

Bokrijk, April 30 2020



Dear colleagues, dear friends

We hope to find you, your families, colleagues and museums doing well. We wish you all the best in these challenging times.

In accordance with the ICOM mission that 'museums have no borders, they have a network' as with the spread of the COVID 19-pandemia across our countries the Board of AEOM has decided to publish a COVID 19 report and send it to the directors and those in charge of our member open air museums in Europe: 'The reopening and managing of open air museums in Europe post COVID 19 lockdown'.

In the report attached you will find some general guidelines and measures to help open air museums navigate in the direction of reopening and most importantly, to successfully manage and operate that reopening. These tips and suggestions are not carved in stone. They have to be seen in the light of national guidelines, will depend upon the unique situation of our museums as well as the mental climate of our staff and visitors.

At the end of the report we share some interesting sources and resources. We invite you to circulate within this group all that can be of interest of and/or use for all of us.

Wishing you all the best, keep safe

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Hilde Schoefs', is written over a horizontal line.

Hilde Schoefs

president Association of European Open Air Museums (AEOM)

in the name of all of the Board of AEOM:

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Association of European Open Air Museums

AEOM Report

The reopening and managing of open air museums in Europe post COVID 19 lockdown

This report aims to focus briefly and as clear as possible on the steps open air museums can take

- to prepare practically and financially for a safe reopening;
- to maximize their efforts through cooperation;
- to advocate for a safe reopening with their national or regional governments;
- to make a success out of the reopening.

INTRODUCTION

This report is not written in a typical report format. We have chosen to write it primarily in brief paragraphs and bullet points, preferring clarity above eloquence.

This report contains no spelled out analysis of the different aspects it tackles. Let there be no misunderstanding however, the tips and guidelines we suggest are based on research and analysis, the most important which you can find in the (re)sources section below.

Nonetheless the situation for every open air museum will be different. Some will be urged to reopen, others might have to lobby to do so. Both museums and visitors will have to adhere to the government guidelines.

This report focusses on open air museums in Europe. The strategies mentioned can benefit open air museums elsewhere as well as other types of museums and attractions, they are however not taken into account as a target group in writing this report.

THE POWER OF COOPERATION

This report in itself is an example of how cooperation between colleagues and partners can lead to benefits for all involved.

Some thoughts and guidelines:

- Cooperation can only be effective when you know your own needs and wants as an organisation. Make your own homework first.
- Identify the partners that share the same needs and wants on a local, regional and national level. See whether you can join or even coin mutual interest groups around coping with covid 19. Some of these interest groups might be existing and self-evident, for eg. the national ICOM affiliations. Dare however to think outside of the framework you already know: the local zoo might have more in common with you at this point of time than a museum on art

history. Visitor attractions, tourist organisations, forums of entrepreneurs are now more than ever viable partners.

- There is no place for being greedy in cooperating, sharing information and aligning. Be open to inviting everyone who can be included. Be generous with information and insights, this is not the time for 'quid pro quo'-thinking (as if ever). The phrase 'sharing is caring' owes its popularity to the validity of its essence.
- Clever cooperation can address several goals:
 - o to identify, share and discuss information, opportunities, challenges, practicalities regarding reopening;
 - o to agree on a common set of measures, a campaign, ...;
 - o to lobby with the authorities on what is important for one or more groups of partners as a whole;
 - o to maximize joint efforts at a lower price;
 - o ...

Some actual practices by open air museums in Europe:

- cooperation with large visitor attractions all over the country on defining a common set of practical measures concerning reopening;
- cooperation in different groups (museums/heritage/culture + visitor attractions + tourism), bringing these groups together (!) so that for eg visitor measures are quasi identical and hence clear and manageable for all organisations involved, their employees and visitors;
- lobbying with tourism organisations to maximally promote tourism in your own country/region;
- convincing the government on a visitor campaign paid for by the government because the measures communicated by the campaign have been agreed on by for eg all the museums and/or visitor attractions.

EXAMPLES OF PROTOCOLS OF PRACTICAL MEASURES FOR A SAFE REOPENING

The examples below are existing practices and measures that were brought to our attention by AEOM members and fellows. It speaks for itself that these measures are guidelines and will have to be adapted to the specific conditions of the museum and the guidelines by the national government.

What we have learned so far is that staff (and once in a while also those in charge) are in first instance inclined to think in terms of 'cannots'. 'No, we cannot close the museum shop.' 'No, we can't have people pay their parking ticket in advance.' 'No, we can't disinfect the touch tables after every use'. That is why we invite you to read the guidelines below with an open mind and to ask your staff to come up with smart solutions. It is an illusion to think that we will be able to reopen, keep on doing what we have always done and pretend nothing has changed. The same old won't apply in the present circumstances. Now more than ever leadership is needed, and the confidence that our staff has the potential, given our trust and a clear assignment, to think in terms of what is possible. The financial consequences of that which is possible is another matter.

For the MUSEUM

- The museum and the government communicate about the protocol (preferably including other day attractions as well): press, campaign, ...
- Museums communicate their visitor protocol on the website, at the entrance and at various places in the museum.
- If updates are made to these protocols, they will be communicated as soon as possible.

- Make sure that everyone can keep 1.5 meters apart at every point of their visit, from the parking lot to the restroom and back.
- Wherever relevant, indicate and guard the maximum number of visitors that may be in a room at the same time. The general guideline is a maximum of 1 visitor per 10 square meters of available (!) surface. For some countries this may be different.
- Ensure maximum hygiene both for staff as well as for visitors.
- A bit of humour goes a long way.

For VISITORS

- Check the website for the latest information.
- Come to the attraction only with the people you live with (for eg. with a maximum of 6).
- Group visits and every other group activity are not allowed (many countries: until 31 August 2020).
- Book your visit online in advance, in order that you are sure that you will be able to visit.
- Do not come to the museum if you have a cold or flu symptoms.
- Always follow the directions of the museum and the staff.
- Keep 1.5 meters distance from other visitors or staff.
- Pay only with pin or contactless (pin or mobile) if needed.
- In case of health complaints during the visit, ask the museum staff for assistance.

Arrival

- Advice is to drive directly to and from home and not have local contact, such as when visiting shops and supermarkets.
- Only individual arrival with your own passenger car is possible.
- Only cars with confirmed access are allowed.
- Buses (+ 6 people) are not allowed.
- Parking spaces are arranged in such a way that there is always 1 car space in between.
- Parking is free to avoid payment contact or it is to be paid in advance online.

Admission/entrance

- Net access volumes are calculated, whereby the 1.5 m can be safely secured. 1 visitor per 10m² is generally the norm. To achieve this there are several options, for eg. that visitors are only allowed access when booking a time slot in advance.
- Entry of more than 1 person is only for people who run a joint household.
- Tickets are paid online in advance.
- Arrival times / time slots for access are confirmed.
- No entrance tickets are sold at the entrance.
- No brochures or leaflets are handed out. Visitors can take these for themselves.

Interior spaces

- Metered access to guarantee a maximum of 1 person / 10m² (don't forget to calculate your staff as well!).
- Interior spaces that can't contain 2 persons or that are very touch sensitive one should consider not to open.
- "Traffic lights" for flow control in narrow passages.
- Crossing at less than 10m² is not allowed.
- Staff equipped with disinfectants to clean the interior on a regular basis (for eg every time someone touched a device).

Exterior

- One-way traffic where paths are so narrow that a 1.5m distance is not possible.
- Many a museum is reducing its programming. For eg some museums have chosen to offer 1 obligatory route through the museum that has to be booked online in advance. All other activities that normally take place are in that scenario temporarily not available.

Restrooms

- Metered access (toilet miss or gates) is arranged for public toilets so that the number of users is limited.
- Additional toilets (eg Dixi, or festival toilets) are placed in the outdoor area for individual use.
- The toilet room is cleaned more often and with extra hygiene measures.
- Install automatic faucets, hand dryers, toilet roll holders, toilet flushing where possible.
- Pay attention to the local regulations and keep a distance of 1.5 meters.

Museum shops

- Store protocol applicable
- Make sure that everyone can keep 1.5 meters apart, but also in front of the entrance
- In shops, indicate the maximum number of customers that can be in the store at the same time.
- The guideline is a maximum of 1 customer per 10 square meters of retail floor space.
- Only touch the product you need.
- Do your shopping with your company, keep children near you.
- Stand behind the stripe of tape until it is your turn.
- Pay contactless or by debit card.

Catering

- In many countries the catering industry will be the last to start up again. In other countries cafes and restaurants haven't been closed at all. Again, the specific measures for catering in the museum will have to be in accordance with government guidelines.
- Where catering is possible
 - o take-out
 - o eat outside with tables at a distance
 - o no buffets
- Keep 1.5 meters away
- Pay contactless or with pin.
- Pay extra attention to the hygiene regarding the pin automat (cotton earplugs seem to be a popular practice to avoid direct contact with the automat).

For STAFF

- Communication is key! Involve your staff, inform them, listen to them. Not only at the onset but regularly on a continual basis.
- Make sure your staff feels safe.
- Make sure your staff knows why the safety regulations are so important.
- Have your staff more than ever coached in positive assertiveness towards visitors (and sometimes even each other). Supermarkets and garden centres report a growing amount of verbally uttered frustration and irritation by their visitors.

- Equip your staff with the best and the most comfortable protective gear. For eg. a local supermarket gave their rack fillers a fluorescent vest saying 'We're all in this together. Will you also keep 1,5 meter distance?!'.
- Make sure that people with customer contact measure their temperature every morning (so that customer safety is guaranteed).

HOW THE ABOVE CAN HELP IN ADVOCATING REOPENING YOUR MUSEUM

From what we hear some of you are asked to reopen on short notice and find themselves grappling to realise the necessary preventative measures, while others are waiting for government approval to do so.

Let's be clear, safety should prevail first and foremost. But if health conditions are going in the right direction, it can help to convince authorities that you are ready to reopen.

Top tips on convincing your government that you are in the possibility of safely reopening

- Partner up with a relevant and significant amount of organisations, preferably across sectors. For eg. all museums, all large museums, all large visitor attractions, all tourist organisations, a combination of the previous, ...
- Set up a comprehensive yet concise plan for reopening all of the partner organisations along the same guidelines summarised in ca. 10 bullet points that makes it clear you have done your homework as a group of partners, i.e. that you have a clear vision on reopening in such a way that it will be clear for visitors too.
- Deliver this to your Minister of Culture and/or other relevant Ministries (Tourism, ...).
- Inform the press of your plan.
- Ask the government to back up your plan by launching a campaign to inform the public about the shared set of measures when visiting museums and day attractions.
- As the saying goes, the proof of the pudding is in the eating: prepare as thorough as possible. You have only one chance to do this right!

HOW TO SURVIVE FINANCIALLY?

As goes for all of the above, there is no one size fits all approach. The following are examples from open air museums across Europe we have heard of.

- Fundraising/crowdfunding
 - o Make your calculations.
 - o Inform all the relevant parties of your predicament: how much do you need and what for?
 - o Have others speak up for you.
 - o Keep your audience informed on where you stand.
 - o Be sure to thank all those who sympathise and donate.
- Revising your business plan
 - o Slim down on the foreseen programming (regular programme, exhibitions, museum events, ...).

- Changing opening hours to receive more visitors. One might think of providing a special time slot for visitors at risk (for eg 65+).
- Investigate whether you as a museum have to pay for orders, activities and events that you arranged for but that can't take place. Due to the exceptional character of these circumstances it might legally be acceptable not to do so.
- Offer your visitors a downsized programme (for eg 1 thematic route) that is manageable in terms of safety, hygiene and staff.
- Reduce the ticket price to an acceptable level seen from the visitor's perspective.
- Investing in your biggest fans = securing the future
 - Make your annual friends/fans/subscribers a priority.
 - Offer those who already bought a 2020 pass, a free pass for 2021 as they won't be able to enjoy their current annual pass as intended.
 - Think of extra measures that make them stand out, for eg the possibility to prebook online before others, free parking, ...

No need to say the approaches above are only the tip of the iceberg and can be cleverly combined.

WE ARE OPEN, NOW WHAT?

Keep going strong! Good luck!

Let's keep each other updated on relevant information and practices.

SOURCES/RESOURCES

ICOM

- dossier on COVID19 for museums worldwide
- <https://icom.museum/en/covid-19/>

NEMO | Network of European Museum Organisations

- survey, map and articles on covid 19 in museums across Europe
- www.ne-mo.org

AiM | Association of Independent Museums (UK)

- dossier on covid 19 and museums
- www.aim-museums.co.uk/coronavirus-resources

AAM | American Alliance of Museums (USA)

- dossier on covid 19 and museums
- normally members only (paid subscription) – the covid 19 section is for free and quite impressive !
- www.aam-us.org/category/covid-19
- section on reopening your museum: www.aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/preparing-to-reopen

AMaGA | Australian Museums and Galleries Association

- dossier on covid 19 and museums
- www.amaga.org.au/news/covid19-information-amaga-members

Colleen Dilenschneider | Know your own Bone – IMPACTS

- market research and the behavioral economics surrounding cultural organizations
- in casu data & analysis on COVID19
- www.colleendilen.com/category/covid-19-updates

GENSLER RESEARCH INSTITUTE

- Mission: to Create a Better World Through the Power of Design
- extensive dossier on COVID 19 – out of our ‘box’, hence quite interesting!
- www.gensler.com/design-responds-to-a-changing-world

Articles

- Mike Sarna, ‘Museums moving past the current crisis’ 23 April 2020: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/museums-moving-past-current-crisis-mike-sarna/?trackingId=TP8FlhmKccR03cl1b97EZQ%3D%3D>
- Brian Stromquist, ‘Taking Care of Each Other in the Post-Pandemic Open Office’, 10 April 2020: www.gensler.com/research-insight/blog/community-in-the-post-pandemic-open-office
- Andras Szanto, ‘People Need Art in Times of Crisis. That’s Why Museums Should Be Among the First Institutions to Reopen for Business—Here’s How’, 14 April 2020: <https://news.artnet.com/opinion/andras-szanto-op-ed-reopening-museums-1832439>