts of Estonia, including Tallinn, the capital, were again closed because of the pandemic situation. They will be closed at least until the middle of January 2021. Currently the Ministry is preparing new measures of support for museums and other cultural institutions. As the number of foreign visitors in museums has decreased more than 80%, the numbers of domestic visitors hit a record in July. So, the museums were doing quite well in the summertime. From September we have had many restrictions which have also affected museums, so the number of visitors and income has decreased again.

The pandemic has changed the actions of the Estonian museums: now we have lots of museum educational materials, exhibitions, videos, etc on the web, we have learned to work at home using more digital advances, we are thinking how to make museums and their collections even more digitally accessible than ever. The museums are using their outdoor spaces more than before, though we have a somewhat uncomfortable climate.

In 2020, the Ministry of Culture and the National Heritage Board offered grants named 'Accelerator for the Museums' (1,2 million euros). The purpose of the grant is to provide museums with the opportunity to make rapid development leaps in activities and services aimed at the public that would be economically viable once launched.

This year, these two institutions also continued to prepare a new efficient financing plan for the field of museums.

In June 2020, The Kalevipoeg Museum, a place to discover the legend of the Estonian national epic, was completely renovated. It approaches the stories of the giant hero in a new way – visitors can experience them first-hand through interactive technical solutions.

Some museums opened their new permanent exhibition, among them the Estonian Sports and Olympic Museum, University of Tartu Museum, Narva Museum and Padise Monastery.

Triin Vaaro

FRANCE

The situation of museums in France during this period of confinement remains complex – first **of all on the side of museum professionals.**

The first period of confinement - between March and May 2020 - mobilized some of the museum teams.

--- towards the public. Museum professionals, who were unable to welcome audiences within their walls, have shown great inventiveness in developing actions outside the walls. All digital tools have been mobilized to develop these actions, to raise awareness of the museum's professions and collections. Also, to involve and continue to mobilize the public.

--- towards the collections. The period mobilized part of the team (teleworking was recommended) on the collections, inventory, and packaging operations. Real scientific background work has been carried out.

The second period of confinement, which began in November 2020, is much more complicated for the teams to experience. It remains impossible to welcome the public in the exhibition spaces. Many structures were able to open their winter exhibition, but these had to quickly close their doors.

Without knowing the date of reopening, depending on the evolution of the health situation, museums have several choices. In the hope of an early reopening, some are maintaining their programming, some are extending their winter exhibition, and others are shifting their exhibition program, if possible.

Secondly the situation for the public side has also felt the impact of the pandemic.

The public experienced the first period of confinement while waiting for the reopening of cultural places. And they have massively adhered to the offers put in place by museums to discover their collections, sometimes in an unusual way.

The second period of confinement has generated more frustration, because access to exhibition or workshop spaces remain prohibited, even for school audiences.

In the big daily newspaper, *Le Monde*, tribune there was a call for the reopening of museums.

https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/01/31/les-musees-sont-sans-doute-les-lieux-ou-humaninteractions-and-the-risks-of-contamination-are-the-least-harmed_6068257_3232.html.

In general, the period of confinement of more than a year that we have gone through makes people aware of the importance of museums to the public. Art museums, places of exchange and sociability appear essential, as does the relationship to the original work.

Also, this period forces museums to work in different ways. On the one hand, they are diversifying their work, with the development of actions 'outside the walls' and via social networks. On the other hand, they think their exhibitions and their programming differently. The search for objects, works in closer museums, for temporary exhibitions is a trend.

Finally, museums assert their place in society. Deprived of their foreign and tourist audiences, they develop actions to attract a local audience. The museum is becoming more inclusive. Also, science museums have increasingly asserted their role in society. In the face of the most diverse and false scientific theories, science museums have strengthened their position as holders of knowledge. The place of the original object, witness to knowledge, has never been stronger.

Samuel Cordier

GERMANY

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a heavy impact on museum work in Germany. From March to May and since November 2020 the museums were closed for public. During the summer, many museums developed solutions to open for visitors under given restrictions. They invested in infrastructure, hygiene measures and more staff for fewer visitors. The museums now suffer from the lack of income. As many museums in Germany are publicly funded, financial effects are softened but will hit the museums with delay and strongly. Especially small museums feel their existence threatened because of considerable restrictions and financial cuts.

During the closure, museums developed digital activities and strategies to keep in touch with their audience and to maintain their education work. The pandemic increased the gap between museums which are well connected to the digital world and those who are lacking infrastructure, skills and knowledge. As a positive effect for all museums, the pandemic led to an openness for digital communication and opened the doors for investment and innovation in digital infrastructure and communication. This is even true for the educational sector where many schools, similar to the museums, still suffer from lacking digital infrastructure and skills. Digitalization programs have been set up and will show effects in future.

Due to the restrictions in times of the pandemic several museum openings were postponed. However, the opening of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin was celebrated in the digital space and the opening of the galleries and exhibitions is scheduled for Spring 2021. In this context the ongoing debate about colonialism and coloniality was triggered again, as the Humboldt Forum will not only show objects from the ethnological collections of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, but also takes the role as a space and facilitator for discussions and reflections. The discussion about guidelines to deal with collections from colonial contexts, facilitated by the German Museums Association as well as strategies to decolonize museums are discussed with passion. This was further pushed by public debates about racism and globalization.

The year 2020 was projected as a celebration of industrial heritage in eastern Germany regarding 500 years of innovation, industry and industrial culture in Saxony. But most of the special exhibitions and programs suffered from the closure periods and could not reach a broader public.

'Open space - questioning collections' was planned as the main topic of the German Museum Association's annual conference 2020 which could not be held as a conference

in its normal format. Some of the papers were printed in the journal *Museumskunde*, others will contribute to the 2021 conference focusing on digital collection work.

The annual conference of ICOM Germany was held as a virtual meeting together with ICOM Cyprus and ICOM Greece. Under the headline 'Museums Facing a Planetary Emergency', the conference discussed climate change, globalization and pandemic challenging society and museums' work. The ongoing debate about the museum definition of ICOM led to several and often polarizing discussions. The member forum of ICOM Germany, held as a video conference in June 2020, came to the point that the distinction between definition and vision / mission statement of museums is important.

ICOM Germany and the German Museums Association (Deutscher Museumsbund) stood up frequently in political debates to point out the importance of the museum's work in society and the need to support the museums work during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

Dietmar Osses

GREECE

As elsewhere, in Greece too, the pandemic brought museums face to face with an unprecedented situation. The lockdowns due to COVID-19 interrupted their activities, while most of their personnel was forced to work on a rotation basis. However, it also raised pressing questions about how museums are run and their mission.

Although the new situation caused a huge loss of revenue, it also highlighted the need for the museum community to speed up its transition to the digital age. Of the 272 museums, private and public, included on the website of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism, those that rose to the challenge of maintaining contact with their public were mainly the major museums. During the lockdown period, the Acropolis Museum, the National Archaeological Museum, the Byzantine and Christian Museum, the Benaki Museum, the Museum of Cycladic Art, the Goulandris Natural History Museum, the Folk Life & Ethnological Museum of Macedonia & Thrace and others redefined their social role, offering support to Greeks confined at home in an effort to keep in touch with them through digital applications and activities, both for children and adults, offering virtual tours of their exhibitions and presenting selected exhibits on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

Certain museums in the Greek provinces also maintained a dynamic presence, namely the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation in Nafplion (Peloponnese), the Folklore Museum of Larissa (Thessaly) and the local museums of the Museum Network run by the Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation (PIOP), with targeted online presentations of their activities, but also organising virtual discussions with museum professionals in Greece and abroad. For instance, the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation proposed an online presentation of its exhibition 'Production, processing and application of natural weaving fibres in Greece', which won the 1981 European Museum of the Year Award, as well as of its exhibition 'Endyesthai (To dress). Towards a Costume Culture Museum' and its pottery collection.

Additionally, in order to demonstrate the social and 'therapeutic' role that museums can play, Marlen Mouliou, assistant professor of Museology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, in collaboration with social anthropologist Yiannis Koukmas and archaeologist-museum educator Maria Christina Efstratiou, elaborated the idea of creating a different museum on the Internet, which they called 'The Museum Inside Me'. Two different collections of photographs and stories were created, on Facebook and Instagram respectively, through the public's response to two

key questions, “what objects from your own space generate a feeling of joy, hope, comfort and calm?” and “how do you remember yourself in a museum?”. Starting on March 28, 2020 (when the project was launched on social media) and in just a fortnight the collection created on Facebook exceeded 110 uploads, while that on Instagram surpassed 100. Both actions are extremely popular, with over 3,300 followers for the Facebook page and 926 on Instagram.

However, all museum professionals agree that, although the digital presence of museums is now a requisite, the greatest challenge after almost a full year of living in a pandemic, is not to allow the digital dominion to dispossess us of the immediacy of a physical presence. Thus, some museums are already looking to implement actions centred on developing a real-time interaction with their virtual visitors and as direct a communication with and response to them as possible. This said, feeling that no virtual experience can ever replace a live relationship with museums, their priority remains that of a physical access to their collections.

Adopting the international practice developed during the pandemic of collecting material relating to it, and wishing to create a ‘special collection’ reflecting this period, the Lyceum Club of Greek Women’s thematic Museum of the History of Greek Costume launched an online call to all interested persons for items relating to its subject

(hashtag#GreekCostumeMuseum#ContemporaryCollecting#CovidCollection&Stories). As an institution centred on the preservation and promotion of the history of clothing, the Museum started collecting objects and testimonies from this difficult period, which will be preserved and serve as a subject of study and analysis for future generations. The objective is to create a ‘memory bank’ in real time, while respecting the fact that there are items that cannot be collected at this stage, as well as protocols that have to be followed while the virus is still a threat.

Lastly, among the positive outcomes of this past year it is worth noting the Accreditation-Certification by the Museums Council of the Ministry of Culture and Sports of a) two thematic technological museums belonging to PIOP’s Museum Network: the Museum of the Environment of Stymfalia (Peloponnese) and the Rooftile and Brickworks Museum N. & S. Tsalapatas in Volos (Thessaly), and b) the Jewish Museum of Greece.

Nadia Macha

HUNGARY

The year 2020 was unusual for museums as well. The pandemic COVID-19 completely convulsed the daily routine of museums. In my opinion, museums in Hungary faced two great challenges in 2020:

- the lockdowns due to COVID-19 epidemic and its consequences.
- the abolition of civil servants' legal status of museum employees.

Exact statistical figures are not available yet, as museums prepare their reports for the previous year at the end of January. Precise data will be accessible only in the Spring.

After COVID-19 had appeared in Hungary, the government declared a national epidemiological emergency situation on March 11, as part of the emergency legislation. Though at that time closure was not mandatory, more and more museums shut down due to the restrictions. The most important task was the protection of the employees, in particular saving their jobs and their health.

Several institutions introduced home office or the rule 'one person in one office at the same time', together with mandatory wearing of masks, keeping social distance and using disinfectants.

Already In the first week of April 2020, the Ministry of Human Resources responsible for cultural affairs requested the Centre of Education and Methodology of the Hungarian Open Air Museum to conduct an online survey to find out how the museums could handle the special situation caused by the epidemic, and what kind of consequences they envisaged in case museums, considering the worst scenario, had to remain closed until the end of July.

According to the respondents, the number of visitors of the institutions affected by the lockdown would decrease significantly, altogether by more than two million people, while the number of participants in museum educational courses may also drop by about 250 000. Revenues from booking tickets and other services – normally an integral part of the yearly budget of the institutions - would show losses totalling 280 million Forints (app. 800 000 Euro) in the museums participating in the survey. Therefore, from the beginning of the epidemic, the museums introduced several measures to reduce their costs, cut back operational expenditures, cancelled earlier envisaged events and exhibitions, and were forced to take steps concerning the number of their staff as well. In spite of the lockdown the museums, professionals of the institutions

have maintained contacts with their visitors through social media platforms and through their own websites, trying to maintain public interest. Although their assisting presence in their locality has somewhat diminished, there are several nice examples of considerable involvement in the life of their community in this unique situation.

The respondents' opinion was divided on the idea of 'home office' introduced after the lockdown. More than half of them supported this form of work but there were institutions where it was not introduced or even not allowed at all. The respondents mentioned plenty of difficulties, especially the lack of infrastructure in their homes, and the cumbersome administration of their work. Home office involves several different tasks, among them research and working on academic projects, while communication, creating digital content and administration are also important elements of it.

In the opinion of the respondents, the most difficult problems of the current situation are the loss of income, and the retention of their present work-force, but a lot of them expressed concerns and uncertainty about the future in the post-epidemic circumstances, in which the key point would be the financing of their institution. In this respect, the lack of IT infrastructure seems to be a major setback, hampering the spread of home office and the operation of the museums in a more digitalized way. Financial and methodological support is recommended to ease the situation. It is considered to be one of the benefits of the situation that it let museums catch up with some of the arrears in their working plan. Concerning good practices of other domains, the large-scale extension of online content was emphasized by most of the participants of the survey. Indeed, the online presence of museums distinctly improved in 2020 and great progress was made in their use of the social media. Museums set up several high-standard virtual exhibitions, made online databases available, and developed curriculum connected to online schoolwork.

By the end of May 2020, thanks to the remission of the epidemic, cultural life began to restart gradually in Hungary, just as in several other countries in Europe. After the limited reopening of the open air museums and exhibition sites, the buildings of the traditional museums and community centres were also opened, observing the rule of keeping social distance, allowing limited number of persons to enter a closed exhibition site, and adhering to health regulations. However, the number of visitors was much less than the museums had expected. The absence of foreign tourists, due to the uncertainty, resulted in a radical decrease of the number of visitors, especially in the case of the large museums, although, during the summer months, the attendance indicators were improved by domestic tourism coming to life.

In November 2020, the second wave of the epidemic reached Hungary. The museums were closed again and thus the winter period brought another decline in the number of visitors.

During the year, several exhibitions, public and professional events were cancelled, but a few of them were held online with great success.

The government provided financial assistance to the cultural and artistic sphere to ease the damages caused by the pandemic on two occasions. However, this financial support was not available for all museums, the beneficiaries being mainly the large, nationwide public collections. During the second wave, the government assistance involved tax exemption and salary subsidies for museums.

Several museums responded to the pandemic by appeals for help in order to document the changes caused by the COVID-19 and began to collect objects, photos and stories connected to the corona virus.

During the COVID-19 state of emergency the government prepared the legislation to reform the legal position of the employees in the cultural institutions, which meant the abolishment of their civil servants' status.

The salary in the cultural public sector has always been lower than in the commercial sector, and there was no significant pay-rise there in the last decade. The disadvantage arising from the lower payment was intended to be balanced by modest benefits for the public sphere, stronger occupational safety, and more predictable career path, hereby, securing the highly-qualified work-force and quality performance. These were the main points of arguments from the critics of the new legislation in the parliament, but they also complained about the government's allowing only the Easter long weekend to consider the draft. Finally, the parliament adopted the new law, abolishing the civil servants' legal status in this sphere and instead introducing labour law regulations for them, to take effect from November 1, 2020.

Put into force by November 1, the government granted a six percent pay rise in the museum sphere, retroactively valid from January 1. Due to the introduction of the new legal status, about seven or eight percent of the employees in museums did not sign the new labour contract, and departed from museological employment, including the ones, who retired.

Huge investments are underway in several museums. The Ethnographical Museum, the new up-to-date building of which will be opened in 2022, is now closed owing to

relocation. The Museum of Applied Arts – its listed historical building is under reconstruction at present – and the Hungarian Technical and Transportation Museum will also be moved to a new building. The reconstruction works in several museums outside Budapest were finished in 2020, and many of them renewed their permanent exhibitions.

The National Museum Restoration and Conservation Centre (37 000 m²) was inaugurated as part of the Liget project, providing outstanding professional conditions and technical background for conserving about 350 000 art objects of the Ethnographical Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, and the National Gallery. Storerooms for objects of art, workshops for restorers, offices for researchers, and ateliers are included in the complex. The newly established Institute for Central European Art History Research will also be installed here. A huge park of 13 000 m² open free of charge for the public during working hours has been created around the building complex.

Zsolt Sári

ICELAND

In Iceland, a country of 357,000 people, there are close to 200 museums, exhibitions, and cultural and historical centres. But only 46 museums are accredited by the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and work according to the Icelandic Museum Act and the ICOM Code of Ethics. Three of the state-funded museums are listed as principal museums - The National Museum of Iceland, The Museum of National History and The National Gallery - and they have the role of forming strategies for other museums in their respective fields.

Accredited Icelandic museums are still in the process of adapting to new regulations and demands as their legal duty to collect, preserve, safeguard and promote their collections is now monitored by the Icelandic Museum Council. Each museum reports annually to the Museum Council, which has the role of monitoring all museum operations, according to the Museum Act.

Like elsewhere around the world Icelandic museums have suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In March they were all forced to close their doors to visitors for a little over six weeks, until early May. During June and July most museums welcomed Icelandic visitors, as well as a few foreign ones – but there weren't many tourists around this year. Early August Icelandic museums were again forced to adjust to tightened rules. All events were forbidden and no more than 50 visitors were allowed inside at the time, regardless of the size of their Museum and exhibition halls. Again, late October, the maximum number of people allowed to gather in one place was changed to ten. At that moment, many Icelandic museums were forced to close their doors again, until mid-December.

It is clear that COVID-19's effect on Icelandic museums is widespread, income from foreign tourists, who generally maintain the income of many museums in Iceland, decreased to almost nothing - foreign tourists making up about 62% of museum visitors to Iceland. In addition to a decline in revenue, museums had to contend with closures, changes to their plans, projects and staffing and even staff reductions.

During closures and a year of fewer visitors, Icelandic museums put extra time and effort into working with their collections, with accessioning and research. Around 85% of the staff of Icelandic museums worked from home at some point. Many museums used social media to reach their visitors, who were not able to visit due to closures and travel restrictions. Also, many used the opportunity while the museums were closed to clean their exhibits and make necessary repairs.

The impact of COVID-19 is not yet over – and it is not yet clear how widely the pandemic has affected Icelandic museums during 2020 as many are still in the process of gathering information and finalizing finances. But it is clear that 2021 will hold its challenges as well – as the world is still struggling to fight the pandemic.

Anita Elefsen

IRELAND

2020 proved a challenging year as the museum world struggled with a pandemic. When news about the COVID-19 pandemic hit Ireland, it dominated media channels, newspapers, national and international politics, invading everyday life. In March, Irish Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, alerted his country to nationwide restrictions (including museum closure) impacting to the end of June. Over the summer, most, but not all, Irish museums reopened, continuing into the autumn when restrictions returned. Overall, Ireland fared well, Irish people were compliant and there was a low virus incidence and death rate. However, over Christmas the numbers spiralled, echoing the pattern elsewhere in Europe, resulting in severe restrictions imposed by Government to ensure the numbers swiftly declined. Museums closed, despite the stringent protocols, controlled entry-exits, ventilation, one-way systems, monitored capacity, and increased sanitisation, no infection was traced to museums. This was confirmed by NEMO's statement (27/10/20) reporting museums were not infection centres, instead, were low-risk safe places, promoting civic wellbeing and respite for visitors.

The Irish Government announced COVID-19 supports for the Arts-Culture sector early in the year, with funding allocated to the national cultural institutions, which was supplemented later in the year. Separately, through funding to the heritage sector, resources went to the Heritage Council, who manage the Museums Standards Programme, (MSPI), to help organizations impacted by COVID-19. The museum sector was badly hit as was tourism. Museums adapted by reducing staff, many became part-time, augmenting their income with the Covid Wage Payment. Independent museums (the majority of 180 Irish museums (230 all-island) are free) furloughed staff or reduced hours having lost their income stream. A Heritage Council survey found two-thirds of heritage workers experienced lost or postponed work, 51% of events were deferred or cancelled, 52% temporary closure and 46% impacted by reduced revenue. Museums and cultural sites undertook assessments, as per the Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021 Plan and Northern Ireland Executive's restrictions.

Most museums, but not all, reopened to find attendances less than 20%, varying across the country. Social media provided a vehicle for outpourings of feeling. Irish museums used it to open conversations to engage new audiences in inventive, creative ways, employing their digital infrastructure and diverse online platforms to make their collections and exhibitions available in a process that should make collections more accessible in the future. While funding went into developing, maintaining, and refreshing digital infrastructure and content, this proved a challenge for some museums, who had little or no online presence or infrastructure resulting in steep learning curves as reduced budgets were diverted into technology and training. The

benefit to everyone was the massively increased digital offerings that continue to engage people and keep museums in the public eye. The weekly Irish Museums Association (IMA) coffee break proved a welcome platform for sharing information and strategies, exchanging ideas, and providing support for workers. The IMA also commissioned a schools and museum engagement survey from teachers in primary, post-primary schools and educational institutions. Key findings included interest in low-tech resources e.g., blended learning, downloadable resources and materials and 'live' online engagements e.g., 'ask the expert' sessions., recognising that museums can assist students to understand complex narratives and make emotional connections to academic learnings, while helping them develop analytical and social skills.

This year people moved from travelling from home to the office for chats, meetings in rooms, lunch in the café, lectures in theatres and conferences in halls, meeting friends in a restaurant and visiting cinema on the way home. Home is the new office where technology provides emails, zoom for meetings, conversations and conferences, links for webinars, meals from the kitchen taken at the desk and day ends with movies on Netflix. Media reports broadcast instant world news as NEMO, ICOM, EMA, IMA and cultural bodies and websites provide events to engage and inform connecting audiences. Facemasks, space, fresh air, and social distancing is the new lifestyle. The museum and its world of workers are learning fast an enormous amount about adaptability, flexibility, engagement, and the need to prepare for vaccine, and national emergencies that may occur in our future.

In February, the IMA Annual Conference in Athlone included a range of national and international speakers addressing the theme 'Transforming Museums'. The 2021 conference will be online. The IMA began publishing its journal online, see *Museum Ireland 2019* @ www.irishmuseums.org. In June, following an election, a three-party coalition comprising Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party formed a Government (including a minister for arts and a minister of state for heritage) their first challenge to address the pandemic, followed rapidly by Brexit, a major issue for Ireland, as pressure of a deal brought it sharply into focus.

The pandemic halted Ireland's Decade of Centenaries, which focuses on significant events between 2012–2023. Designed to ensure this complex period in Irish history, including the Ulster Covenant, the 1913 Lockout, the 1916 Rising and anniversaries relating to World War One, the Struggle for Independence, Civil War, the Foundation of the State and Partition, the role of women, the suffrage movement, Literary Revival themes, the struggle for workers' rights, and other events of the period, encompass the different traditions on the island of Ireland and are remembered appropriately. The GAA museum highlighted events of 1920, and the Crawford Art Gallery held the exhibition *Citizen Nowhere / Citizen Somewhere*. Other museums, notably around the border, began plans for 2021.

The Heritage Council's museum standards programme (MSPI) and training continued, albeit online. The process of accreditation employed virtual on-site visits supplemented by videos, photos, and documentary material, resulting in two museums awarded interim accreditation, four, full accreditation and five, maintenance of accreditation.

The IMA in partnership with Northern Ireland Museums Council, was awarded, funding through Government's Cooperation with NI Scheme for the project *Interpreting Museums*, which aims to strengthen cross-border working relationships and public understanding of museum practice.

Discussion points: reaction to pandemic issues and practical ways to move forward; the implications of Brexit as it will unfold and impact; the question of colonial legacy emerged due to contemporary events and opened conversations on the subject; climate change; and planning for 2021.

Marie Bourke

ITALY

Museum activities in 2020 were obviously marked by the pandemic caused by COVID-19. The Italian museums were closed for more than half of the year (from March to June and from November to December). The simultaneous closure of schools and the drastic reduction in the international tourist flow have dramatically reduced the number of visitors (official data will be available next year).

Many museums have moved their activities to on-line channels (websites and social networks) by exploiting digital content already available and/or by producing new ones. However, no noteworthy experiences or strategic choices in this direction have yet emerged. Certainly, it has been possible to observe the experimentation of many ways of interacting with different audiences through digital tools and it is expected by 2021 that some of these experiences will continue and will be implemented by the various cultural institutions.

In February 2020, the new organizational structure of the Minister of Cultural Heritage and Tourism (MiBACT Italian acronym) became operative (see also the previous 2019 report) within which the creation of the new direction 'Institute for the digitization of cultural heritage - Digital Library' deserves particular attention. It will take on the coordination of the activities of the various central institutes and it is proposed to have a central role in the coordination of digital activities related to the Italian cultural heritage.

To give an overview here are some data on museums in Italy published by ISTAT (National Statistics Institute) on 18 December 2020 on the reference period 2019.

4.880 among museums, archaeological areas, monuments, and eco-museums open to the public. Among them 4.416 are private institutions while 464 are public institutions.

- 3,928 museums, galleries, and collections (80,5%)
- 625 monuments (12,8%)
- 327 archaeological areas (6.7%)

The regions with the most structures are Tuscany (580), Emilia-Romagna (458), Lombardy (419), Piedmont (414), Lazio (349) and Veneto (299).

Over 129 million visitors visited the Italian cultural heritage in 2018 (129.946.967): around 1 million more (+ 0,8%) than in 2018.

ITsArt is the new platform for the dissemination of digital content of Italian cultural institutes. Conceived under the name 'Netflix of culture', it has been much criticized

from the very beginning. The main reasons for the criticisms are both economic (a platform of this type requires significant investments to support both the dissemination of content and to support its production) and strategic (a national platform of this type is partly already connected to the national television system where even important cultural contents are already produced). It was formally adopted in late 2020 and expects to see what the development of this product will be by 2021.

The strategies for the allocation of funds from the Recovery Fund Next (Generation EU) to support museums in crisis due to the pandemic have not yet been defined.

The work for the introduction of a National Museum System launched in 2018 by the previous minister and continued throughout 2019 and 2020. Now, practical implications are not yet to be reported, even if the work for the connection with the regions and the definition of museum standards goes on.

Giovanni Cella

LITHUANIA

2020 was a period that will go down in history: the pandemic of COVID-19 has fundamentally changed lives around the world.

In March 2020, the government of the Republic of Lithuania approved a plan of measures to stimulate the economy and reduce the consequences of the spread of COVID-19. Additional 4.9 billion € were earmarked for these measures, 75.6 million € of which – for the cultural sector.

In 2020, no museum in Lithuania performed as usual: they were completely closed in February-April and November-December, although in May-October museum expositions were open to visitors, many restrictions remained (size of groups of visitors, area per visitor, etc.).

In 2020, museums effectively developed activities in the virtual space by creating and offering various educational virtual games, tours, exhibitions (e.g. a very rich and complex virtual gallery and exhibit base at the Lithuanian Integral Museum Information System LIMIS), online lectures, concerts, digital publications, translations, and more. Numerous projects developing new virtual products or services for museum visitors have been implemented:

2018–2021 the Lithuanian National Museum of Art is implementing the project ‘Virtual Museum’, funded by the European Regional Development Fund. During 2020 were created 10 audio guides for children, 25 museum virtual tours, and a tour presenting the Vilnius castles.

In 2020, Education Department of the Lithuanian Museum Association continued the project of the virtual educational platform ‘Discover your land in a museum’. The project aims to create conditions for the educational community to get acquainted with the opportunities opened by museums for students and teachers that could be accessed remotely. There have been 15 virtual lessons prepared.

The initiative of the Lithuanian National Museum ‘Share what you live for’ tries to ensure the preservation of today's culture for the future. The Museum invites everyone to contribute to the full reflection of this event in history and to share items that may become museum exhibits in the future telling us the history of the COVID-19 pandemic.

By the order of the Lithuanian Culture Council in 2020, there was conducted a study on ‘Population participation in culture and satisfaction with cultural services’ (it has been carried out every three years since 2014). The study of 2020 showed that in the cultural field we are an active country. In the year until the Spring quarantine 2020, as

many as 88% of the population visited cultural and artistic events, museums, cultural heritage sites, and read books. 70% of the population welcomed the availability of cultural services and 68% – their quality in Lithuania.

The study also shows that the quarantine helped to discover the culture. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the quarantine that has been announced in the country in the Spring of 2020, strongly affected the cultural life of the Lithuanian population for the whole three months. One-third of the population said they were negatively affected by the lack of cultural activities during this period.

However, the fact is that even 77% of the population were engaged in at least one cultural activity during the quarantine. 42% of the respondents claimed that culture helped to spend leisure time meaningfully, 41% – broadened their horizons, 36% – that it calmed and lifted the mood, and 30% said that the quarantine helped to discover culture in new ways.

Despite all the difficulties and unfavourable situation for museums, the study shows that:

- 78.2 (in 2017 - 71.0) percent of the population visited museums or cultural heritage objects, watched and listened to programs
 - 36.6 (in 2017 - 31.5) percent of the population visited museums
 - 24.3 (in 2017 - 21.3) percent of the population visited galleries or exhibitions
- www.kulturostyrimai.lt

Gita Sapranauskaite

LUXEMBOURG

After a promising start into the year 2020, the coronavirus made its mark in Luxembourg at the beginning of March and quickly developed into a topic of major concern-.

On March 12, the Luxembourg Government Council announced its decision to close all the state cultural institutes, among which the state funded museums, from March 13 onwards. Three days later, the ministerial decree of 16 March 2020 confirmed the closure of all cultural institutions throughout the country, joining the decisions adopted in neighbouring countries.

The closure of cultural institutions has highlighted the need for museums to adapt to the situation. Following the example of international institutions, many museums in Luxembourg took advantage of this episode to focus on work behind the scenes as well as on technology and innovation, rising to the moment with a surge of creativity and ensuring that even in times of a health crisis, the museum is just a click away from the visitor. The National Museum of History and Art (MNHA), for example, has started to publish video-guides to current exhibitions on its Facebook page and its YouTube Channel. Many more museums in Luxembourg have embarked on a digital journey and have sought to engage in a more open and regular communication with their audience through thematic videos, video-guides, online workshop tutorials, photo-challenges inviting people to recreate works of art (following the Dutch initiative 'tussen kunst en quarantaine'), etc.

Following several weeks of closure, museums in Luxembourg were able to reopen their doors to the public on May 11, along with archives and libraries, in compliance with the sanitary recommendations that were put into place by the government. Whereas guided tours and educational activities were not recommended at first, the measures have been steadily adjusted in accordance with the evolution of the situation on a national level and they eventually resumed with a limited number of participants.

Attendance figures after the reopening show that the public was at first reluctant to visit museums. Visitor numbers slowly started to rise again during the summer months, when many people took advantage of the holidays to explore museums all over the country, as travelling abroad was less of an option due to the many travel

restrictions. Some museums even attracted more visitors than during the same period in the previous year.

As in many other European countries, the public health crisis worsened at the end of the year, shuttering once again the doors of museums across the country from December 26, 2020 to January 10, 2021.

Overall, 2020 has been a year of many challenges that museums in Luxembourg have faced with commitment and by developing and integrating digital solutions into their everyday work.

Many efforts have been made on a national level to accompany and support the professionalization of the cultural sector in recent years. In response to the public health crisis caused by COVID-19, leading to unprecedented financial distress and uncertainty across the field, the Ministry of Culture in Luxembourg has put in place a number of financial aids to revive the cultural sector. These measures include a financial support addressing regional museums which are planning to implement museographic projects to increase their attractiveness and to upgrade their exhibitions or which want to elaborate concepts to rethink their management.

This aid is part of the overall strategy of the Ministry of Culture to support and structure the sector in a sustainable way in the years to come, in order to guarantee an adequate conservation of our heritage, in accordance with the standards set for the practice of museum professionals. Reflection sessions on the development of coherent national museum policies within the Ministry of Culture have resulted in the outline of a number of avenues for a more specific support of the museum sector. These considerations include a financial support of the national federation of museums and museum professionals, 'ICOM-Luxembourg', as well as the idea of introducing a type of agreement for museum institutions, as already applied in some countries. One of the many advantages of such a 'quality seal' or national recognition is that it contributes to promoting and applying international museum standards more purposefully.

With regard to public events, the year 2020 has proved particularly challenging for culture and heritage enthusiasts. Major annual events such as the 'Luxembourg Museum Days', generally held in May, and the 'Nuit des musées' ('Night of the Museums'), held in October, could not take place because of the pandemic. Where

possible, museums switched to digital experiences, underlining the importance of interactive digital content to aid learning and exploration of museum's collections.

With this in mind, the department of digital strategy of the Ministry of Culture continues to coordinate and to support various digital cultural heritage projects, such as the implementation of an IT management system for museum objects and collections, in collaboration with the MNHA, or the initiation of pilot projects in the field of 3D numbering. This is done in compliance with international standards and best practices and in respect of the legal framework.

Julia Kohl

MALTA

The museum landscape in Malta has been significantly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020. The museum ecology is broadly split between public, religious and non-governmental/ private with each sector roughly representing a third of the entire museum landscape. The national museums and heritage sites are managed by Heritage Malta, an umbrella structure that also functions as the national institution for cultural heritage. Catholic cultural heritage museums and sites are run by the Catholic Church, mostly also managed on a voluntary basis with the exception of the Cathedral Museum at the Old City of Mdina. The private museum sector, including Foundations and Non-Governmental Organisations includes two main non-governmental organisations and a number of house museums.

With the tourism sector in tatters, as Malta registered a close to 80% drop in tourism, the museum sector had to rely mostly on local publics, particularly during the second half of the year. Museums had to go in lockdown between March and July and the general trend registered suggests that museum work continued behind closed doors, particularly with regard to long overdue refurbishment works, collections care and management, including restoration. Museums were intermittently open during the second half of the year, with the state-run museums experimenting with opening hours and days not open to the public.

This reliance on local museum publics, however, would stand for a relatively small percentage. Going by Eurostat Culture Statistics for 2019, less than 30% of the local population is known to visit a cultural site between one and four times. By comparison, 80% acknowledge the relevance and significance of the country's cultural heritage. The most significant initiative to address this deficiency is a scheme launched in 2018 by the state-run network brand-ed as a passport scheme. Data regarding the extent of impact this initiative has registered is not available as yet. The national museum network registered a significant shift to digital and on-line including online lectures, outreach initiatives and events that could be easily transferred to online. Ecclesiastical and private museums shifted to digital by a much lesser degree. This situation underpins the mismatch between digitisation resources available for national museums and those that are not state funded.

Needless to say, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on museum revenue streams. Provisional statistics suggest that revenue for the national museum network local went down by 80% during the period under re-view. This would be an increase in financial pressure following the registered deficit for the year 2019 of slightly more

than €1.3 million. Data for ecclesiastical and private museums is not available as yet. New funding models are certainly required, including online shop facilities so far only being operated by the state museum network. Suffice to mention that only two Maltese museums (one state-run, one private) have cafeteria and catering facilities.

Ecclesiastical and private museums did benefit from a wage supplement scheme launched by Government during the early weeks of the pandemic. In general terms, the projects that continued uninterrupted were those covered by EU funding, particularly those with European Regional Development Funding.

The benchmark for the local museum ecology at this point in time is threefold, namely: to invest significantly in digitisation and the online, reach out in more strategic ways and means to local publics and re-think operating practices and management models to become more resilient and efficient.

Sandro Debono

MOLDOVA

It was a very difficult year for all areas of culture. However, analyzing museum activities, we note the following:

In 2020, no relevant museum was opened in the Republic of Moldova, only a few local ones.

In connection with the pandemic, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research in collaboration with ICOM organized training sessions in the field of museography in order to promote cultural heritage in pandemic conditions.

A special achievement was the additions to the regulatory, legal and organizational framework for the activities of museums by approving a number of provisions, including the Regulation on the Accreditation of Museums, the new Regulation on the Registration of Museum Heritage, the Electronic Register of Museum Heritage throughout the country, the Rules for the Accreditation of Experts in the Field of Intangible Cultural Heritage, etc.

There was a drastic decrease in the number of on-the-spot visitors, but the number of online visitors and the number of online scientific and cultural activities increased, including the ICOM Moldova project 'Movable cultural heritage is a step for a new communication platform', which was implemented with the financial support of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research.

Elena Plosnita

MONTENEGRO

As is usual, depending on who the founder is, museums in Montenegro are divided into state and local. Concerning that there are museums founded by the state: National Museum of Montenegro – Cetinje; Maritime Museum – Kotor; Natural History Museum – Podgorica; I Center for Contemporary Art - Podgorica. There are native museums, whose founders are municipalities in 14 cities.

The entire year, in the whole of Europe and worldwide, and including Montenegro, was dedicated to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, which contributed to the changed work of all institutions in the country, including museums.

As an example, we have The National Museum of Montenegro, the main museum institution in the country, which consists of the following museums:

1. Historical with memorial museums - King Nikola's Museum, Njegos's Museum, Mausoleum of Peter II Petrovic-Njegos (located on the mountain Lovcen), Mausoleum of Bishop Danilo on Eagle Karst; Palace Church on Ćipur, as well as a permanent exhibition in the Government House;
2. Art Museum with gallery of Miodrag-Dado Djurić;
3. Ethnographic Museum of Montenegro and Archaeological Museum of Montenegro, with departments of archives, libraries, documentation, conservation and restoration and the Museum Information Center.

As in the National Museum, and most other museums, in addition to the usual work in the field of museum activities, due to the changes of the law, a revision was carried out of the museum's material and museum's documentation.

Because of the drastic reduction in the number of tourists throughout the country, the number of visits to museums was reduced to 10 percent of the usual annual visit.

Following the example of European museums, the National Museum of Montenegro offered a possibility for a virtual visit to all museums and ongoing exhibitions that were on display at the time the museum had to be closed to visitors, because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We could not cease with our educational system, so we adapted to the new circumstances. Educational activities were organized in small groups or online, our teams have done the same. Also, exhibitions were organised in a reduced volume and without the presence of the audience.

Archaeological excavations have also been suspended or kept to a minimum (1 or 2).

With a high hope that happier times await us without a pandemic, and that we will return to the usual way of working and visiting, below I submit links for virtual visits to the National Museum of Montenegro.

Links:

Art Museum: <https://goo.gl/maps/KjYSU1vDBE1reb9S6>

King Nikolas Museum: <https://goo.gl/maps/myXfUmcB8whxNXen8>

Njegoš's Billiarda: <https://goo.gl/maps/bE1yRU3QBDFjwpc8>

Archaeological collection: <https://goo.gl/maps/AoAxf757AnUctokBA>

Isidora Kovacevic

THE NETHERLANDS

The museum sector has been and is still under severe pressure.

In 2020, museums were compulsorily closed for over sixteen weeks. Due to the 1.5 metre measures, far fewer people were allowed in since 1 June 2020. This made it inevitable that the number of museum visits would drop.

The number of other visitors (non-cardholders, of which many would have been foreign tourists) plummeted from 20 million in 2019 to 7 million in 2020. This is general data which is available now; the figures will be specified later this year.

Museum cardholders paid 4,9 million visits to museums. This is almost half of the visits compared to 2019, when there were 9.3 million visits. It is striking that the visits in 2020 mainly consisted of children and their families. Seniors came less, mainly because of fear of infection with the COVID-19 virus.

The result was that one out of ten Dutch museums had to fire permanent staff members due to the COVID-19 crisis. Slightly less than one in three museums did not renew temporary contracts in 2020 and almost a quarter of the museums do not expect to be able to renew temporary contracts in the near future.

In April last year, a quarter of the museums were threatened with closure before the end of the year. Eventually three museums closed: the Museum of Bags and Purses, the Museum of Traditional Costumes, and Humanity House.

An example: The Rembrandthuis in Amsterdam

At the Rembrandthuis in Amsterdam, the museum in the former home and the studio of Rembrandt, 11 of the 44 permanent jobs have disappeared due to the Covid19-crisis. Some temporary contracts were not renewed and the permanent office workers who remained worked an average of six hours a week less.

The layoffs were spread across all departments: fundraising, exhibitions, but also the team of 'demonstrators' who give explanations in the museum. The museum is worried about 'ZZP-ers' (Independent Worker Without Staff), of whom a dozen have a long-term connection as guides, teachers and collection specialists.

In total, the museum made a cut of 1.2 million euros in 2020, of which 900,000 was in wage costs out of a budget of 4.3 million. The loss was about 2.5 million, which was partly offset by cutbacks, funds and donations.

Despite a year of setbacks and disadvantages for the museums, the last 12 months also revealed creativity innovation. In 2020 the realization grew that the digital domain must be a fully-fledged element in the public experience. This will serve more young families and millennials on the one side, and on the other hand the museums get more marketing data - for instance through online reservations and time slots. Now, in 2021, the goal is to perpetuate and stimulate support among this new audience.

An example: The Mauritshuis in The Hague

The Mauritshuis is a museum that houses the Royal Cabinet of Paintings, which consists of 854 objects, mostly Dutch Golden Age paintings. In 2020 it developed a super creative way of allowing the public a lifelike experience in a virtual environment. It became the first museum in the world to have been fully digitised in gigapixel format. By bringing this together with the Mauritshuis's existing Second Canvas app, the wonderful stories behind the paintings are also revealed and you can zoom in on the brushstrokes. No fewer than 36 masterpieces, including all the Vermeers, four Rembrandts, three Jan Steens, Fabritius's Goldfinch and The Bull by Paulus Potter, can all be enjoyed in exquisite detail.

The virtual museum can be visited by clicking the image on the website, or in the Second Canvas app of the Mauritshouse, available in the AppStore or Google Play.

Another turning point is the revaluation of the museum's own – but also national - collections compared to foreign loans in the exhibition planning. Whereas in previous years the general idea reigned that blockbusters with international objects were essential to the development and growth of museums, now the emphasis is more on current topics.

Wim van der Weiden

NORTH MACEDONIA

In conditions of a global pandemic during 2020 caused by COVID-19, the Museums in the Republic of North Macedonia did not realize most of the activities that were foreseen by their Annual Work Plan, so some of the activities have been transferred to the next year 2021.

The realized projects in 2020 were mostly exhibitions, research, and protection of movable cultural heritage, while the other activities were related to the development of the infrastructural projects.

During 2020, the Ministry of Culture funded projects in accordance with the policy of national interest.

In conditions of the pandemic and the closure of the museums (from March 2020), some museums created the slogan #museumswork, even though they are closed, wanting to stay relevant and in touch with the audience at a time when a physical visit was not possible. Under this slogan, various digital contents were created - starting from the previously made projects.

This content was posted simultaneously on YouTube, Facebook, Google Business and on the websites of the museums. In this way, the museum successfully overcame the three-month physical imprisonment and managed to maintain direct contact with its audience, but also to gain new followers and to introduce the general public to its work. The communication dynamics continue in the same way after the physical opening in July.

After the abolition of the quarantine in July, in accordance with the recommendations of the Commission for Health of the Republic of North Macedonia, the museums were opened for work with mandatory respect for social distance. Some of the excavations, especially the archaeological ones, were carried out during the summer months, in autumn and in the beginning of winter. Many exhibitions were realized in Museums and Galleries after the quarantine was lifted in July, with a significantly reduced audience and the simultaneous usage of social networks and digital media.

The pandemic and changing working conditions have shown that a more thorough approach to social media communication strategy is needed as part of the museum's overall strategy, including digital strategy. It is extremely important to create digital content (photos, videos, presentations, quizzes, awards, donation actions, digital exhibitions, etc.) that can be easily distributed to the audience through our communication channels (social networks and websites).

The international activity and cooperation of the Museums this year in conditions of a global pandemic was not at an enviable level and took place in several segments addressing future plans after the pandemic.

Some Museums are now open for visitors, even though there is just a very small number of them. Employees are following special working protocol, depending on the management. Somewhere employees are divided in two clusters, going at the museum every second day, or one group is working from 08h – 12h and other from 12h -16h with rotation.

All activities related to the operation of the museums are a result of the inventiveness of the employees and their managers, because apart from the Health Commission, there were no instructions for work from the Ministry of Culture. The most positive thing in 2020 for us museum workers is that finally, after many years, since September we got a salary increase somewhere over 30%.

Gordan Nikolov

NORWAY

In Norway, as everywhere, 2020 has been an exceptional year - and the pandemic situation has also influenced the museums. Museums have been closed in periods after the Norwegian lockdown from March 12. In May the first museums re-opened and during June most museums re-opened. The reduction in visitor numbers has been enormous for many museums, especially those dependent on foreign tourists, but most museums have had reductions. The Norwegian Museum Association has examined the situation and figures are available here:

<https://museumsforbundet.no/dokumenter/?mappe=63&parent=58>. New figures will soon be ready covering also the last part of the year.

The lockdown resulted in distinctive loss of income from entrance fees, but also from shops, cafés, and several other income sources.

During the spring and early summer several disaster help-packages were launched for organizations locked down by the Government. Museums dependent on or with more than 60% of their income from public grants got a compensation for their loss of income (from tickets, café and shop) from the Ministry of Culture. Museums with fewer public grants, were given access to one of the more general packages, but many of them had to wait a long time for a compensation. Some museums - among them most of those connected to the Ministry of Education and Research - and museums with funding from Oslo, are still outside all the different compensation regimes. The Ministry of Culture has twice granted money for the art and design museums to buy more modern art and design from Norwegian artists to stimulate their economy. The Sami museums finally got some funding in late autumn 2020.

A few museums experienced, on the contrary, great success and an increase in visitor numbers in 2020 as Norwegians had to stay in Norway and not go abroad for their holidays. The most popular museum was Kistefos Museum, originally an industrial museum. They opened late 2019 their new sculpture park and The Twist Gallery <https://www.kistefosmuseum.com/> and became a tremendous success. During the summer and especially in July several museums, most of them outside the larger cities, experienced increase in visitor numbers, but after the vacation the visitor figures have declined.

Museums have really learnt how to work digitally last year, internally through webinars, streaming and digital meetings. We have as well seen a lot of creativity in working with new digital ways in communicating with audiences. There have been

different kinds of guided digital tours, quiz, films and learning programs through social medias and websites. Many museums have been focusing on their collections, to register and publish objects on digital platforms as well as interpreting them to their old and new audiences. A lot of museums have been documenting the pandemic situation in different ways. Results from one of the Quest Backs from the Museum Association show that many museums have been able to work quite well in several areas of museum work during the lockdown, even from their home offices. Some museums have moved into new storage facilities or are building new ones.

Several new exhibitions have opened throughout the country: unfortunately, several of them with few visitors due to local lockdowns in Oslo and Bergen in Autumn/Winter 2020. The National Art & Design Museum, which planned to open their new building in 2020, has postponed the opening till 2022. The new Munch museum will open in spring 2021, according to their website.

A new white paper concerning museums will be launched in March 2021. Several important and necessary surveys and reports have been produced in the preparation of the white paper during 2020. New Norwegian guidelines elaborating the ICOM Code of Ethics have been prepared involving a lot of museum professionals. These guidelines will be launched in 2021.

This document has been read and elaborated by Liv Ramskjær, General Secretary of the Norwegian Museum Association.

Ann Siri Hegseth Garberg

POLAND

2020 was determined in the Polish museum sector by the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures that were introduced as a reaction to the pandemic in the Polish museum sector were comparable to the ones in other countries (e.g. timing of lockdown, expansion of on-line activities). They were described in detail in periodical reports, e.g.: Network of European Museum Organisation, *Survey on the impact of the COVID-19 situation on museums in Europe. Final Report*.

(https://www.nemo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/NEMO_documents/NEMO_COVID19_Report_12.05.2020.pdf), International Council of Museums, *Museums, museum professionals and COVID-19*

(<https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Report-Museums-and-COVID-19.pdf>).

In that context, the regulative role of governmental institutions should be pointed out e.g. the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the National Institute for Museums and Public Collections. One of such significant activities was to prepare the *Guidelines for museums, art galleries and other cultural institutions operating in the field of cultural heritage policy and heritage protection in connection with the planned reopening of the state in light of the epidemic COVID-19*. (<https://nimosz.pl/files//articles/156/COVID19%20%28guidelines%20for%20museums%29.pdf>).

The first version of the above document was published at the end of March, being systematically modified and adjusted to the changing situation (e.g. in the form of particular guidelines for educators, prepared in September 2020:

<https://nimosz.pl/files//news/365/Edukacja%20muzealna%20%28stacjonarna%29%20w%20warunkach%20pandemii%20%E2%80%93%20dobrze%20praktyki%20.pdf>).

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic should be treated as a kind of test passed by managerial structures and people. Summarising that category: in general, during the pandemic crisis, managerial procedures were created ad hoc; in their course, a kind of intuitive management was identified, not taught at any certified educational institution. Regarding museum professionals, it should be emphasised that the institutions' capacities in a technical meaning were easier to transform than the psychosocial capacities of employees in a private environment, synergising all duties. Managing change became a routine during the 2020; on one hand being far from over, on the other resulting in the following observations: (1) applying managerial methods, based exclusively on formal authority, did not prove effective; (2) the most important in sustaining the operation of institutions were the human resources; even under

worse historical conditions, institutions had been spared, when teams of people were ready to undertake unconventional challenges and rebuilt them.

The characteristic feature of the museum landscape in Poland is its varied character, initiated, limiting to the experience of the post-communist period after 1989, by the 1999 reform of the local authorities, which meant that three quarters of museum institutions operating at the time began then to be administratively dependent on local government bodies, the phenomenon continued by the systematically growing number of so-called 'private' museums (including museums organised by universities, NGOs, churches). Consequently, the museum landscape has been altering with the forecast of Krzysztof Pomian: *small community museums will multiply, and so will collections of carriers of memories of professional, religious, territorial, political groups, or groups connected with a shared experience of war, terror, natural disaster; these institutions have turned museums into familiar institutions, known, and understandable to substantial groups of the population.* (*Kilka myśli o przyszłości muzeum* [A Couple of Thoughts on the Future of Museums], 'Muzealnictwo' 2014, No. 55, p. 9). The above-described landscape is actively and systematically performed by the continued governmental investments, historical policy-oriented, especially: Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek (near Warsaw), The Polish History Museum in Warsaw.

The search for a legislative form to solve the above-mentioned challenges found inspiration in the discussion held within the ICOM, on the museum definition. The repercussions of that determined the Polish internal debates, being in 2021 continued (e.g.: *The museum universum, in the amplexness of organizational solutions, financial and management ideas, differentiated scale of their occurrence, legal and political conditions for their implementation, as well as socio-cultural contexts, thus expects a 'minimal' definition, search for the essence of 'museum' and 'museality' in the times which for different reasons respective of different parts of the world mark the world of culture and science with the imprint of usefulness. The 'minimum' should be the collections (both in their tangible and intangible version) and the story about them created with the public in mind by the people who are aware of the cultural importance of their work and subjectivity of their addressees. I would leave defining of the 'maximum' of museum duties to the creators of respective museums and communities in which they live, thus keeping the faith in their creative powers and common sense.* (the author's comment after: Dorota Folga-Januszewska, *Dzieje pojęcia muzeum i problemy współczesne – wprowadzenie do dyskusji nad nową definicją muzeum* [History of the Museum Concept and Contemporary Challenges: Introduction into the Debate on the New ICOM Museum Definition], 'Muzealnictwo' 2020, No. 61, pp. 39-57).

An important question is whether the epidemic has brought about a durable change, or is it merely an episode? From the authors' point of view the pandemic is not the episode (in 2021 will be continued) and can be the chance. Bearing in mind words of the one of the famous Polish museologist Mieczysław Treter (*the museum organization is based, first of all, on a precise definition of its character, on defining museum's contents and range, on a clear awareness of the goal to be reached and means that lead to it*), let us remember

that the persistence of things amassed in museums does not guarantee the continuity of the existence of the community which created that matter. Lifeless objects gain life not with their own power, but thanks to their conscious recipient visiting a museum exhibition, capable of understanding meanings hidden in them. It should be remembered that the making objects available to the public is not an exclusive *raison d'être* of museum institutions, especially during the pandemic. The challenge is the rethinking of proportions between the function of amassing and making available, described as an alternative between *templum* or *forum*. (*Muzea współczesne. Studium muzeologiczne. Początki, rodzaje, istota i organizacja muzeów. Publiczne zbiory muzealne w Polsce i przyszły ich rozwój* [Contemporary Museums. Museological Study. Museums' Beginnings, Kinds, Essence, and Organisation. Public Museum Collections in Poland and their Future Development], Warszawa 2019, pp. 94-5).

The pandemic experience leads to a conclusion which was voiced some decades ago by Teodor Adorno:

Culture suffers damage when it is planned and administered, when it is left to itself, however, everything cultural threatens not only to lose its possibility to effect, but its very existence as well. (<https://monoskop.org/images/f/f0/Adorno-Culture-Industry.pdf>, Chapter 4, Culture and Administration, pp. 104-31).

Consequently, in mass society museums can find the right to autonomic existence above all thanks to the public administration, its regulative position, legislative initiatives and supporting financial programmes.

Piotr Majewski

ROMANIA

The year 2020 critically influenced the general evolution of museums throughout Europe, so Romania was no exception. In the economy of the 12 months, more than half, i.e. the months of March-May, and respectively September-December, meant the total or partial closure of museums in our country. As of March, the usual public events (openings, concerts, conferences, educational workshops etc.) could no longer take place, as they were either completely banned or carried out under restrictive conditions, social distancing, and antiviral protection (masks, frequent disinfection etc.).

These are the reasons why we have registered a dramatic decrease in the number of visitors in all Romanian museums, with percentages ranging between 25-85%.

Among the 'winners' of the pandemic were the open-air/ethnographic museums, which were not closed for as long as the indoor museums. There was also a dramatic decrease in own revenues, which were not significant anyway (with a few notable exceptions such as the Peleş National Museum, Romanian museums operate with a subsidy from the state, either centrally or locally).

Although the revenues and public activities of the Romanian museum institutions have decreased significantly, the good news is that the existing jobs were kept at the end of the year. This exceptional situation is also caused by the fact that salaries in Romanian museums are among the lowest in Europe (between 400 and 1500 euros).

In terms of the positive effects of 2020, we must note an exponential increase in the number of museum visits online, virtually, whether they are virtual tours of museums or exhibitions, or live or recorded broadcasts of conferences, concerts, presentations of cultural goods or even educational workshops. Another unexpected gain of this year is the opportunity to focus on some functions of the museum that are often overwhelmed by the function of heritage communication.

Perhaps more than ever since the beginning of the museums, there has been time for conservation and restoration, for fundamental and applied research.

Illustrative for this national effort is the project 'E-Culture. Digital Library of Romania', which aims to digitize a number of 550,000 cultural assets, of which 200,000 will be exhibited in europeana.eu. This project started in October 2019 and will be completed in May 2021. Therefore, most of this project was completed in 2020.

Last but not least, the year 2020 meant for the Romanian museums the unprecedented acceleration of the preoccupations of the management and of the heritage specialists for the modern instruments of the online communication.

Thousands of employees in our museums have produced digital content, with greater or lesser public success, but which suddenly brought us into the 21st century.

Valer Rus

SERBIA

During 2020, as for other museums all over the world, museums in Serbia faced the extraordinary situation caused by the COVID-19 virus. They had to adapt their work to the new circumstances, trying to find the best way to overcome all the challenges that the global crises brought. At the very beginning of the year, when the exhibition season started, the development of the pandemic in March led to the sudden closure of museums. Museum experts had to react quickly and transfer their activities from the real to the virtual world. Numerous programs were launched on social networks and websites offering cultural content in the spirit of the 'new normality'.

The audience accepted this way of virtual communication, as the only possible, and showed great interest to all posted events. Consequently, the number of virtual visitors on social platforms of museums considerably increased.

Fortunately, the Government of the Republic of Serbia noticed that museums are the safest places for the 'consumption' of culture, and gave a recommendation to their reopening, at the end of April. All the obligatory measures, such as disinfection barriers at the entrance, wearing of masks and keeping distance between the visitors were highly respected. Museums accepted this decision and, according to their possibilities, opened their doors to the public. This was a clear message that museums might return to their regular activities and that the public could consume safe cultural contents again. In that phase, museums were reorganized and transformed their activities in accordance with the prescribed measures by organizing events for a smaller number of visitors. The presence of a new, younger audience was also noticed. Probably encouraged by virtual activities, they decided to pay a live visit to museums and become their regular visitors. At the same time, museums continued with their virtual posts, but the number of audiences stagnated.

The third wave of the pandemic in the autumn was the most complex because the audience reached satiation with online contents, and museum experts could no longer withstand the passivity. Museums had two options - either to organize virtual openings or to completely postpone official opening ceremonies. However, the number of newly opened exhibitions increased significantly and a whole series of exhibitions was opened in museums throughout Serbia. In that phase, a great interest of the audience for visiting exhibitions, listening to expert interpretations and lectures in museums was noticed. The positive experiences of the audience are evidenced in their numerous remarks noted in books of impressions.

Moreover, museums in Serbia took advantage of the pandemic period for accomplishing their basic but often invisible museum work, such as the revision and digitalization of the art fund, or the publication of catalogues of collections. In parallel,

they worked on the development of digital contents and virtual tours and thus opened to new technologies, modern work methodologies and innovative models of communication with the audience. The Ministry of Culture used this time to edit the system and completed their work on the first Law on Museum Activities.

The situation showed that museums in smaller countries, which do not have many tourists and millions of visitors in their museums, especially those directed to the local population, overcame this crisis more easily. In accordance with generally lower costs and investments in museums, their loss was less, as well. There was no museum in Serbia that had been closed and not a single employee lost their job. The crisis gave museums a chance for transformation, adaptation to new challenges and the demands of the public. For that, it was necessary for them to know their values / characteristics, human capacities, and the level of institutional inventiveness. Therefore, I believe that this crisis has strengthened the museum sector in Serbia and, at the same time, pointed out to the Government the importance of museums in modern society.

Tijana Palkovljević Bugarski

SLOVENIA

In 2020, museums in Slovenia replaced almost all international activities with Zoom meetings and finding new ways to contact visitors.

Museums were closed for the first time in March-May 2020 and October 2020-February 2021 but at the same time open to integration, joint exploration of new opportunities and telework. Never before have museums been so accessible and active online.

In 2020, we exchanged international activities for Zoom meetings and finding new ways to contact visitors. Museums have closed, but at the same time opened up in networking, joint exploration of new possibilities, and teleworking.

At the time of the epidemic, museums, despite not being able to receive visitors, continued to do their job (providing material, information, project preparation, digitization, etc.). At the same time, thanks to the dedicated work of the museum staff, museums actively cooperated with users with information and publications on online networks. In the given situation, museums also came to the aid of teachers and educators and offered content for interactive learning and teaching. They conducted cultural days, virtual workshops, and tours of exhibitions. The Slovenian public, together with museologists, had a hard time anticipating the opening of museums, and they were sincerely pleased with the changes to the decree. Unfortunately, they were not informed about this change in advance, so museums cannot open museums at once. Namely, they must ensure the safety of employees and visitors, properly prepare the museum premises, and take protective measures.

Slovenian museologists connected in all three non-governmental institutions: the Association of Museums of Slovenia, ICOM Slovenia and the Association of Slovene Museums.

Museologists and associated colleagues connected with various topics and exchanged mutual experiences and practices. During the seminars, they discussed the social role of museums and their cooperation with local, national, and international organizations that promote the accessibility of vulnerable groups in museums. They were interested in whether museums are merely custodians of cultural heritage. How much do they react to social events around them? Do museums fulfil the claim that they are the bearers of messages about equality, diversity, and inclusiveness?

The publication of the joint Newsletter serves as a communication platform for the exchange of opinions and discussion of museum work, projects, and good practices of networking between institutions. Together, the associations want to promote the

topics that are at the heart of their work and at the same time bring them closer to other institutions and offer them the opportunity to learn about our good practices.

Museums have delved deeper into their work and their missions and become even more involved in life in certain local environments.

Most important, however, is the fact that after long months of closure, there were visitors in front of their doors. Therefore, their online networking and activities have achieved their goal.

Currently, museums in Slovenia are open. They opened their doors almost on the eve of the Slovenian national holiday - a day off - 5 February 2021.

Andreja Rihter

SPAIN

COVID-19 has had and continues to have an enormous impact on museums in Spain. On 14 March, the Spanish government decreed a state of emergency, leading to the home confinement of the entire population. This national lockdown also meant the closure of museums and other heritage sites (monuments, collections, archaeological sites, etc.) from the middle of March to June as of when, in most cases, the measures and restrictions on mobility were gradually reduced.

COVID-19 has also had a direct effect on the entry of foreign tourists, a particularly relevant fact in the case of Spain, one of the top three countries in the world, together with France and the US, in terms of tourist numbers, according to the World Tourism Organization. The pandemic has affected:

- museum activity
- personnel
- budgets
- visitors

From the viewpoint of their activity, museums have stopped all visits. Important temporary exhibitions have been cancelled and there are no plans in the medium-term for this type of event given the difficulty of international traffic. Museums are therefore falling back on the basic wardrobe of their collections.

The pandemic has also meant that museums have put their activity online. New digital contents have been created to maintain museum activity on their websites: online guided tours, games, conferences, etc. The current situation has accelerated the change towards the digital museum with a diverse wealth among the different museums according to their human and technological resources. However, one serious problem that Spanish museums face is the age of their staff and the lack of younger professionals, meaning that there is a reduced presence of digital natives on their teams.

In terms of personnel, the repercussions have been particularly severe for employees of companies that museums outsource services to, not only security and cleaning but also educational services and guided tours, companies dedicated to the production of activities, etc. For the most part, these are people who were already in a situation of insecure employment before the pandemic and who are now unemployed. The entire ecosystem around cultural heritage has been severely affected: museography

companies, researchers, consultants, restoration studies, communication offices, etc. In the case of their own staff, many museums have had to suspend contracts or reduce working hours through furlough schemes. Lastly, it is also worth mentioning the shift from on-site to remote working, leading to longer working days.

The closure of museums and borders has meant financial losses of varying dimensions. Large museums, those recognised internationally, have suffered considerable losses to their income, not only from a fall in ticket sales but also in merchandising sales and renting of spaces. It is somewhat paradoxical that some medium-sized museums that have introduced changes to their management models, applying objective-based strategic planning processes and marketing plans for diversifying audiences and sources of income, are those that have been most affected, compared to other publicly owned museums where contributions from public administrations cover the costs of civil and non-civil servant employees.

Studies carried out by the Observatory of Audiences of Cultural Heritage of Catalonia estimate a loss of 80 % of visitors to heritage sites 2020 compared to the previous year <http://observatoripublics.icrpc.cat/cat/projectes/impacte-de-la-covid-19-en-la-freqentacio-dels-equipaments-patrimonials-de-catalunya-el-2020.html> With no similar data available for Spain as a whole, it is plausible to assume that this reduction is of the same magnitude throughout the country.

Losses have been extremely high in terms of tourist visits, be they of international or domestic origin. However, there have also been significant losses in visits from education centres, as well as organised groups, particularly senior citizens.

In short, the main visitor group to museums are locals. In some cases, registering an increase in volume for this group compared to 2019. It is yet to be assessed whether or not the enormous efforts that museums have made in digital production has had an impact of the same magnitude on internet visitors.

It must be noted that in Spain most of the cultural heritage sites and museums are publicly owned. Despite there being talk of vaccines, there is no promise of easy times ahead for Spanish museums. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, public administrations have had to make huge efforts in terms of health care, social assistance, and business support. This has generated a vast deficit. A deficit that will have an impact on public administration budgets for several years to come and, consequently, on funds for culture and museums.

Antoni Laporte

SWEDEN

Many museums in Sweden have remained open throughout the year, despite the pandemic. There have been restrictions in the number of visitors and most events, lectures, films, guided tours, workshops, and other activities have been cancelled. Visitor numbers have decreased. Some museums have had periods of closure and in the middle of December most museums had to close to the public. There were 8,4 million visits to Swedish museum during 2020, which is 46% of the number of visits made in 2019.

Instead, there has been an enormous increase in digital offers. There have been guided tours through digital media, quizzes, films, programmes for schools, and an endless number of digital meetings and conferences. Sweden was quite well prepared for this. Most museum already had some sort of digital offers, or at least a presence in social media which quite easily could be expanded. In total Swedish museums have had 216 million digital visits during 2020.

There has been some national support for museums. National museums received extra funding in the beginning of the summer, while other museums had to wait until October. There was also support for parts of the salary for staff who had to be sent home when museums closed or reduced their activities. However, this was only available for commercial parts of the museum's activities, where the entrance fee, tickets or other revenue pays the salaries. Despite this, many museums have had to reduce the number of staff, thereby losing competence for the future. Exhibitions have been cancelled or postponed; projects have been delayed.

With fewer visitors or closed museums, there have also been opportunities for development work, planning ahead and getting up to date with work that has been left behind. Digital competences among staff have improved, many members of staff have had the time to participate in digital conferences and learning opportunities to improve their competences for the future.

During the autumn a report was presented (Museer 2019) which stated that the number of employees in the museum sector has decreased, while the number of visitors has increased. Worst is the situation for regional museums, which have reduced their staff by 5% in 2019 compared to 2018. The regional museums have also been brought up in other reports as the category of museums that has received less public funding during a long time, compared to national museums and municipal museums.

Nevertheless, some things went on as usual. The museum of the year in Sweden was proclaimed to be Sörmlands Museum, a regional museum which has been completely rebuilt with an innovative way of integrating the collections within the museum. The exhibition of the year was 'Skate', a touring exhibition about skateboard culture, produced by The Regional Museum of Skåne together with youth groups with an interest in skateboarding.

Anna Hansen

TURKEY

Shortly after the release of the first COVID-19 detected in Turkey on March 11, 2020 on March 16 museums and historical sites were closed to visitors. Public spaces, which were temporarily closed in April 2020, started to be opened gradually with the 'normalization' process as of May. From June 1, 2020, many museums started to open their doors to visitors with new arrangements. During the reopening process of the museums, both the Ministry of Culture and the Museum Association published precautionary measures to be taken for the reopening of the museums with the guide prepared by examining the recommendations of ICOM.

The necessity of museums to use technology effectively and to increase their digital capabilities has become a central discussion topic in the field of cultural heritage during the global epidemic. It has been observed that during the course of the pandemic, museums quickly began using digital platforms and there has been a substantial increase in the number of viewers.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism launched the virtual museum application towards the end of March, as the epidemic interrupted the culture and arts life. Only 33 of the 199 state museums were opened to visitors in a virtual environment under the <https://sanalmuze.gov.t> address in 2020. This ratio is much higher in private museums.

Museums opened their doors to visitors virtually so that museums which had to temporarily close could survive, maintain their continuity, not lose their visibility, and continue to fulfil their functions such as education, entertainment and communication. The number of virtual visitors has increased with the help of museums having these technological opportunities and know-how, organizing virtual tours, collections, exhibitions, publishing videos and organizing conferences.

In addition to virtual museum tours, many museums, non-governmental organizations, universities and associations organized webinars, chats, workshops and conferences on museology using social media accounts such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube. They tried to survive in a positive way to ensure their existence. In these meetings that took place in the process, the topics of museums and digital transformation, art, society, museums and the pandemic in the 21st century and the future of museums were discussed; 'How will virtual museums and digitalization affect museum travel culture? How are learning programs developed in Virtual Museums? Will museums be able to use their instruments correctly in this environment? are some problems that have been opened to discussion.

Besides, many private museums have started to produce more and more diverse content on social media networks and to engage in interactive studies with their followers. Museums, which started to experience the use of virtual museums as an educational environment or to experience guidance works in the virtual museum, have also started to carry out their social functions and especially their education functions via websites, remotely and using digital facilities.

In addition to this, while some private museums modernize their documentation by recording their collections in digital inventory systems, they also focused on offering digital applications that will enrich the exhibition design and increase the quality of the audience visit. At the same time, many museums are still in search of different curatorial works in virtual exhibition applications.

Despite all this, the decrease in income in museums, which have different economic resources belonging to individuals and foundations that try to survive without state support, brings about an important sustainability problem. In these economically disadvantaged museums, it has not been / will not be easy for many museums to use digital platforms effectively or to rapidly implement virtual museum applications. On the other hand, to find a place in digital environments, museums that can manage the digitalization encounter problems of constantly producing new and contemporary content. The biggest impact for museums in Turkey is the necessity of technically competent staff that can follow digital technologies, developments and apply these and knowledge in museum work.

One of the important details that has emerged is the necessity to make the objects and exhibitions in the museum digitalized and exhibited in a virtual environment. At this point, in addition to the problem of raising competent personnel who can achieve this, creating a digital archive and protecting this archive against possible digital theft are among the important issues to be considered.

Although the pandemic has a negative impact on museums, it also created an opportunity to review many issues related to the definition, functions, areas of activity, management and operation of museums. When we have an overall look at this period, we can say that many museums have new titles such as virtual museums, virtual exhibitions, digital inventory and archive systems, virtual learning environments, use of social media, interactivity, webinars and virtual museum games. However, economic income disparity among museums made it difficult to provide the same conditions for all museums. However, since layoffs were prohibited according to the 10th article of the Labour Law issued by the government on 17.04.2020, there were no official layoffs in the museums. In addition, there were no public or private museums that were closed in 2020 due to epidemic and economic restrictions.

Several museum initiatives began under the consultancy of Ahmet Erdönmez: Zile City Museum belonging to Zile district of Tokat province, a life culture museum in Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality Havran district, Sındırlı City Museum, Bigadiç City Museum, a ship museum on Avşa island, and a city museum at the historical train station of Balıkesir. In addition, the renovation of Gemlik Umurbey Celal Bayar Museum is on the agenda. Another museum project in Bursa is the cultural center with an area of 3000m² where the collections of Ahmet Erdönmez will be exhibited. Ahmet Erdönmez also plans to hold an EMA Turkey office in the same area. This museum is planned to be opened in 2021.

There are 27 newly opened museum of the Republic of Turkey in 2020. Overall, there are 488 museums of which 199 are state and 289 are private.

Dilek Yıldız Karakaş & Ahmet Erdönmez

UNITED KINGDOM

2020 was a challenging year for UK museums! Most museums and galleries have been closed to the public for a significant part of the past year, with some smaller institutions deciding not to open at all. There was a gradual reopening from the early summer and now all museums and galleries in Scotland are closed until at least March 2021 – in the rest of the UK no firm dates for reopening have been set currently.

Museums have risen to the challenge and worked to ensure their facilities are Covid-Safe; for many they were seen as a relatively safe environment, especially those with outdoor facilities. Even when open however, Covid restrictions have reduced museum visitor numbers. This is to maintain social distancing, but also due to travel restrictions and some public caution. This has meant a rapid rollout of online booking systems for both free-entry museums like those in Glasgow and for charging venues like the SS Great Britain. The public seem to have embraced this form of booking and it will continue as 'normality' returns.

The biggest impact of Covid has been the reduction in income from ticket sales, school visits, retail, catering and donations. This has affected UK museums in different ways; independent museums like the SS Great Britain Trust rely heavily on ticket income, particularly through the busy summer period and have suffered drastic revenue losses. Although able to open from July onwards, visitor numbers at the SS *Great Britain* were limited to around 50-60% of normal capacity so although full most days, income was still well down on what we might expect. Glasgow Museums, part of the Glasgow Life charitable trust, and receiving 70% of income from Glasgow City Council only managed to re-open three of its eight museum venues through the period August to December 2020. Entrance is free, but capacity limits meant a booking system had to be introduced at additional cost, whilst retail and catering in these venues did not operate due to low numbers. In the case of the SS *Great Britain* we were able to keep our shop and café open (the latter serving takeaway food). Large national museums have been hard-hit, especially those in London, since they rely so heavily on international visitors, and generate considerable income from 'blockbuster' exhibitions, which have of course been cancelled.

Fortunately, there has been support from the UK government for museums and galleries through employment and tax relief initiatives which have helped offset fixed costs. Many museums made use of the Furlough scheme enabling staff to be retained, which was welcome. There has been targeted revenue support from the Scottish and UK Government to support Covid-related museums and galleries' revenue costs and costs for current capital projects such as the UK Cultural Recovery Scheme, and other emergency funding from institutions and charitable foundations. Most organisations

have been reviewing their operations to save costs with many forced to reduce staff numbers through redundancies.

The pandemic has meant that museums have risen to the challenge of reaching audiences digitally; there has been amazing innovation, whether through virtual lectures and tours or increased online access to collections. Work has also been done to support parents and children to support home schooling; as an example the *SS Great Britain* has a dedicated 'Things to Do At Home' page on its website. Museums have also made great use of social media to raise their profile and encourage fundraising and most have improved their online retail offer. All this will prove of benefit when UK Museums and Galleries emerge from the crisis. A 'blended' offer of online content and the ability to visit museums in person is here to stay, since 'normality' (whatever that means) is not likely to return immediately!

Looking forward, financial and operational pressures remain. Pre-COVID-19 revenue funding across the museums sector was challenging, especially for those funded through local authorities (non-national funding). The fluidity of the situation is also challenging; trying to plan a 2021 budget given all the variables is extremely difficult! At the *SS Great Britain*, we had thought that lockdown might be eased at Easter, enabling us to reopen but we still have no idea if this will be possible despite the rapid rollout of vaccines.

Capital funding is also squeezed. The National Lottery Heritage Fund which supports capital developments and refurbishments of museums prioritised emergency funding in 2020 and a reduction in income due to competition from other lottery providers meant its funding programmes are likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future. Corporate, Trust and private fundraising is more challenging due to the economic climate and the public, corporate and charity focus on supporting the health and care sector rather than the cultural sector and as a result, many museums and galleries are revising longer term development plans.

Other Developments

Working Life: one of the biggest struggles that museum staff have had to cope with is trying to maintain day-to-day routines and deal with other issues. Many staff in the UK have either been furloughed, or part-time furloughed, and so managers have tried to balance maintaining basic services with either reduced staff, or one working at home. Staff at the *SS Great Britain* were back in the office on a very limited basis in the autumn, but we have largely adapted to working from home. This has meant a culture change, and an investment in technology to ensure everyone has the capacity to work remotely. I do think that as a sector (and maybe even internationally) the world of work has changed for good, COVID-19 has proved that for some jobs at least, you do not need to be physically in the office every day, and in future people will have a

blended work pattern mixing home and office. It will reduce pollution and commuting, not a bad thing!

Brexit: this continues to be another distraction and uncertainty for the UK cultural sector for although a deal between the UK and the EU was agreed after much worry about the consequences of a 'No-Deal' situation, there are still issues to be clarified. These include the nature of the cultural relationship between the UK and EU member states, how new citizenship rights will affect museum staff and museum and gallery loans, and new customs regulations. There is also uncertainty for museums and galleries in Ireland and Northern Ireland as the effects of Brexit on the economy hit funding. Until COVID-19 has eased, the sector as a whole will not really know the impact of new visa and travel regulations on the tourism business and consequently visitor numbers. On a day-to-day basis, I know that museums in the UK are still keen to maintain the close links that have been established with EU colleagues and once we are through these difficulties, I am sure these relationships will be as strong as ever!

Black Lives Matter: the BLM campaign has once again highlighted the difficult issues surrounding museums, slavery and colonial history in the UK. The toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol was the most high-profile expression of a more general need to tackle the issue but as the UK Museums Association has argued, what is now being called 'decolonisation' focuses on more than just statues and is about recognising the role of empire in museums from their inception to the present. There is much dialogue and work ahead and much room for controversy (such as public reaction to a report on Colonialism in National Trust collections published in 2020), but museums and galleries are acknowledging the need for change and doing something about it.

Tim Bryan & Lawrence Fitzgerald