

1. Since 2009, you have been President of EMA, how did you create the idea of the need for another organisation ? What was the process, and how did you form your team ?

The EMA was founded with the aim and objective of bringing together knowledge, experience and good cooperation between individuals who believed in the values of trust, respect, understanding, selflessness, knowledge, morality, social standing, experience. Wim van der Weiden, Massimo Negri and myself were connected in a unique way in the European space, as we inadvertently created a network between colleagues that linked the different specificities of the European cultural heritage". I myself believe in the diversity of Europe's values and its hidden cultural heritage, which I rediscover every year, especially through the ŽIVA¹ museum award. That is why the EMA was created and remains today and, in the future a solid organisation of personal networking and sharing of professional experience and knowledge. In 2009, the official decision was made when Wim became our Chairman, Massimo our Director, and myself as President of EMA. We clearly agreed on our tasks. In the very second step, we invited Ann Nicholls to join us with her irreplaceable knowledge of concrete country situations.

The curtain rose in 2010 when the Micheletti Foundation decided to entrust its prize to EMA, to the colleagues, friends, and experts with whom it had started its journey. In 2011 the first EMA Awards took place in Dortmund on the premises of DASA, the first recipient of the Luigi Micheletti Prize, the brainchild of Kenneth Hudson and Luigi Micheletti.

On the occasion of our joint story, a special DASA prize was awarded in Dortmund. The first recipient of the DASA award was the Museum de Portimão in the Algarve, Portugal. In 2011, the Micheletti Award went to The State Textile and Industry Museum (TIM), from Augsburg, Germany. In its highly successful TIM Museum Director, Karl Borromäus Murr, we identified our new board member for EMA. Today Karl is our Chairman.

Today, museums should create, manage different roles in society²; they should be what they were, but also creative hubs with a lot of creativity for all generations; museums deal with social issues, encourage green transformation, etc.

Our various personal involvements in museums' education-related activities led to a partnership with Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums in 2010. I was a member of the Hands On! Board and proposed the award for the best children's museum in 2009. We started modestly in close collaboration with the Children's Book Fair in Bologna with Massimo as the liaison person. All three of us successfully carried out three awards in Bologna. Today, the Children in Museums Award successfully connects institutions from all over the world.

¹ ZIVA AWARD more: <https://www.fsk.si/projects/ziva/>

² ICOM – new Museum Definition, Prague 2022

Wim's close relationship with Robin Lutz was the idea behind the Heritage in Motion Award³, which was first launched in 2012 and we are now successfully continuing the award in partnership with the FSK.

We have been networking and each of us 'beginners' has woven our own network of experts. You can see where we are today with our connections by the names and the number of individuals covering Europe.⁴

2. How do you see the future of EMA, what way should EMA go?

As we set out to do at the outset, we have also dedicated our future to even greater integration in education. This is evident in our calendar of activities, where we organise on-line Master Courses in Museology New Media and Museum Communication, the International Master's in Education in Museums@Heritage with cooperation with the University of Glasgow. We are also partners in the organisation and delivery of the International Summer School of Museology in Koper (Slovenia) and the University of Primorska (Slovenia).

Our platform of museum networking in our awards opens up opportunities for active participation in the exchange of experts from different profiles and especially from different parts of Europe and the world. I must mention that our online courses connect colleagues from all over the world, as well as our Children's Museum Award and, from this year onwards, the HiM Award. The exchange of ideas and experiences is extremely important and fruitful for the development of the professionalism and activities of museums.

3. You are also director of the Forum of Slavic Cultures (FSK) - what aspects of Slavic cultures are important for you to address?

Our mission and goals in the past years were: we aimed to connect Slavic cultures and promote them in a global environment. Without the support of our members, who make it possible to build bridges among us, there would be no International Foundation - FSK.

After years with Covid, in 2022 FSK was finally able to devote itself fully to what is our basic mission: weaving living ties, communication and meetings, human contact for the benefit of other people and joint institutions.

We did this all the more enthusiastically because a war brutally erupted on our continent - more precisely, between our member states - suddenly we were talking about the integration of Slavic cultures, science and art as well as activities in the field of heritage and literature with war on the horizon and on the ground, with victims among people and institutions.

³ HIM - <https://europeanmuseumacademy.eu/heritage-in-motion-award/>; Heritage in Motion is a multimedia competition for creators and users of films, games, apps and websites on themes related to Europe's heritage, cultural and natural, tangible and intangible.

⁴ <https://europeanmuseumacademy.eu/network/#advisers#advisers>.

Every day that passes is difficult for us. Divisiveness, disunity and intrusions into our midst divide us, alienate us.

4. There are two important projects; the ŽIVA Award and the Women Writers Route. Could you please take us through your process and background information for making these projects?

Two stories, two mirrors of our creation and bridging of cultures

The ultimate collection of our youth was The Hundred Slavic Novels. We were aware that the greatest works of fiction indispensably capture the spirit of the times and speak to future generations. We were often helped to understand them by the remarkable accompanying words. But most of all, even more than the authors, the subjects and the accompanying words, it was the breadth of the horizon that impressed. The collection on the shelf was like a horizon of the world and of the spirit, and the book in hand was the promise of another unforgettable journey. Today, as I look proudly at the shelf full of snow-white books on the occasion of the publication of the 100th book in The Hundred Slavic Novels collection, I am overwhelmed with immense pride that we have created a similarly vast horizon. But by limiting ourselves to the Slavic world, we have in fact been able to go even deeper: in eight Slavic countries, we have brought together 108 authors of the contemporary Slavic novel and almost as many translators and translators with their readers.

The languages written on the pages of the novel and the sound of the Slavic words we send out into the world, uttered by our readers, testify, through their subtle differences, to our fundamental kinship, to the powerful Slavic literature and culture that is now understood, read and lived by more than three hundred million people. It is a mighty horizon, with a book in your lap and a thought for tomorrow.

We started developing the WWR route five years ago on the initiative of the Forum of Slavic Cultures, the international foundation based in Slovenia. The goal was clear, but ambitious: to gain more visibility, significance and reputation for women writers and their contribution to European culture and history of human rights and democracy. It took us five years to receive certification.

We are particularly proud of the route, since literature is one of the foundations of our (Slovenian)culture. But it is also true that the monument to national poet France Prešeren is erected at central city square – while women's role is limited to the symbolic muse behind his back and a historic muse leaning from the window on the opposite side of the square.

By founding the Women Writers Route we are pushing ladies to the front of the picture, both historically and symbolically – since the destinies of many of them have been ignored and pushed aside.

The Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami liked to say that when we reach the crossroads, the only direction is the one we came by: all others remain unknown to us. So, although it sometimes feels as though we have come a long way, the big adventure is still ahead of us.

We are very proud that our route has become a member of the ever-growing family of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and we are delighted that through our route women writers and their achievements will receive the attention they undoubtedly deserve.

If the best part of the road is the crossroads, then our »cross-routes«, our mutual collaboration and complementarity, is one of the most inspiring dimensions of the whole process that the Council of Europe so carefully cherishes.

5. Lastly, could you please remind us why organisations such as FSK and EMA are so crucial for European culture and society?

It is essential that the European Museum Academy feels committed not only to the countries of the European Union, but to all countries of the Council of Europe, because members of FSK are also members CoE. The Academy and FSK are built upon democratic and human values of social justice, participation, inclusion, gender equality, racial justice, community building, sustainability – all fundamental values that should be the driving force for the 21st century.

Within The European Museum Academy, we are united for the advancement of knowledge in museology. Museum experts from various national and cultural backgrounds are united in identifying innovative museum projects as role models for others to follow. The Academy was a model for the ŽIVA award.

I am deeply convinced that by awarding the best examples of promoting the diversity and originality of our cultural heritage in Europe, we do create common ground where expert talk can go beyond geopolitical differences. We use our meetings to find such common ground in our expertise – and we trying us help those who need our help most this winter!