

Second Call for Conference Papers

# National Museums in a Changing Europe

12-14 December 2012

A Conference of the Eunamus Consortium at the Central European University,  
Budapest

Conference of the Eunamus research consortium studying 'National Museums, Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past, and the European Citizen' <http://www.eunamus.eu/>

This conference is an opportunity to bring together researchers studying national museums and professionals responsible for taking these institutions forwards. It offers an opportunity to consider the past and present, but with the aim of debating the future. The conference considers holistically the role of the national museum in the context of change. Researchers, museum and cultural policy professionals, and postgraduate students, are invited to submit abstracts of maximum 300 words 21<sup>st</sup> October **2012** to [eunamus@le.ac.uk](mailto:eunamus@le.ac.uk). Please include contact details and affiliation.

The first call produced an excellent response in many areas and we are now seeking further papers to enrich and diversify the papers covered at the conference. Proposals for papers are welcome from every part of Europe, and particularly from Western Europe which was underrepresented in the response to the First Call.

The conference also welcomes delegates interested in the topic who do not wish to present a formal paper but would like to contribute to the discussion and debate. To register your interest, please email [registration\\_eunamus\\_bp@pasts.ceu.hu](mailto:registration_eunamus_bp@pasts.ceu.hu)

The conference will be shaped around the following questions:

- How do national museums respond to the challenges **political, economic and social change** in Europe?
- How can national museums be more **responsive** to the needs of changing audiences?
- How are national museums redefining the **nature, borders and futures of Europe**?
- How should the institutional **inheritance** of national museums (purpose, culture, philosophy, etc.) shape their future role?
- How do the **historical narratives** and **material collections** of national museums contribute to division and **contestation**? How do they, or might they, **build bridges** between nations and communities?
- How have national museums been instrumentalised in government **policy**? How have they become **socially active**?
- How do national museums contribute to the **values, perceptions and identities of citizens**?

- In a changing Europe, how can national museums contribute to **greater social cohesion**? How can the stories national museums tell and the treasures they display, be mobilised to **build connections** across Europe?

Central to this conference is a dialogue between museum professionals, professional organisations, policy makers and university researchers. While academic researchers can operate outside of the professional and institutional constraints that shape practice, the role of national museums in building greater European cohesion can only be developed within a framework of energetic, proactive professionalism. *National Museums in a Changing Europe* provides a forum for debate and dialogue between those who study national museums and those who daily shape these institutions and who are charged with taking these institutions forward.

Eunamus, a European-funded research consortium, brings together participants from across Europe to consider how national museums and their uses of the past, might contribute to European cohesion. In 2010, when Eunamus began its research, the challenges to cohesion seemed to arise from population migration, demographic change and nationalism. Two years later, Europe's democratic and economic institutions, and European cooperation more generally, are under extraordinary pressure. As a continent, which more than any other, is composed of autonomous independent states, with a population twice that of North America, in a territorial area no larger than Canada, and with a combined GDP larger than any nation (including the USA and China), Europe's significance in the modern world often eludes its citizens. Given its political complexity, it is inevitable that Europe is in a constant process of change. At times in its history, however, change seems overwhelming. Confidence is then replaced by uncertainty, democracy and the free market face new challenges, and a shared sense of European cultural identity becomes increasingly tested by nationalistic instincts. These periods of great uncertainty have resulted from territorial conflict, political revolution and economic catastrophe. Europe is today situated in one of these vortexes of extreme change, apparently incapable of recovering the stability of just a few years ago.

Historically, national museums have been important players in the negotiation of national and pan-European stability. In the face of mass industrialisation, urbanisation and challenges to national autonomy in the nineteenth-century, museums across Europe engaged in identifying, recording and collecting the tangible characteristics of the nation. Today these museums form a connective tissue that reveals similar modern aspirations, acts of representation, and pasts. In art and science, the global study and representation of culture was established first in Europe; these representations are inherently European. In national museums across Europe, these museums seem to speak of many things but in doing so they also seem to say something about Europe itself. The price of these acts of negotiation and production of symbolic objects has also been the development of national competition and divisive nationalism, contestation over possession, the elevation of particular kinds of art that empowers the richer nations, and an inflexibility in the representation Europe's changing ethnic and religious populations. If Napoleon's acts of possession and representation became the model for Europe's rising cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century, (which became enshrined in the building of national museums across Europe), what role might national museums have in today's Europe where a counter aspiration of beneficial economic and social interdependency holds sway?

The Eunamus consortium is led by: Peter Aronsson, Linköping University, Sweden; Alexandra Bounia, University of the Aegean, Greece; Arne Bugge Amundsen, University of Oslo, Norway; Constantin

Iordachi, Central European University, Hungary; Simon Knell, University of Leicester, UK; Kristin Kuutma, University of Tartu, Estonia; Ilaria Porciani, University of Bologna, Italy; and Dominique Poulot, University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, France.

### **Preliminary programme**

#### **Tuesday 11 December**

Pre-conference museum visits and cultural programme

#### **Wednesday 12 December**

9.00 Welcome

9.30 Round table: National Museums around the World

11.00 Coffee/Tea

11.30 Keynotes/plenary session

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Parallel sessions I

15.30 Coffee/Tea

15.30 – Parallel sessions II

17.00 Plenary report back and discussion

Reception/dinner

#### **Thursday 13 December**

9.00 Keynotes/plenary session

11.00 Coffee/Tea

11.30 Parallel sessions III

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Is there a need for national museums? On the Hungarian National  
Gallery

15.30 Coffee

17.00 Plenary discussion

Conference dinner

## **Friday 14 December**

### **Eunamus final conference: The Cultural Force of National Museums**

This part of the conference brings together policy makers at all levels, museum professionals and Eunamus researchers to discuss five cross-cutting propositions emerging out of this three-year multi-disciplinary transnational project.

9-9.30 Opening

9.30-10.15 National museums are born out of and respond to change

10.15 - 11 National museums mediate and negotiate conflict

11-11.45 National museums provide cultural glue both within and between communities

11.45-12.30 Refreshments

12.30-13.15 National museums increasingly recognize their powerful voice in creating social identities

13.15 -14 National museums must deal with competing demands from their various audiences

14-14.30 Closing words

14.30 Conference closes

All participants (except invited speakers) must take care of accommodation and travel themselves. There will be a minor conference fee to cover receptions, coffee etc.