GUIDELINES

for building bridges between

YOUTH AND MUSEUMS

October 2020

Guidelines for Building Bridges Between Youth and Museums.

These guidelines are addressed to museum professionals and youth workers who are interested in finding new ways to bring youth and museums closer.

The idea for these guidelines comes from concerns in the museum sector about youths' lack of interest in museums. Youth institutions backed up the idea of generating guidelines by creating a space for reflection on existing challenges and for creative thinking about strategies for overcoming barriers to bringing youth and museums closer together.

The Spanish Youth Institute (INJUVE) as part of Spanish National Agency for Erasmus+ and the Office of State Museums (Spanish Ministry of Culture and Sports) created two Seminars. Beginning in 2018 with the first edition, young people, youth workers and museum professionals from all over Europe have gathered together to reflect on the challenges they encounter and the initiatives they are implementing to overcome these barriers.

During the most recent edition of "Youth and Museums Seminar" that took place online in October 2020, the participants identified the main challenges to connecting youth and museums, analysed the current situation by looking at the different actors, the power dynamics and current initiatives, next they brainstormed ideas for generating connections and finally, they collaboratively created a series of recommendations that we have collected here in these guidelines.

We are aware that not all recommendations and initiatives will be applicable to all contexts, but we hope this can be an inspirational tool. Feel free to pick the bits that are useful and adapt them to your realities.

The challenges and opportunities

Below is a list of the identified areas that pose the greatest challenges and the biggest opportunities for growth for youth and museum collaboration.

1. **Representation of the interests of young people in museums and creating a sense of museum ownership by young people.**

2. **Art and culture education for young people.**

3. **Economic investment for youth-friendly educational programs and infrastructure.**

4. **Mediation methods used in museums with young people.**

5. **Economic, cultural, intellectual, physical, language, and technology accessibility for all.**

6. **Cross-sectoral cooperation and networking strategies.**

7. **Use of Information and Communications Technology.**

8. **Dedicated human resources in both museums and youth organisations.**

9. **Other concerns for museums and youth organisations.**

The recommendations and the initiatives

1. **Representation of the interests of young people in museums and creating a sense of museum ownership by young people.**

    GUIDELINES. **We recommend:**
    1. That museums listen to young people!

    2. That youth be given a voice and effective capabilities in the museums.

    3. That the museums have a welcoming attitude towards youth.

    SUGGESTED INITIATIVES
    1. Create youth centres in the museum that are relaxing places with hospitable furniture to take a break during visits with related media in order to investigate themes from the exhibitions.

    2. Explain rules and safety measures in a friendly manner.

    3. Have activities where youth can be a part of the staff.

    4. We suggest creating yearly or bi-annual round tables that bring together young people, youth associations, NGOs, and museum educators to plan activities and exhibitions based on their needs and ideas. Smaller museums could join together in sub-regional/area round tables to join forces.

2. Art and culture education for young people.

GUIDELINES. **We recommend:**

1. Youth should be defined broadly with different programs for different young people such as students, young workers, unemployed, NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), young entrepreneurs.

2. Let teenagers organize their own educational paths and activities in the museum through peer-to-peer mediation.

SUGGESTED INITIATIVES

1. Create NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) programs online.

2. Create programming such as exhibitions and events on topics that are in line with young people's interests, such as gender issues, climate change, etc.

3. Economic investment for youth-friendly educational programs and infrastructure.

GUIDELINES. **We recommend:**

1. Looking for new ways of funding. Get creative and keep a transparent philanthropy policy.

2. That funding sources also have private origins and that activities are created that do not demand a large budget.

3. That museums reserve a larger part of their own budget for developing applications and digital tools in museums. If they don't have the funds they can search for European funds or private sponsorship.

4. That museums try to find sponsors for specific funds for projects that are specially created for youth.

SUGGESTED INITIATIVES

1. Help young people fundraise to sponsor their own activities.

4. Mediation methods used in museums with young people.

GUIDELINES. We recommend:

1. Creating more spaces for debate and the implementation of dialogue.

2. That museums are open to different kinds of activities for youth using different kinds of media and mediation practices (workshops, seminars, debates, Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

3. That museums digitize their archives, collections, heritage, and exhibitions in order to create virtual tools and offer them to visitors on different platforms.

4. The creation of youth-centered activities built around relevant topics in order to present different art works from different perspectives.

5. When reaching out to young people it is important to use informal youth-appropriate language, include information relevant to young people's lives, and also invest more in visual graphics.

SUGGESTED INITIATIVES

1. Host workshops on a museum YouTube channel on a variety of art-making approaches to the creation of art objects and experiences, crafts, cooking, etc.

2. Build community with youth through workshops related to relevant life issues: reviewing resumes, language exchange, youth jobs.

3. Schedule visits and activities outside the common schedule for example late night events (i.e. music events or sleepovers).

4. Create interventions to encourage socializing with other visitors through activities and discussions.

5. Give guards knowledge about the artworks and let them orient the visitors to further educational resources and personal.

5. Economic, cultural, intellectual, physical, language, and technological accessibility for all.

We recommend:

1. Accessibility always be a priority and that museums broaden their definition of it. There are many different barriers to access museums such as economic, cultural, intellectual, physical, language, and technological and digital.

2. That museums offer alternatives for visitors without access to digital technology such as smartphones or tablets for their visits.

3. That museums use accessible language in the explanations of their collections.

4. The removal of barriers for people with special needs.

SUGGESTED INITIATIVES

1. Economic accessibility: The museum could offer tablets in the entrance for small groups.

2. Logistical accessibility: A better and more accessible means of transport to the museum.

3. Economic accessibility: Free entrance for people who cannot afford it.

6. Cross - sectoral cooperation and networking strategies.

GUIDELINES. **We recommend:**

1. That museums collaborate with youth organizations when creating programs and approaches to connecting with young people.

2. More connections between stakeholders from youth organizations, the education sector, museums, and artists.

3. That museums foster relations between artists and youth through online platforms or in-person meetings.

4. That in the process of developing projects that museums also collaborate with NGOs and other local entities that can provide assistance.

5. Connecting education and culture areas in the administrative and political spheres.

6. Cooperation with schools and universities. Fostering a good relationship and creating collaborative projects with the education system by connecting with teachers and the schools directly.

7. That museums cooperate with private and external providers of digital tools.

SUGGESTED INITIATIVES

1. Foster good relationships with teachers, student groups, and not only with the educational center administration.

2. Invite educational centers, youth organisations, and other actors connected to the youth field to contribute ideas for museum programmes.

3. Host NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) programs online.

7. Use of Information and Communications Technology.

GUIDELINES. **We recommend:**

1. That museums tailor their communication on social media to attract youth and dedicate a budget for it.

2. That museums build community through the use of digital tools and social media for use in the museum in order to avoid the isolation of visitors in museums (collaborative digital treasure hunts, badge/rewards games, serious games, on-line events, and debates on various topics).

3. That museums put more effort into creating legible and easier to use websites in order to offer all the practical information about access and offer interactive and interesting information about the collections.

4. Creating specific and dynamic social networks to connect with youth. Offering benefits to subscribers.

5. That museums cooperate with private and external providers of digital tools.

SUGGESTED INITIATIVES

1. Use of gamification techniques, for example, MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games) with uploaded versions based on the museum's themes.

2. Use more visuals, appropriate language, interactive tools - polls, stories, GIFs, hashtags, etc. and appropriate channels (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube).

8. Dedicated human resources in both museums and youth organisations.

GUIDELINES. **We recommend:**

1. That museums give more opportunities for young people / digital native persons to work in the communication departments.

2. That museums cooperate with and hire more visual designers, illustrators, and developers in order to develop attractive tools.

3. Updating technologies and training staff to use these new technologies.

4. That both youth organizations and museums change hiring practices to include more diversity in age, culture, and backgrounds.

5. Hiring younger workers <30 (curators, museum educators, etc.) to work with young people because they bring richness and alternative points of view to the museum work. We also recommend hiring younger youth workers too.

6. Having retraining and continuing education available for workers so that they are up to date on the latest techniques and cultural concerns.

SUGGESTED INITIATIVES

1. Create programs to lead and help young entrepreneurs to form start-ups.

9. Other concerns for museums and youth organisations.

GUIDELINES. We recommend:

1. That the museum be a place not only for viewing and experiencing art but also for participating in the social and public life of the local community.

2. That youth activities in museums should take place in spaces that are liveable for young people. Governments and organizations can help to create more youth appropriate spaces.

3. That museums avoid a tourist-based model and work from and for the community. In this way, the museums avoid a crisis related to the tourist model and will be more attractive for the different groups in the local population.

4. That data be collected, studies made public, and that the data be updated regularly in order to analyse the results and impact of programs. The data needs to be accessible and available for other institutions and for the public.

5. That program guidelines and application processes be available online so that associations are more aware of the bureaucratic process.

Additional Suggested Initiatives

1. Scenography workshops based on the exhibits aimed to create a space where young people can participate in a creative process together.

2. Introduce youth to museum professions through a variety of activities such as workshops, exhibitions, and collaborations with colleges and curators resulting in an exhibition created by young people.

3. Work with young volunteers who interact and motivate other young people about specific topics. Museums can provide the space and give a context.

4. Change the museum into a living place with new initiatives that fall outside the general purpose of the museum. Some examples of activities are hosting book clubs, providing access to the library, organizing international conferences, hosting evening events to connect young people, hosting training courses, and providing community access to the cafeteria.

5. "Me, You, Us" is a proposal for a 3-month intensive artmaking program that includes young people from diverse contexts (such as schools and universities, youth centers, sport centers, music and dance schools, migrant communities, immigrant centers, local associations of LGBTQ+ individuals, local association of diverse population, ect). This project will incorporate youth in all aspects of its development and will result in a final festival opening. The young people from the project will lead a guided tour of the museums and exhibition of their work in order to provide their own perspective on the experience.

6. "Reframing The Paintings" proposes to recreate some paintings or artworks using people in the city to better reflect their reality. Models are normal young people, from all backgrounds. They will be the main characters of the activity and will gain a sense of museum ownership in the process.

7. "I See You" is a proposal where two groups of young people learn about painting in Picasso's, Van Gogh's, and Frida Kahlo's style. In this workshop they become experts on the topic. These young people will then give a workshop to a second group of young people They make self-portraits in one of the styles. There will be an exchange of information from both sides. The groups of young people are from disadvantaged economic backgrounds or with young people with accessibility issues. The idea is to create a visual empowering creative activity to share perspectives and lived experiences.

8. Storytelling through digital tools. Create digital storytelling content using digital tools adapted to the type of exhibition and the type of user. Gamification techniques or putting exhibits into context through digital representation are two examples of tools for digital storytelling.

9. Celebrate a Carnival evening in the museum with activities such as dressing up like a painting character, hosting a party inside the museum with specific costumes and music with free or special access for youth who are dressed up, prizes for the best costumes, and providing food and drinks.

10. "Be a Comic Artist for A Day!". Artists and youth can collaborate together for one day where youth are able to do their own artwork with an exhibition about comics. The young people can choose one artist and do a comic together with them. The event is for free or a reduced inexpensive ticket price.

11. Invite young artists to speak about their artwork and career. Create a space for discussion, dialogue and interchange of experiences with young artists and youth.

12. Storytelling - How do you express your thoughts and feelings about the current exhibition? A storytelling workshop based on the exhibition or individual artworks.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ixt1wmpllNZepn_w2JYaj2Dh4tldsJKwKLUPu_y5GSE/edit?usp=sharing