

Recommendation concerning the Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone

14 December 1960

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, meeting in Paris from 14 November to 15 December 1960, at its eleventh session,

Considering that one of the functions of the Organization, as laid down in its Constitution, is to give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture, to collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual understanding of peoples by instituting collaboration among them to advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity without regard to race, sex or any distinctions, economic or social, and to maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge,

Considering that museums can effectively contribute towards accomplishing these tasks,

Considering that museums of all kinds are a source of enjoyment and instruction,

Considering also that museums, by preserving works of art and scientific material and presenting them to the public, help to disseminate a knowledge of the various cultures and thus promote mutual understanding among nations,

Considering in consequence that every effort should be made to encourage all sections of the population, and especially the working classes, to visit museums,

Considering that with the progress in the industrial organization of the world, people have more leisure, and that such leisure should be used for the benefit and the cultural advancement of all, Recognizing the new social conditions and needs which the museums must take into account in order to carry out their permanent educational mission and satisfy the cultural aspirations of the workers,

Having before it proposals concerning the most effective means of rendering museums accessible to everyone, constituting item 17.4.1 of the agenda of the session,

Having decided at its tenth session that proposals on the question should be the subject of international regulation by way of a recommendation to Member States,

Adopt this Recommendation on the fourteenth day of December 1960.

The General Conference recommends that Member States should apply the following provisions by taking whatever legislative or other steps may be required to give effect, within their respective territories, to the principles and norms set forth in this Recommendation.

The General Conference recommends that Member States should bring this Recommendation to the knowledge of the authorities and bodies concerned with museums, and of the museums themselves.

The General Conference recommends that Member States should report to it, on dates and in a manner to be determined by it, on the action they have taken to give effect to this Recommendation.

I. Definition

1. For the purposes of this Recommendation, the term 'museum' shall be taken to mean any permanent establishment administered in the general interest for the purpose of preserving, studying, enhancing by various means and, in particular, exhibiting to the public for its delectation and instruction, groups of objects and specimens of cultural value: artistic, historical, scientific and technological collections, botanical and zoological gardens and aquariums.

II. General principles

2. Member States should take all appropriate steps to ensure that the museums on their territory are accessible to all without regard to economic or social status.

3. To that end, account should be taken, in selecting the measures to be applied, of the different forms of museum administration that may exist in individual Member States. The measures might vary, for example, according to whether museums are owned and administered by the State or whether, even if not State owned, they receive regular or occasional financial assistance from the State, or whether the State participates in their management in a scientific, technical or administrative capacity.

III. Material arrangements in and admission to museums

4. The collections should be made easy for all types of people to appreciate by a clear form of presentation, by the systematic placing of notices or labels giving concise information, by the publication of guide books and folders which provide visitors with such explanations as they require and by the organization-of regular guided visits accompanied by a commentary adapted to the, various categories of visitors; the guides should be properly qualified persons, preferably appointed through the agency of the bodies referred to in paragraph 16 of this Recommendation; discreet use may be made of apparatus for the reproduction of recorded commentaries.

5. Museums should be open every day and at hours convenient for all categories of visitors, particular account being taken of workers' leisure time. They should be provided with a sufficiently large supervisory staff to permit of a rota system so that the museum can remain open every day without interruption-subject to local conditions and customs-as well as every evening after working hours. They should be installed with the necessary equipment for lighting, heating, etc.

6. Museums should be easily accessible, and should be made as attractive as possible, with a measure of comfort. Provided that the character of the establishment is respected and that visits to the collections are not disturbed there-by, lounges, restaurants, cafes

and the like should be provided for the public, preferably within the precincts of the museum (in gardens, on terraces, in suitable basements, etc.) or in the immediate vicinity.

7. Admission should be free whenever possible. In cases where admission is not always free and where it is considered necessary to maintain a small admission fee, even if only a token charge, admission to every museum should be free during at least one day a week, or for an equivalent period.

8. Where an admission fee is charged, it should be waived for persons in low-income groups and for members of large families in those countries in which there exist official methods of identifying these groups.

9. Special facilities should be provided to encourage regular visits, such as reduced subscription fees for a given period entitling the subscriber to an unlimited number of entries to a particular museum or group of museums.

10. Free admission should whenever possible be granted to organized parties -whether of school-children or adults-taking part in educational and cultural programmes, and also to members of the museum or of the associations mentioned in paragraph 17 of this Recommendation.

IV. Publicity for museums

11. Member States should, through the intermediary of either the local authorities or of their own cultural relations or tourist services, and in the context of national education and international relations, do everything in their power to encourage increased visits to museums and to exhibitions arranged therein.

12. (a) Member States should urge national or regional tourist agencies to make it one of their main objectives to encourage increased visits to museums and to devote part of their activities and resources to that end.

(b) Museums should be invited to make regular use of the services of those agencies and to associate them with their own efforts to extend their social and cultural influence.

V. Place and role of museums in the community

13. Museums should serve as intellectual and cultural centers in their own localities. They should therefore contribute to the intellectual and cultural life of the community, which in turn should be given the opportunity of taking part in the activities and development of the museums. This should apply in particular to museums situated in small towns and villages and whose importance is often out of proportion to their size.

14. Close cultural relations should be established between museums and groups in the community, such as professional organizations, trade unions, and social services in industrial and business enterprises.

15. Co-operation between museums and radio and television services and undertakings should also be established or improved so that museum exhibits can be used for the

