

26 March 2020

Subject: COVID-19 Pandemic and its impact on the heritage world

Dear Members of the Europa Nostra Family,

First of all, allow us to express our deepest solidarity and moral support to all people who have been affected, in one way or another, by the current public health emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic. We wish to convey a message of hope, strength and encouragement to all of you, and especially to our colleagues in Italy and Spain, two European countries who have been particularly affected by the pandemic. We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to and admiration for Europe's health and medical staff who are tirelessly working - in very challenging conditions - for the collective wellbeing.

At a time of on-going crisis and prevailing uncertainty, we now, more than ever, **feel the need to be close to each other while staying physically apart**. Let us cherish all the more the values of **connectedness, closeness and togetherness** which are stimulated by cross-border networks like our Europa Nostra Family. **'Europa Nostra' is, after all, our Europe.**

With this in mind, **this message has a twofold purpose:**

- 1) First, we would like to **ask for your input to help us design and implement an adequate Europa Nostra Joint Advocacy Action with regard to the impacts of the COVID-19 on the heritage world**. The main objective of such Advocacy Action will be to ensure that cultural heritage is duly included in the EU's immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis as well as in the long-term recovery plans. At Europa Nostra, we are fully convinced of the immense potential of culture and cultural heritage for Europe's socioeconomic recovery in the aftermath of the pandemic. (**see ANNEX1**)
- 2) Second, we would like to **share with you some initial observations and update you on the work that Europa Nostra has been carrying in this front** during the past two weeks. (**see ANNEX 2**)

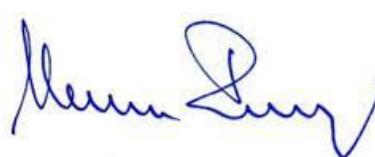
We look forward to receiving your most valuable inputs. For any questions on this consultation please contact **Lorena Aldana** (lao@europanostra.org), European Policy Coordinator at our Brussels Office.

Stay safe and healthy!

With all our solidarity and friendship,



Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović
Secretary General



Hermann Parzinger
Executive President

**The Voice of
Cultural Heritage
in Europe**

**La Voix du
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ANNEX 1 WE NEED YOUR INPUT : Special Call for sharing experiences & concerns

To get a better and more complete understanding of the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on cultural heritage and the specific needs of the heritage sector to overcome it, we need your active involvement.

We would like to hear from you about what is happening across Europe and the reactions on the ground with the longer-term objective of using this information as a basis for our joint advocacy efforts towards the European Union, its Member States and other relevant international, European and national bodies.

Please, share with us (simply by replying to this message), your input and views on the questions below. When doing it, please, do not forget to include the name and type of your organisation, your country, and please also specify if you wish to be contacted in the future for further consultation on the effects of the COVID19 pandemic.

To facilitate and speed up this important consultation, we invite you to send us your input in any of the following languages: **English, French, Italian and Spanish, German and Dutch.**

We invite you to be as concise and concrete as possible when replying to the questions below.

PLEASE RESPOND TO SOME OR ALL QUESTIONS BELOW

- 1) How is your organisation and/or heritage organisations in your country being **affected by COVID19 pandemic** and the measures to contain it? What **consequences** do you expect as a result of this pandemic (in the short and longer-term)?
- 2) Which **measures** are your organisation and/or heritage organisations in your country implementing to overcome the crisis (in terms of re-organisation of daily work, use of virtual tools, economic plans, creation of digital content and alternate-delivery programmes, etc)?
- 3) What can the heritage world **learn from this crisis?**
- 4) In the following months, what do you consider will be the **most urgent needs of the heritage sector?**
- 5) Which **measures** do you think are needed at local/national/European level to support heritage organisations during the pandemic and after the pandemic (in terms of legislation, resources, financial support and subsidies, etc)?
- 6) How can the cultural heritage world **contribute to Europe's socioeconomic recovery** in the aftermath of the pandemic?

NOTE: Any other thoughts, comments, sources, studies and tools you might want to share with other members of the Europa Nostra network are most welcome!

ANNEX 2 UPDATES: Mapping the effects of COVID-19 on the Cultural Heritage Sector

The wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19 on the heritage sector both at the present time and in the long-run are still uncertain. However, the first effects of the pandemic and of the measures implemented to contain it are already taking a considerable toll on the heritage world. Europa Nostra is therefore committed to obtaining a better overview of the current situation.

As a first step, we have co-signed two important European public statements:

- 1) **Joint Statement: European tourism sector demands urgent supportive measures to reduce devastating impact of COVID-19** published on 17 March 2020, accessible [here](#).
- 2) **Joint Letter to European Commission on the Effect of COVID-19 on the Creative Europe Programme and the European Cultural and Creative Sectors** published on 20 March, accessible [here](#).

We have also started identifying specific impacts on the cultural heritage sector through desk research and virtual conversations with our Associate Organisation [INTO- International National Trusts Organisation](#) and other Members of the [European Heritage Alliance 3.3](#), of which Europa Nostra is a founding member and coordinator. As a result, we would like to share with you below some initial observations.

SOME INITIAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE CULTURAL HERITAGE WORLD

Implications for personnel and security of jobs

- For management positions (directors, communications and project managers) in many heritage organisations, it is possible to continue working remotely. This is not the case for the staff that deals with the public or staff involved in maintenance or restoration works at heritage sites. Volunteers have also stopped their activities (this is a particularly vulnerable group as they are likely to be in the more vulnerable age range). Both permanent and temporary staff face the risk of losing their jobs or seeing their work-time drastically reduced in the months to come.

Security of heritage sites and contents

- Generally, heritage sites around the world are closed indefinitely for both visitors and staff. In some cases, staff are working remotely but there is a serious concern of ensuring proper security for these sites and their contents.
- It is particularly difficult to close natural sites or parks, as some of them don't have gates or have multiple gates and employees or guards cannot stay onsite. Heritage operators are already thinking of solutions: can natural sites be partially or totally controlled with the help of technological solutions?

Financial implications due to loss of revenues

- Public events and activities that generate revenues and for which investments were already committed are being cancelled, with important financial implications and uncertainty for heritage operators. Public funding might also dry-up with other urgent social needs attracting the funds.
- Economic damage is proving to be serious, as tourism is being and will be severely hit, drastically stopping the inflow of visitors. In this regard, see the above-mentioned [joint statement](#) issued by the European Tourism Manifesto Alliance and co-signed by Europa Nostra on March 17. The

statement calls on the European Union to implement urgent measures to limit the negative impact of COVID-19 outbreak on Europe's tourism sector, which is very often linked to culture and heritage.

- For Museums and sites that are heavily reliant on visitor revenues, spring and summer openings are being postponed, which tend to be the most visited periods. Spring and summer workshops, trainings and other activities are now cancelled. See this [statement and survey](#) issued by the Network of European Museum Organisations- NEMO for more details on the impact of the crisis on the European museum sector.
- The economic survival of (typically small) EU-funded heritage actors is at risk also due to administrative inflexibilities of EU funding mechanisms, defined for "normal operating conditions". Project delays or alterations induced by the pandemic might trigger cash flow problems for actors benefiting from EU funds. In this regard, see the above-mentioned [joint letter](#) addressed to the European Commission on 20 March and signed by over 30 heritage and cultural networks, including Europa Nostra. In the letter, we call on the European Commission to implement immediate measures to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 on the Creative Europe programme's beneficiaries.

Ensuring proper communication & Keeping networks alive

- For the time being, Heritage operators cannot plan for the future and are generally waiting for updates and/or regulations by Governments, which in function of the yet unknown reality, tend to change often if not daily. Because of this unclear panorama, it is difficult to communicate future plans to staff, volunteers and the audiences.
- Not all organisations and sites were fully prepared to work remotely (e.g. lack of full access to files, or not facilitating home-office in the past, etc). On the other hand, many heritage organisations are exploring how to mainstream the effects of teleworking into their future work, also under normal conditions. It is almost certain that this will have a lasting effect after the pandemic, also as a much needed contribution to the on-going mitigation measures of climate change (e.g. more video-conferences instead of physical meetings, less printing, travelling only when strictly necessary, etc).
- Faced with the indefinite closing of their physical sites, museums and heritage institutions are turning to digital offers such as virtual exhibitions and tours. It is very likely that this will have a lasting effect in the way museums work and engage with their audiences in the future, also after the pandemic.
- Amid the crisis, the heritage world is also seizing the opportunity to co-create solutions, derive learning benefits and re-invent itself. Solidarity messages and actions related to the arts, heritage, nature and beauty are proliferating. Professionals are sharing knowledge and heritage content digitally and cultivating virtual links among each other and with their audiences.

IMPORTANT: More information can be found in the attached collection of statements, open letters and other survey tools produced during the last 10 days by European networks active in the field of culture and cultural heritage.