INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MUSEES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MUSEOS

National Committees of European Countries

Appeal to the European Parliament and Commission,
to the Parliaments and Governments of European Countries
and to Regional and Local Governments

Support Culture and Museums to Face the Global Crisis and Build the Future

ICOM, the International Council of Museums, is the international organisation of museums and museum professionals, with 30,000 members in 137 countries. On behalf of hundreds of thousands of professionals and volunteers currently working in museums in our countries, the Chairs of ICOM European National Committees signed below, with the close support of the Chair of ICOM Europe and the President of ICOM, are meeting in Lisbon on April 5th and 6th 2013, for the international conference on *Public Policies toward Museums in Times of Crisis,* appeal to European, national, regional and local Parliaments and Governments to support culture and museums in these times of crisis.

We would like to point out that in many countries of Europe and European Union the economic crisis is producing dramatic effects upon cultural activities and museums. Museums are unique resources that not only produce knowledge and education, but also contribute significantly to economic and social development This appeal presents to Parliaments and Governments three action priorities for addressing the crisis and ten proposals for the sustainable management of museums and cultural heritage.

1. Global economic crisis is producing dramatic effects upon cultural activities and museums

In many European countries, economic crisis has generated a drastic decrease in public and private financial support for culture and museums. Blind automatic financial cuts do not distinguish between ephemeral initiatives and permanent institutions.

These drastic cuts are endangering the existence of many museums and their collections, and threatening the working conditions of professionals, particularly younger ones. Colleagues are losing their jobs and young professionals are underpaid, have only short-term precarious contracts or cannot find suitable employment. With great concern, we have already seen museums that had to reduce opening hours and activities, or even being forced to close because of lack of resources. Others are now losing their directors and technical teams. Policy makers need to recognise that museums are long-term, intergenerational institutions where research, conservation and dissemination of knowledge are closely entwined. None of these functions should be neglected.

In times of crisis culture, museums and heritage are often considered a luxury that society can little afford, whereas in reality they are assets of sustainable growth. It is our strong belief that at such critical moments we must change our traditional opinions not only about finance and economy, but also about society and ways of living.

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2. Cultural activities and museums are unique resources for the development of economy and society

Culture and museums are important investments for a better society, not liabilities to be cut down in times of crisis. Our national and European identities rest on a common cultural heritage which is not a mere memory of the past, but a capital asset in understanding the present and planning the future.

Culture, heritage and museums in particular drive economic and social growth as well as innovation and community cohesion. Even in countries facing serious economic problems museums and heritage should be financed so that they can continue to contribute to social cohesion and development. Unfortunately, in some countries the percentage of Gross National Product invested in culture, museums and heritage is lower than in other countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (DECO). We believe that governments should modify this trend, and resources available for culture should be spent primarily on activities of permanent cultural institutions.

3. The economic crisis and the new role of museums

In the last few years museums in our countries have changed dramatically and many now have larger social and territorial responsibilities.

The preservation and safeguarding of tangible and intangible cultural heritage is considered the most relevant function of museums and should not be neglected. However, contemporary museums have wider goals. They offer public services and social activities, as well as culture and knowledge. They serve new audiences, use new languages and new media. Innovative museums foster public awareness, promote understanding of heritage and offer educational services. They strengthen cultural identities, support social cohesion and develop intercultural mediation -activities which are fundamental in times of crisis.

Museums produce public values and improve regional assets in a global world. They provide facilities and resources for local, regional and national communities. They generate not only knowledge and education, but also income and employment. Museums and monuments are among the most appealing factors for the tourism industry, a vital economic sector in all our countries. Investing in museums, their activities and their professionals is the best way to develop and improve the quality of cultural tourism.

4. Three priorities and ten objectives to face the crisis and promote the values of museums and heritage

First priority

Museums and cultural heritage are positive engines of development rather than sources of expenditure. This is especially true in times of crisis when long-term strategic issues have to stand up against short-term

proposals. National, regional and local governments should recognise this and act accordingly. There is no sustainable growth without cultural development. Territories need cultural infrastructure in addition to highways, high-speed railways, airports and telecommunication services. To promote regional growth and international exchanges, and to improve the quality of citizens' lives, we need cultural heritage, museums, libraries, archives, performing arts, theatres, concert halls and exhibition centres.

We are asking our governments to

1. Fulfil their public obligations toward heritage and museums and preserve our cultural legacy for future generations.

2. Increase the percentage of Gross National Product assigned to cultural activities, museums and heritage, in particular when it is below the European average, in order to attain European standards.

3. Increase, or at least maintain (in countries where the level of investments is clearly above the European average), the resources for museums as permanent cultural institutions so that they can effectively fulfil their social roles and offer a greater number of activities to support their communities and local development.

Second priority

Governments and communities should protect and promote human resources of museums. Many museums are suffering from a severe reduction, or even the loss of scientific and technical expertise. Without scientific, administrative and management personnel, museums cannot contribute effectively to the life and growth of society and some are at serious risk.

We are asking our governments to

4. Support necessary generation turnover in the personnel of museums.

5. Preserve and promote museum professional competences, both in public and in private institutions, and ensure that museum positions are filled by qualified personnel.

6. Promote the training of museum personnel and ensure the achievement of high quality professional standards.

7. Implement programmes for the employment of competent young professionals in museums, including the introduction of fiscal benefits.

Third priority

Governments and communities should promote citizens' participation in museum activities on a voluntary basis and encourage synergy between public and private organisations and partnerships in order to guarantee the sustainable management of museums and heritage. Governments should encourage synergies between school programs and museums activities.

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We are asking our governments to

8. Promote cooperation in museum and cultural activities among institutions, public and private bodies, professionals and volunteers.

9. Sustain cultural networks on a regional, national and European level.

10. Encourage donations and activities in favour of museums and cultural heritage by means of tax relief.

Lisbon, 6 April 2013

Wim de Vos, Chair of ICOM Belgium

Lidija Nikocevic, Chair of ICOM Croatia

Teti Hadjinicolaou, Chair of ICOM Greece

Alberto Garlandini, Chairof ICOM Italy

Luís Raposo, Chair of ICOM Portugal

Sofía Rodríguez Bernis, Chair of ICOM Spain

Hans-Martin Hinz, President of ICOM

Damodar Frlan, President of ICOM Europe