PROGRAMME OF THE CONFERENCE

“National History Museums in South-East Europe: Learning History, building shared memories”

Thessaloniki, Greece, 18-19 October 2010

An International Conference organized

Within the framework of

“2010 International year for the Rapprochement of Cultures”

In association with
I. Background

In the context of the celebrations of the “International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures” (2010), a renewed emphasis on the comprehension of History as a tool for dialogue and mutual understanding as well as on the challenges of educating on cultural diversity is of the utmost importance.

A museum’s primary purpose is to safeguard and preserve the heritage as a whole, but it is also to approach the history of a country in a multi-perspective manner, in a way that is attentive to social and cultural change and can help to put in perspective the complexities of national histories.

History Museums offer the opportunity to regard culture as systems that have continually evolved through internal processes and in contact with the environment and other cultures, and to reflect on the challenges of shared heritages pasts and shared futures. Indeed, a balanced approach to history, which enhances mutual respect, peace, tolerance has the potential to promote a sustainable intercultural understanding and cooperation.

In this sense, they can be seen as key sites for intercultural learning and dialogue and play a crucial role in regarding history as tools for cooperation and reconciliation. Hence, they can help the general public to better understand how the promotion of cultural diversity is inseparable from the encouragement of intercultural dialogue.

In order to promote approaches to the history of the region in a multi-perspective, innovative and inclusive manner, focusing on the role of National (but also regional, or specialized) History Museums appears therefore to be particularly relevant. As they offer new perspectives for cultural understanding in the 21st century, they also appear to be of great significance for reshaped politics of education.

Finally, there is a new widely recognized need in Europe to develop approaches that can present a national history within its European context and its regional diversity. In this context, and with the European Union accession and integration process well under way, national history museums can be seen as having a responsibility in contributing to the emergence of a European identity. Providing an overview of the national history in an international European context and its internal variety is therefore a new critical challenge for history museums in SEE and beyond.

II. Justification and Relevance

As History has played a crucial role in defining and shaping national identity in the SEE region since the 19th Century, the region has developed a long tradition of “national history museums”. These museums often represented or reflected the visions of the era, and the aspirations related to it, with a particular focus on national identity and state formation.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the war in the Former Yugoslavia, the return to peace and stability in the region, and the rapid EU integration process, national history museums are revisiting their mission statements. The re-conceptualization of these museums also coincides probably today with the quest for an unbiased view of the past, a new narrative and comprehension of national and regional history, and a better understanding of European history.

Also, it should be noted that in the last decades, new opportunities have been offered to create multiple regional or local de-centralized history museums, more engaged with local communities, as the practice of centralizing national heritage highlights in national museums located in the capitals could be perceived as outdated.
Indeed, the interest in history has been growing since the 1960s, corresponding to a new societal need for information about history. Film, television, literature and also museums contributed to this to a large degree. More and more, large regional historical exhibitions meet with an unexpectedly positive response from the public. This trend has been explained by museologists and sociologists in terms of the “theory of second modernity”, or “reflexive modernization”, characterized by individualization, loss of traditions, individual need for a recognition of historical and cultural roots in a context of globalization.

Encouraged not only by public interest, new museums of national history and culture have been founded since the 1980s in Europe and in the rest of the world. Among them, the National Museum of Australia (Canberra, 1982), the National Museum of Japanese History (Sakura, 1983), the Canadian Museum of Civilizations (Ottawa, 1989), the German Historical Museum (Berlin, 1987, reopened in 2006), the National History Museum of New Zealand (Wellington, 1998). In the USA, a new National Museum of African American History and Culture (Washington DC), seeking to stimulate a dialogue about race, afro-American dialogue and culture, and conceived a place of memory and reconciliation is scheduled to be completed in 2015. Interestingly, recently designed history museums are putting an emphasis on international topics of global scale (National Museum of History and Cultures of Immigration in Paris, 2007) or on a post-national reading of history, with a will to present national histories in a European perspective, and no longer in a purely national, regional or local perspective (Museum of Europe in Brussels, 2007; Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations, to be opened in 2013 in Marseille).

Reviewing and revisiting the role of national history museums is not just a question of museographic modernization, but also a historic opportunity to reconcile countries with their past, present national histories in a regional context, forge a better understanding of European history and identity, build shared memories.

This, in particular, has been a crucial challenge for many of the new museums in Europe dealing in particular with the Second World War (the Peace Memorial in Caen, 1988), the Holocaust (Jewish Berlin in Berlin, 2001), the communist period (German Historical Museum in Berlin, 1987; reopened in 2006; the House of Terror Museum in Budapest, 2002).

Many museums in SEE share such commonalities, with a new cultural and political will to present history in a multi-perspective fashion, stimulate the critical reflective and personal involvement of the visitors with history, through critical reflection and education, and ultimately aligned with the standards of international museology and the ICOM Code of Ethics. Interestingly, several museums (history museums but not only) from the SEE have been recently awarded the widely acclaimed “Best in Heritage” award for such efforts (the Zagreb City Museum, 2005; the Ethnographic Museum in Split, 2004; the Goulandris National History Museum, 2004; the Slovenian Museum of Recent History in Celje, 2003). The Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki was also awarded the Council of Europe Museum Prize in 2005. The European Museum of the Year Award was also awarded to the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia (1991).

The Albanian National History Museum in Tirana, for example, is now undergoing a major reform process with the support of UNESCO Venice Office, within the framework of the MDG-F Joint Programme on “Culture and Heritage for Social and Economic development” in Albania, leading to the redefinition of the mission statement of the museum, an enhanced focus on education and entertainment, an emphasis on a diachronic understanding of national history. Likewise, the UNESCO Office is also supporting the transformation/rehabilitation of 3 museums dedicated to the Second World War in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Jablannica, Kozara and Drvar).

In the SEE region, the revision of national narratives, the re-conceptualization of a number of transversal questions – formation of state and of sovereignty, struggles for freedom and emancipation, oppression, war, conflicts, questions about social justice, cultural and religious interpretations, issues related to
gender and sexes, minorities, migrations, empires- and historical topics -the Ottoman period, the Balkans Wars, the First and Second World War, the Holocaust, the Communist Period- pose new lines of historical questioning. In Italy, the National Museum of the Risorgimento (“Resurgence”) in Turin will reopen in 2011 after 4 yours of renovation on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Italy’s political unification, and will endeavor to present new perspectives on the issues of State formation, nationalities, nationalism and national sentiments in Europe.

Revisiting the role of national history museums appears therefore also closely linked to reforms in history education, and requires the establishment of closer relations and dialogue between museums, curators, educational authorities and history teachers/educators. Indeed, history museums and history educators face very similar challenges when developing historical narratives: critical use of empirical evidence, presenting multiple interpretations of the past, helping the public to acquire skills to evaluate and understand conflicting sources of information and form independent thinking. Impartial language, objectivity, inclusiveness, multi-perspective approaches and critical thinking appear to be of necessity in such a context.

For this to be true, museums must be given the opportunity to strengthen cross-border communication and facilitate exchange on how to better integrate cultural diversity and dialogue principles into a wide range of policies (scientific policy, collections, museography, research and publication, exhibits, communication and outreach, education).

III. Objectives

The conference, bringing together experts from the region and beyond, will discuss the function of National (or prominent) history museums in SEE as innovative educational and communicative tools, their role in fostering a critical and unbiased understanding of national/regional history, reflect on the notion of “shared memories” and “shared heritage”, propose new interdisciplinary perspectives on SEE and European history.

Experts from other European museums and international associations or organizations will share their experience and expertise: studying the cases of what some countries in SEE and outside SEE have done may be of interest, not necessarily as examples to follow, since the approaches taken are different from one another anyway, but also as good practices for benchmarking. The conference should also serve therefore to exchange ideas and information on practical experiences in developing innovative historic exhibitions, enhance transfer of didactical, academic and pedagogical know-how and skills, compare respective mission statements.

Experts will be asked to comment on the evolution of the role of history museums in Society, the development of public policies and creation of cultural projects around history museums (exhibits, facilities, education services, events, entertainment, communication, equipment and technology for visitors), the capacity of museums of presenting the cultural diversity of European societies and highlighting the common historical heritage of SEE countries. And finally, discuss modalities for enhancing regional and international cooperation, identifying needs and gaps, providing concrete suggestions for improvement, in order to transform national history museums into modern cultural

IV. Topics of discussions

The conference will address four major topics.
Round-table 1: “National History museums today: mission statements, goals and objectives, strategies”

The ICOM museum statement provides a general framework, by specifying that a museum is a “non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment” (ICOM, 2007).

This round-table may want to reflect on the field and scope of activities of history museums in today and discuss the opportunity for SEE countries to revisit national museums frameworks and concepts (what is a national history museum today?), the scope and functions of the museums (exhibitions, but also research, education, communication and development, capacity building), interdisciplinary approaches (curators, historians, architects, exhibition concept/design specialists). Beyond, the round-table may discuss how revised mission statements can serve to enhance the image of national history museums, yet different from the stereotyped vision of pre-1989 museums (“museums of the Revolution”, etc) or from museums too strongly associated with the promotion and celebration of national identity and of the nation’s historical continuity?

Round-table 2: “National history museums and intercultural dialogue: new perspectives on history and memory in Europe”

National Museums can inspire a broader understanding of nations and its many peoples, create opportunities for learning, stimulate critical thinking, and present challenging ideas about a country's past. This round-table may want to address the following questions: how can a history museum foster mutual understanding, appreciation of the history of a country in a regional context, encourage dialogue of the public with and among all citizens on the past, present and future of a country? How can a history museums become a forum for critical discussion and understanding, for reconciling shared (or supposedly shared) history with the particular histories of the social groups that comprise a multicultural society, for encouraging critical thinking and discussing the diversity of origins and the plurality of memories of European history?

Round-table 3: “Transforming national history museums in modern cultural institutions: education, communication, entertainment”

National Museums, if they want to shed a new light on national history, must work to ensure that the collections, exhibitions, research, publications and educational programs all support the Museum’s basic mission and to make exhibitions and programs as accessible as possible to all visitors.

This round-table may want to reflect on the development of educational programmes for history museums, new forms of display of artifacts creating a new way of experiencing history; new methods of communication related to presentations, exhibits, visits, peer education, training; communication plans and strategies; outreach to the youth; creation of websites, shops and museum kits; development of public programs, from demonstrations, lectures and tours to storytelling and festivals; development of archives centers housing documents, photographs and other works; education Web site, offering free, standards-based, innovative resources for teaching and learning the country's history. Indeed, innovative educational programmes, together with concise plans of temporary exhibitions, can create and strengthen the links with the community as well as with the tourists, thereby improving community engagement and audience development.

Round-table 4: “National and international exchanges, networks, partnerships: a new vision for SEE and European history museums”
This round-table may want to share ideas, experiences and suggestions on how to assist the history museums’ networking at national, regional and international level; foster regional approaches and strategies; develop global strategies of partnerships among museums, schools, cultural agencies and centers, ministries of education; develop policies regarding incoming and out-going short-term loans of artifacts. Beyond, this round-table may want to enhance a debate on how history museums can be used as a tool for sustainable development, cultural tourism, social and economic growth.

V. Expected results
- hold a comparative exchange of views on the role of National History Museums today: mission statements, strategies, purposes and objectives
- present recommendations on strategies, methods and policies conducive to the reform, transformation and development of history museums
- foster a better awareness, comprehension and knowledge of the educational and civic role of history national museums in promoting a reflexive and critical understanding of History, as well as intercultural dialogue.
- identify new forms of institutional cooperation, exchanges and partnerships between museums within the region and beyond
- identify follow-up actions and flagship programmes activities to be supported and promoted in SEE and make recommendations to UNESCO in this regard

VI. Participants
The conference will comprise museum directors and experts from Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey.

Are also invited directors and high level experts from other European museums, professional institutions or international organizations to allow for exchange of an ideas and practices (Peace Memorial in Caen, Museum of Europe in Brussels, German Historical Museum in Berlin, National Museum of the Risorgimento in Turin, Council of Europe, International Association of Museums of History, ICOM South-East European Regional Alliance).

VII. Working language: English and French (Simultaneous interpretation)

VIII. Date and place of the conference:
- Thessaloniki Museum of Byzantine Culture (first day)
- Thessaloniki Archeological Museum (second day)

IX. Interventions
Experts will be asked to make a 20 mn general presentation, based on their personal professional experience, during one of the four round-tables, in relation to the topic selected. This presentation should allow each expert to present his views and experience, outline challenges encountered, and make proposals for future actions. Besides their personal presentation, experts will be asked to participate in the discussions of all 4 sessions, under the guidance of the moderator. Participants may also want to share in advance a summary/outline of their intervention.
X. Agenda: The final agenda will be finalized before the conference and sent to the participants. Please inform the Museums Secretariat, with copy to the UNESCO Venice Secretariat, if you need any specific audio-visual equipment for the presentation of films, slides, power points, slides.

XI: Accommodation: UNESCO Venice Office and Athos travel agency will arrange for travel tickets and make hotel reservations for participants. The hotel chosen for participants is the City Hotel, 11 Komninon street, Thessaloniki, (tel: 30 2310 269421; fax: 30 2310 274358; email: info@cityhotel.gr; web site: www.cityhotel.gr). Transportation from the Airport to the Hotel will be arranged by the travel agency. Lunches and dinners will be offered to the participants.

XII. General Contacts:

- UNESCO Hellenic National Commission

  Mrs Ekaterini Papachristopoulou-Tzitzikosta, President of the Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO, Tel (30-210) 368 23 85, Fax: (30-210) 368 23 84, Email: unescogr@mfa.gr

- UNESCO Venice Office

  Mr Anthony Krause, UNESCO, Culture Programme Specialist, Tel + 39 041 260 15 58, Fax: + 39 041 528 99 95, Email: a.krause@unesco.org

  Mrs Laura de Stefani, UNESCO, Culture Senior Assistant, Tel + 39 041 260 15 36, Fax: + 39 041 528 99 95, Email: l.destefani@unesco.org

- Archeological Museum of Thessaloniki, Manoli Andronikou Street 6, Thessaloniki, Greece (website: www.amth.gr)

  Contact: Mrs Polyxeni Adam-Veleni, Director, Tel: 00 30 2310 830538, Fax: 00 30 2310 831037, email: pveleni@culture.gr; info.amth@culture.gr

- Museum of Byzantine Culture, Leoforos Stratou Street 2, Thessaloniki, Greece (website: www.mbp.gr)

  Contact: Mr Dimitris Nalpantis, Acting Director, Tel: 00 30 2313 306 400, Fax: 0030 2310 838 597, Email: dnalpantis@culture.gr; mbp@culture.gr
Provisional Agenda of the Conference

Sunday 17 October 2010

Arrival of participants, transfer from airport to City Hotel

Dinner (tbc)

Monday 18 October 2010

Venue: Thessaloniki Museum of Byzantine Culture

08h30: departure from hotel (20 minutes walk)

09h00 Welcoming and registration of participants

9h15-10h15 Opening addresses

- Mrs Ekaterini Papachristopoulou-Tzitzikosta, President of the Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO
- Mr Engelbert Ruoss, Director of the UNESCO Venice Office
- Mr Pavlos Yeroulanos, Minister of Culture and Tourism (tbc)
- Mr Georgios Chatzikostandinou, Secretary General, Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace (tbc)
- Mrs Maria Andreadaki Vlazaki, Director of the General Directorate of Antiquities
- Mr Dimitrios Nalpantis, Acting Director, Thessaloniki Museum of Byzantine Culture
- Mrs Polyxeni Adam-Veleni, Director, Thessaloniki Archeological Museum

10h15-10h30: Coffee Break

Session 1: “National History museums today: mission statements, goals and objectives, strategies”

10h30-10h40: Opening remarks by Mr Philippos Mazarakis (Greece), President of the International Association of Museums of History, Moderator of the session

10h40-11h00: Mr. Dario Disegni (Italy), Board member of the National Museum of the Risorgimento (Turin) and Head of Cultural Relations, Compagnia di San Paolo

11h00-11h20: Mrs Tsvetana Kyoseva, (Bulgaria), Director of the National History Museum of Bulgaria

11h20-11h40: Mrs Barbara Ravnik (Slovenia), Director, National Museum of Slovenia

11h40-12h00: Mrs Matea Brstilo Resetar, (Croatia), Curator, National History Museum of Croatia
12h00-12h20: Mrs Ana Stolić (Serbia), Director of the National History Museum of Serbia

12h20-13h30: Discussion (Moderator: Mr Philippos Mazarakis)

13h30-14h45 Lunch (location: Museum of Byzantine Culture)

Session 2: “National history museums, education and intercultural dialogue: new perspectives on history and memory in Europe”

15h00-15h10: Opening remarks by Mr Jean-Pierre Titz, Head of History Education Division, Council of Europe, Moderator of the session

15h10-15h30: Mrs Nataša Jovičić (Croatia), Director of the Jasenovac Memorial Museum

15h30-15h50: Mrs Elena Ploșniță (Moldova), Scientific Secretary, National Museum of Archaeology and History

15h50-16h10: Mr Benoît Remiche (Belgium), Secretary-General and Artistic Director, Museum of Europe

16h10-16h30: Mr Bojan Stojnić, (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Assistant Director, Archives of Republic of Srpska

16h30-16h45: Coffee Break

16h45-18h15: Discussion (Moderator: Jean-Pierre Titz)

18h15-18h30: Concluding comments by Mrs Mirjana Nincovska (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Programme Director, National History Museum

18h30-19h30: visit of the Museum for Byzantine Culture

20h30: Dinner at the Macedonia Palace Hotel, offered by the Deputy Mayor of Thessaloniki for Culture and Youth, Mr Vasilios Gakis

Tuesday 19 October 2010

Venue: Archeological Museum of Thessaloniki

Session 3: “Transforming national history museums in modern cultural institutions: education, communication, research”

9h00-9h10: Opening remarks by Mr. Ernest Oberlander Tarnoveanu (Romania), Director of the National History Museum of Romania, Moderator of the session

9h10-9h30: Mr. Stéphane Grimaldi (France), Director, Caen Memorial /Center for Peace History

9h30-9h50: Mr. Murat Ertugrul Gulyaz (Turkey), Director, Nevşehir Museum

9h50-10h10: Mrs Ulrike Kretzschmar (Germany), Director of Exhibition Department, German Historical Museum
10h10-10h30: Mrs Demetra Theodotou (Cyprus), Curator, Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia
10h30-10h45: Coffee Break
10h45-12h00: Discussion (Moderator: Mr. Ernest Oberlander Tarnoveanu)
12h00-13h00: Visit of the Archeological Museum
13h00-14h30 Lunch (location Museum)
Session 4: “National and international exchanges, networks, partnerships: a new vision for SEE and European history museums”
14h30-14h40: Opening remarks by Ms. Mila Popovic Zivancevic (Serbia), Chair of ICOM SEE Regional Alliance, Moderator of the session
14h40-15h00: Mrs Marica Filipović (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Deputy-Director of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina
15h00-15h20: Mrs Angeliki Kottaridi, Head of Department for Museums, 17th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities
15h20-15h40: Mr. Pavle Pejovic (Montenegro), Director, National Museum of Montenegro
15h40-16h00: Mrs Daniela Popescu (Romania), President of the Romanian Federation for UNESCO Clubs, Centers and Associations
16h00-16h20: Mrs Naskou-Perraki (Greece), UNESCO Chair in intercultural policy for an active citizenship and solidarity, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece
16h20-16h40: Coffee break
16h45-18h00: Discussion (Moderator: Mrs Mila Popovic Zivancevic)
18h00-18h15: Concluding comments, by Mrs Polyxeni Adam-Veleni, Director of the Thessaloniki Archeological Museum
18h15-18h30: General Conclusions (Moderators, Anthony Krause, UNESCO Venice Office)
20h30: Dinner offered by the General Secretary of the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace, Mr Georgios Hatzikostandinou (location tbc)

Wednesday 20 October 2010

Morning: Visit of the Royal Tombs of Vergina (Tomb of King Philip II), Archeological site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (80 km of Thessaloniki)
8h00: Departure from City Hotel
9h15: Arrival in Vergina and visit of the site
11h30: Departure from Vergina
12h45: Arrival in Thessaloniki, transfers from hotel to airport

Afternoon: Departure of participants