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META-MUSEUM

*Moving Emotions towards confidence in the Transformative
 Appropriation for a Meaningful Understanding of cultural
 heritage: a neuroScientific approach to EUropean Museums*

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DISSEMINATION LEVEL PU - Public SEN - Sensitive

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OTHER

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM	DESCRIPTION
WP	Work Package
CH	Cultural Heritage
DGM	Direzione Generale Musei

FRAMEWORK

1. Reference to Work Package (WP) and tasks as described in the DoA

WP9: Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation

T9.4 Communication to policy makers

2. WP and task objectives

The general goal of the WP is to maximise the impact of the project, by spreading knowledge about its activities and results throughout its whole implementation to various targets, from the academic world to the society and general public. It also supports the dissemination and exploitation of the research findings to inform and involve policymakers at various levels.

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The document concisely presents the main elements that have been identified as fundamental to start dialoguing and working towards the establishment of a network with policymakers. Although provisional, and in its first stages of development with first-year mark approaching, the document outlines the core activities of META-MUSEUM to highlight their potential, and intention, to be poured into policies at a further stage, foreseeing the project progression and results validation.

1 Introduction

Can emotions influence citizens' relationship with Cultural Heritage?

Can emotions be measured?

How can we design a transformative cultural experience capable of increasing citizens' confidence in these difficult times?

META-MUSEUM project seeks to answer these complex questions with the support of neuroscientists, sociologists, heritage experts and the technologies available today.

“Culture, including cultural heritage, plays a crucial role in our democracies and in the lives of individuals. Participation in culture and cultural heritage, creativity and the arts have a positive impact on people of all ages and backgrounds; it enhances people’s quality of life, and improves the health and overall well-being of individuals and communities” [10].

Today, museums and cultural sites face multiple challenges, finding out ways and solutions capable of:

- stimulating reflection and growth in individuals;
- transmitting cultural heritage in a democratic and participatory manner (recognizing that CH belongs to everyone [1];
- ensuring accessibility and inclusion in the enjoyment of cultural heritage;
- designing transformative experiences that can also attract people not used to visiting cultural heritage sites.

European and international frameworks already worked and reflected on these matters [2,3,4], promoting recommendations and guidelines, stressing accessibility, inclusion and participation as key elements to ensure the abovementioned right [5,6,7,8,9].

It is not enough to present new knowledge and information, although in an engaging way, but also to generate emotional responses able to ensure memorisation and personal re-elaboration.

How can experiments conducted within the framework of MM support these challenging tasks in practice?

Currently, following the heated debate on the definition of contemporary museums and their active role in society, cultural operators are seeking new approaches to an increasingly critical and demanding public that progressively became aware of its rights.

Cultural experiences shall thus be democratic, participatory, varied, inclusive and appealing.

The public must evolve from the passive recipient to an active protagonist in interpreting heritage in such a way that highlights its coexistent transformational and transformative nature.

During the project scheduled measurement campaigns in museums, experiments there conducted to monitor the intellectual and emotional (physical) responses in visitors revealed

considerable mental effort with little emotional involvement. If it is true – and it is true – that what strikes us will be remembered not only more vividly but also more prone to resurface in the most diverse occasions in life; the cultural experience should not be limited to the acquisition of information from a source, yet the occasion to work that knowledge into reflection through the experience of Cultural Heritage. This is still a difficult approach to take, as it requires the extrapolation of the values of heritage, possible more than just the information related to it.

Finally, the issues of accessibility and inclusion are only apparently resolved, but the more complex question of true personal appropriation of one's heritage lingers in the background: walking the path of emotional involvement can reveal effective solutions for true inclusion.

Policy makers have a great responsibility in guiding actions in this direction, identifying new approaches and methods, new themes and trends in order to implement effective actions.

They can also guide the self-assessment of cultural entities, providing best practices, evaluation criteria and guidelines.

Finally, they can promote new training programmes and new professional skills.

2 Policy Recommendations

As mentioned above, “Culture, including cultural heritage, plays a crucial role in our democracies and in the lives of individuals. Participation in culture and cultural heritage, creativity and the arts has a positive impact on people of all ages and backgrounds; it enhances people’s quality of life, and improves the health and overall well-being of individuals and communities” [10].

But how can we ensure that this crucial role is played out to its full extent and potential, how can we promote participation, including and reaching all people, tangibly improving their quality of life, their well-being and their attitude towards the future?

It is worth mentioning that despite decades of policies aimed at the promotion of access to culture in the name of its democratization and the significant investments towards it to expand and diversify the audience Cultural Heritage, outcomes are, at best, very modest: in most European countries, over 60% of the population does not engage in any cultural activities outside the home [11].

Obviously, the field of cultural heritage communication is a very complex one, where the cultural, economic geographical and political context have a decisive influence, so guidelines must be capable of being tailored to the specific environment, then carefully implemented.

From the point of view of a project such as META-MUSEUM, methodological guidelines can be provided to enable cultural professionals to perform their delicate task to the best of their ability.

Experimental results obtained in an ecological environment (i.e., not in a laboratory, but out in the real world) indicate that Cultural Heritage is considered by both cultural professionals and citizens a source of information about the past - or as an occasion of aesthetic appreciation, much less as a promoter of identity, sense of belonging, and, above all, critical reflection. The links between the past and the present are often underestimated by both professionals and visitors, missing out on the chance to induce in the public the abovementioned effects.

The project, which tests solutions for co-creation, actualisation and identification, is developing a basic methodology (common to different types of heritage) to present it to citizens in an innovative way.

2.1 Who can benefit from the project

Given the diversity and complexity represented by the different political bodies of the various European countries involved in the project, it was decided to focus primarily on the Italian case. However, the document envisages reflections and recommendations from other Consortium countries, including Associated Partners (museums and cultural foundation) in the next Policy Brief, planned for the end of the project. This document aims to reach authorities responsible for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, including policymakers and bank cultural foundations.

For example, in Italy, accessibility in museums has evolved from an approach focused on physical and sensory barriers to a broader one that also takes into account other dimensions such as social, financial, cultural concerns. Since the 1970s, comprehensive legislation and guidelines – such as the 2001 Ministerial Decree, the 2008 Guidelines on overcoming architectural barriers and the 2018 P.E.B.A. plans – have established advanced standards for improving the cultural experiences on topics related to orientation, usability, communication, and visitor comfort. Although these measures demonstrate Italy's strong commitment, accessibility policies are still often limited to physical aspects, while qualitative, emotional and experiential dimensions are less developed.

In the Italian context, the first type of target identified by Partners is directly tied to Cultural Ministries: the *Direzione Generale Musei* (DGM), as part of the Italian Ministry of Culture, which coordinates the management, use and communication policies of Italian national museums, developing and promoting strategic guidelines for the conservation and enhancement of the nationally significant CH. At national and regional level, DGM defines the directives that influence the museum system and its cultural offerings. It is responsible for overseeing the entire national museum system and coordinating its peripheral branches, ensuring the uniform application of management, use and communication policies, and it is therefore a policy maker of great importance.

Glancing at the local level, the themes and challenges META-MUSEUM is now dedicating itself to, have already been subject of interest by multiple *Direzione Regionale Musei* (regional direction of national museums), peripheral authorities of the Italian Ministry of Culture. Laudable examples of this effort that are considered worthy of mention can be encountered across the North-West such as in Emilia Romagna, Liguria, Lombardia and Toscana respective DRMs.

Thanks to innovative studies of visitor behaviour, projects results can enrich the current guidelines and actions about CH accessibility, with operational recommendations and new solutions for those who manage and create cultural experiences, inside and outside museums.

In the frame of CH and museum professionals long-term training, regional authorities such as *Direzione Regionale Musei* shall establish programmes and courses on strategic themes addressed by META-MUSEUM project, to raise awareness of the transformative nature of CH and boost the path to personal appropriation through both emotional and cognitive responses elicited by visitors.

In the next phases more policymakers will be identified in other represented countries in the Consortium.

Finally, the Consortium will have to evaluate the possible involvement of ICOM (International Council of Museums), being the authority that defines policies on specific issues of Museology, and sets universal standards and principles to manage CH and museums.

2.2 Specific outcomes

The theoretical framework derived from the project includes **recommendations** from which guidelines can be developed with the support of political actors.

The researchers believe that **the methodology that will be fully developed at the end of the project** – which focuses on researching heritage values, their shared interpretation and their actualisation at a personal and collective level – can be very useful for designing cultural experiences. In particular, **the organisation of interdisciplinary workshops** (including not only the traditional disciplines studying the Cultural Heritage but also psychologists, sociologists, neuroscientists, informatics and so on) with the participation of scholars, stakeholders and users is a tool that the team is testing and fine-tuning.

The project recognises that new professional skills are required in a constantly evolving general (political and social) context, where the contribution of cultural heritage to the formation of aware and mature citizens is increasingly pressing.

Initiatives of educational nature, that recognise the need for new professional skills, are also a way of responding to the ever-changing challenges of the contemporary world.

3 Evidence and analysis

As stated by ICOM, museums are places “offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing” [12], clearly a key role highly relevant to both individuals and society. However, museums and other CH institutions still struggle to realize this vision – particularly when it comes to measuring and understanding the impacts of such approaches. As widely recognized by international organizations, the lack of data, measurements, and monitoring on public responses has posed major barriers to advancing the recognition and importance of cultural heritage [13]. META-MUSEUM can contribute closing this gap through its validated experiments, collecting data and observing responses to different solutions, and providing cultural operators **and institutions with evidence-based tools to build cultural experiences capable of stimulating active participation (co-creation) while also welcoming and absorbing perspectives and contributions from visitors.**

Carried-out experiments proved of even greater value thanks to choice of holding said campaigns in different environments (i.d. museums, hospitals, laboratory and urban environment), an occasion to deeply observe visitors’ behaviour, responses, limits and difficulties in the hazy triangulation between the subject, the environment and CH.

The cultural disciplines, supported by social and neuroscientific expertise, allow better understanding of these complex processes. More reliable and refined assessment and monitoring systems will be derived, as well as a methodological approach to develop discursive, critical, and interactive interfaces between citizens and CH.

4 Project identity

Project name	Moving Emotions towards confidence in the Transformative Appropriation for a Meaningful Understanding of cultural heritage: a neuroScientific approach to EUropean Museums
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Website	https://meta-museum-project.eu/
Social media	Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/MetaMuseumProject Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/company/meta-museum/ Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/meta_museum_project/

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