



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
CULTURAL HERITAGE DIRECTORATE

Survey of the COVID-19 crisis situation in the field of cultural heritage in the Republic of Slovenia

10. 4. 2020

INTERVENTION MEASURES

To promptly and effectively assist the cultural and creative sectors at the national level in the COVID-19 crisis, Slovenia adopted fiscal, social, and economic measures in the so-called Intervention Measures Act to curb the COVID-19 epidemic and mitigate its consequences for citizens and the economy. All measures adopted also apply to NGOs in the field of culture as well as self-employed in the cultural sphere. The measures taken apply from 1 April 2020 to 31 May 2020. If the COVID-19 epidemic is not repealed by 15 May 2020, the expiry date set for 31 May 2020 shall be extended by 30 days.

Measures applicable for supporting cultural and creative sectors are:

- *exemptions from obligatory contributions for pension, health and disability insurance for all employees.* During the period of intervention measures, these contributions are fully covered by the state budget;
- *help in the form of monthly basic income and payment of obligatory insurance for the self-employed in culture, freelance journalists and religious officials* of registered churches or other religious communities – basic income and contributions are covered by the state budget;
- *financial compensation during temporary work restraint ("sickness benefit") is covered by state health insurance company.* The same measure applies to both, the self-employed in culture as well as NGOs from the field;
- reimbursement of salaries where employers are temporarily unable to provide the employees with work (*employees on furlough*; reimbursement is 80% of their usual salary), as well as the exemption from obligatory insurance contributions for such employees. An employer, whose employees are financed from the public subsidy (e.g. an NGO from the cultural sphere) receives a percentage not covered by the subsidy;
- *temporary financial compensation for loss of employment;*
- *regional and other television stations, which are keeping citizens informed, are exempted from paying service of the distribution of TV signal as well as the licence during the COVID-19 epidemic.*

Other measures that directly or indirectly affect the field of cultural heritage are:

- providing access to users through e-services;
- online advice to users;
- facilitating electronic applications (eg. they can be submitted without a secure electronic signature), also for protection consents for interventions on cultural heritage;
- increased purchase of e-books for libraries;
- free access to different e-contents, including textbooks, etc.

CULTURAL HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS – A SURVEY

The Cultural Heritage Directorate at the Ministry of Culture sent *a questionnaire to all cultural heritage organisations* (museums, libraries, archives, institutions for the protection of immovable and intangible cultural heritage).

Questions were related to the operational capacity of public institutions for identifying:

- scope of annual work program implementation (tasks from the annual program which cannot be carried out due to the COVID-19 epidemic; tasks from the annual program that could be carried out (or increased) during this time; other tasks not included in the annual program enabling the use of human and financial resources in a meaningful way);
- scope of working at home, way of monitoring such work;
- need for additional information and communication technology;
- estimation of the loss of financial resources;
- measures to eliminate the impact (already established and planned);
- the situation in the field of outsourcing (micro business, freelancers in the culture field where outsourcing cannot be carried out due to the new circumstances).

A summary of the answers

Cultural heritage organisations (museums, libraries, archives, institutions for the protection of immovable and intangible cultural heritage) differ in the legislation regulating their status (archives, libraries, cultural heritage protection), in the material they are taking care of (documents, publications, movables, immovables), in their organizational form (as part of the government administration, public institutions, even some concessionaires), the founder (state, local communities) and size (from hundreds to less than ten employees).

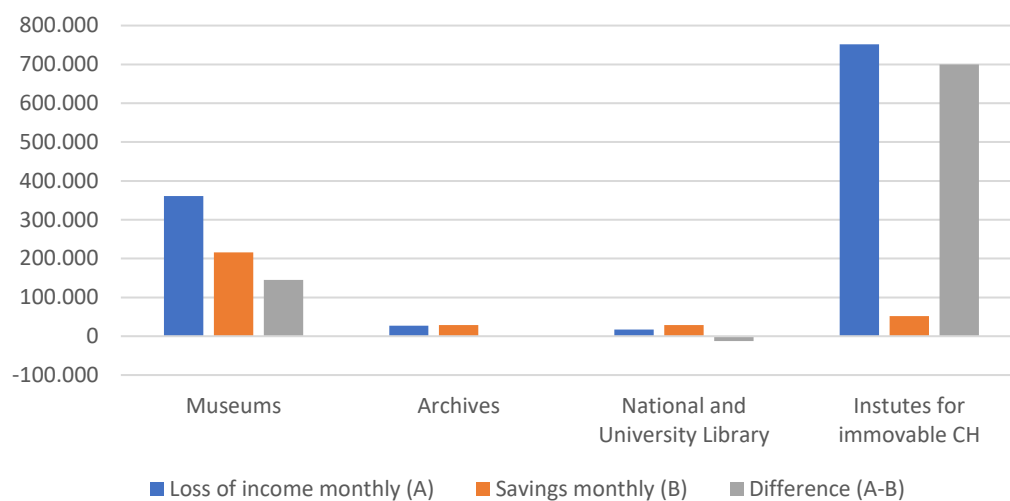
In a normal situation, some state heritage institutions (such as Volčji Potok Arboretum, partly the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia and the Idrija Mercury Heritage Management Centre) financially cover a part of their public service from charging entry fees and similar services. For them, the loss of economic activity represents a significant problem for performing their public service. The current solution of putting employees on furlough (temporary lay-off) does not solve the problem; the Arboretum is a Monument of National Importance and needs to be maintained regardless of COVID restrictions. The same applies to the cultural heritage urgent damage evaluation at the Slovenian side of the border after the Zagreb earthquake, for the conservation interventions on endangered monuments, the archaeological fieldwork related to the construction of the national infrastructure, etc.

For cultural heritage public institutions, salaries are being paid out of the public (mostly state, in some cases also municipal) budget. Municipalities cover the majority of salaries in public libraries (about 75 %) and to a smaller degree in municipal museums (about 25,75%). The latter can lead to difficulties in securing funding in smaller municipalities with liquidity problems.

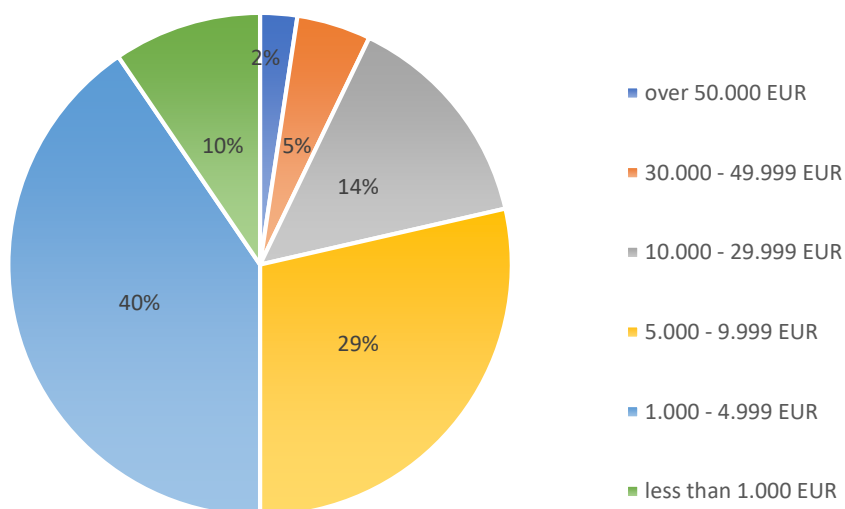
The loss of income from entry fees (museums) and membership fees (libraries) should not have a considerable financial impact on cultural heritage institutions. An exception is Volčji Potok Arboretum, partly also the National Gallery and museums which relay on organised school visits – such as the Slovenian Museum of Natural History and the Technical Museum of Slovenia.

The problem may arise at the implementation of projects involving public institutions by EU financed programs (such as Creative Europe, Horizon 2020, Erasmus +) to which Slovenia has no direct influence.

Monthly loss and savings in cultural heritage institutions (in EUR)



Monthly loss of the income of museums (number of museums with monthly loss)



Due to the epidemic, public institutions have partly redirected their activities to the alternatives offered by new technologies, e-contents, and remote access. This applies mainly to libraries and archives, partially to museums. A good deal of employees works from home; those who carry out emergency tasks and are on-call duties at their places of work abide by precautionary measures. Many institutions have taken advantage of the new situation for completing activities for which there was by now not enough time.



Due to the economic crisis, which will almost certainly occur during and after the epidemic, there is a real risk of a lack of financial and human resources for adequate integrated conservation of cultural heritage. The epidemic and, consequently, the financial crisis have exposed structural difficulties and, in some cases, inconsistencies in the functioning of public service and cultural heritage public institutions.

At the same time, the epidemic and the financial crisis offer an opportunity for a thorough reflection on how to overcome the mentioned problems as quickly and as painless as possible. The phenomenon of the epidemic, among other things, offers the opportunity to develop contemporary (digital) access to cultural heritage, learning about it and enjoying it. Museums and other cultural heritage institutions are investing great efforts in transferring their content and activities online – in the form of 360-degree museum tours or training, offering free access to their collections or archives, teaching materials, activities to collect material on the current situation to preserve the memory of the epidemic and quarantine and other activities to stay in touch with their public. Museums and other cultural heritage institutions have adapted their activities, including the recording and exploration of epidemic-related content. Moreover, they are actively engaged in direct cooperation and exchange, as well as offering support to other institutions from the neighbouring countries that were severely affected by the lockdown.

It is therefore of great significance that the government, in further steps of the preparation of legislative anti-crisis measures, defines measures to mitigate the problems of public institutions, analysed in this report. The existence of a resilient public service is crucial for the long-term

preservation of our culture and heritage in all its manifestations. Finally, public service in the cultural area is a service for all citizens and participates in all important socio-economic activities.

The data was collected at the end of March 2020.

This survey contains only a summary of the analysis prepared by the Cultural Heritage Directorate.