



Resilient museums and memory institutions for resilient societies in the Baltic Sea Region

Project number: #S001

Research report

04.2023



The project BaMuR equips public authorities, NGOs and SMEs with a toolbox to help cultural and heritage institutions maintain their consolation role to people in times of crisis.

The resilience of societies and institutions in the Baltic Sea Region was significantly tested during the COVID pandemic and will face even a greater challenge at the time and after the war in Ukraine. During the last two years it became apparent that in every country the museums, memory and cultural institutions have a much bigger role to play in ensuring resilience in the society during the crises than initially expected.

In the "Baltic Museum Resilience" project we shall analyse how the cultural and memory institutions managed and overcame the latest crisis to ensure resilience from three perspectives: governance, business model and digital sustainability and economic sustainability. Based on the best practices already implemented, relevant research and peer reviews we shall develop a toolbox with solutions for the institutions: what and how to do.

The toolbox will help to sustain the institutions but also provides additional resilience opportunities for the whole society during a crisis - but the principles could also be applied at any time for improving the organisation's performance and helping to achieve its goals.

The toolbox will be piloted and adopted during the project and made available to all respective institutions in the BSR. Our main target groups are authorities (responsible for culture and heritage), NGOs active in the field and SMEs providing innovative services in the area, who will increase their capacities to lead the change to resilient heritage institutions.



General statistics and information

11 museums in Lithuania answered the questionnaire: 4 of them as incognito and other 7 were:

Centre for Ethnic Culture and Traditional Crafts of Šiauliai district municipality

Samogitian museum „Alka“

Chocolate museum „RŪTA“

Curonian tribe historical museum

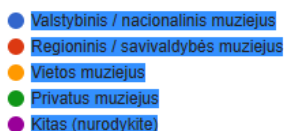
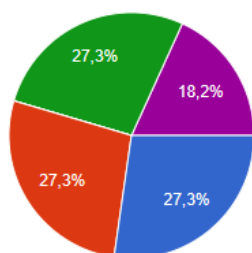
Šiauliai tourism information centre (Balts centre)

Mažeikiai museum

V.Kavaliauskienės cat museum (Šiaulių jaunųjų gamtininkų centras)

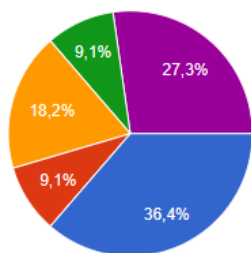
7 museums were from administrative region of Šiauliai (Šiauliai city and Šiauliai county districts, Akmenė, Mažeikiai), and one museum from Vilnius, Kaunas, Skuodas and Telšiai districts.

6 organizations represent state/ national and regional/municipal type, other 5 – private museums.



7 museums focus on preservation and revitalization of the traditions, customs and traditional crafts of the region, all the others thematic are chocolate history, wooden architecture and ethnography, cat issues, the values of telephony technology.

Main characteristics of museums:



Staff numbers differ: 4 museums have only up to five staff members, each museum has between 10 and 20 employees, two between 10 and 20 and 3 museums have more than 30 employees.

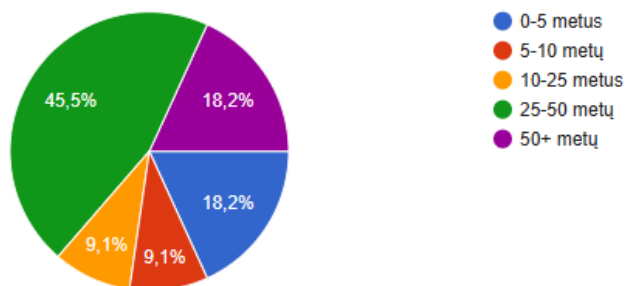
Annual visitors amount of all museums is almost 190000 (2019 – 188019; 2020 – 187636; 2021 – 138132; 2022 – 246034).

During 2019 approximately about 20000 visitors visit each museum: numbers differ from 1292 to 64460. 2020 number of visitors slightly decrease and reached 18000: numbers differ from 853 to 100000. 2021 due to quarantine and previous restrictions on visits, the number of visits was almost halved compared to the previous year and the average of visitors at museums reached 12557: numbers differ from 100 to 65000. During 2022 the numbers increased and reached almost 24000: numbers differ from 300 to 100000.

Only half of museums stated their income. Income differ from 47436 at 2021 to 95953 at 2019. 2022 income average was 77950. The average of income was 23988 at 2019, 14012 at 2020, 9487 at 2021 and 19487 at 2022.



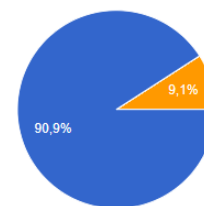
Almost half of museums (5) is operating continuously between 25 and 50 years. 2 museums count more than 50 years of working. 2 of representatives are young ones and operate only until 5 years. One museum operate between 5 and 10 years and one more between 10 and 25.



Main target groups visiting the museums are youngsters and children (including as part of the children's school program), families with children and tourists (these answers were selected by 10

representatives).

90 per cent of visitors are domestic tourist and only 1/10 part is foreigners.



Almost half of visitors come to museums with large group-visits (72,7 proc.) and only 2 museums have visitors individually (A minority of visitors 18,2 proc.).

The average length of visit in the museum is 70 min. representatives told that the length of visits differ from 45 min (3 museums) to 90 min (6 museums).

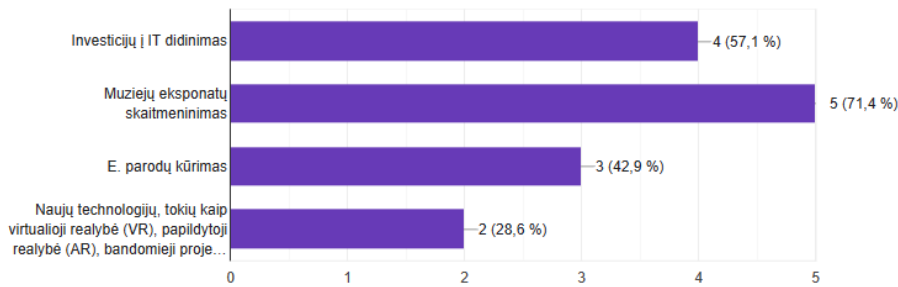
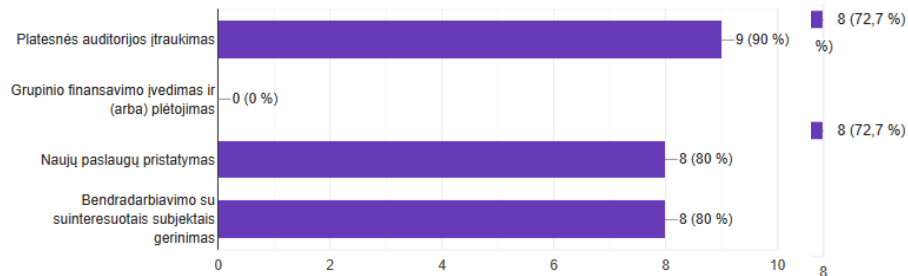
Crisis related information

General overview and the state of play in your museum in 2019. How was your museum doing in 2019 / before Covid? What were the success stories from the last few years? What were your ambitions and objectives.

- increasing the number of visitors (8)
- Developing new exhibitions (7)
- Internationalisation (5)
- Improving research work and scientific effort (3)
- Improving cooperation with other museums in the country or region (8)
- A digital guide of Vilnius Old Town implementation (1)
- Implementation of investment projects to renovate museum buildings and create new exhibitions (1)
- Do not have an answer (2)



Specifically for governance and business model development: wider audience engagement (9), introducing new services (8), improving cooperation with stakeholders (8). Other issues was not mentioned.



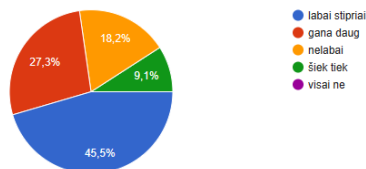
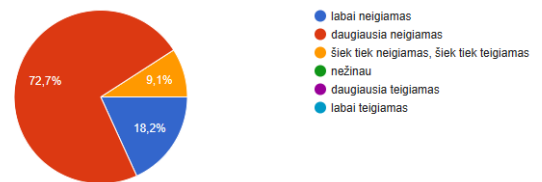
Specifically for digital development and sustainability: increasing investments into ICT (4), digitisation of museum artefacts (5), developing e-exhibitions (3), piloting new and emerging technologies,

such as VR/AR (2). Other solutions were not mentioned.

Specifically for economic sustainability: increasing revenue (8; 80 proc.), decreasing costs (5; 50 proc.).

7. We assume that the crisis period brought along mainly negative effects to your museum and the ambitions and objectives listed above were often not fulfilled or were postponed. But if the crises also caused some specific positive effects to your museum, do not forget to highlight them as well. Please describe the effects of the crisis period (2020-2023). No one answer.

The effects of the crisis period were negative for all museums: just 2 of them very negative, 8 – mostly negative and 1 some negative, some positive.



The official regulations during the crisis have an effect on organisation's day-to-day life: very much so for 5 museums, quite a lot for 3. For other 3 official regulations made not that much or a little effect.

All representatives of museums explained that “initially”, “at the beginning”, “immediately”, “in the early days” of the crisis were the first steps taken against it. Few of them added that “the response was belated, believing that the crisis was short-lived”.

Almost all (8) anticipate new official rules and guidelines “according the recommendations that circulated” and all “institution have adapted to the current situation” or lead governmental rules directly without any inner documents.



9 museums had crisis meetings and other 2 not. 5 museums had an assigned person (organiser of traditional crafts activities, head of personnel, director and administrator) to keep everyone informed and other 6 not. No one of museums had to cut back on the number of staff, but 4 museums had to close down operations for approximately “3 months”, “4 months” or direct term of “2020 03 16 - 06 20; 2021 09 - 2022 07”.

All museums had to close down some part(s) of their operations: “direct contact with visitors (educational sessions) in line with government guidelines”, “physical visits to the museum were suspended in accordance with quarantine rules”, “visitor services, presentation of exhibitions and displays, educational activities”, “the museum had to be closed due to the procedures adopted by the State to manage the crisis”, “exchange events to foreign countries and education activities in the premises”, “Direct service to tourists, organisation of excursions”, “contact education at the museum”, “suspension of the reception of visitors at the museum due to the general situation in Covid”.

Organisations didn’t invest more on digital services (6) and digital equipment (10), but organisations (8) provided more digital services. At 8 museums other digital work increase during the crisis (collections, communications, etc).

7 museums had a visible change in ticket sales. 9 museums had an effect on their organisation’s other means of income during the crisis. 4 museums received special government support during the crisis and other 7 lived on their own. Due to these facts 9 organisations had to rethink some of its future investments.

The most important effects of the crisis period on museums in general:

- Improved IT skills: have learnt how to work remotely, how to present ourselves and how to work in virtual space.
- A positive observation, it made rethink the future crisis scenario and prepare themselves for future hardships.
- The number of visitors and income decreased. Positive impact - visitors missed the museum and its activities
- The museum was closed in order to keep the number of staff unchanged, the company suffered financially.
- No more foreign tourists. Low mobility of Lithuanian residents/tourists. Employees have become more proficient in the use of IT technologies.
- Fewer visitors, less revenue
- Some activities had to be abandoned due to lack of funds.
- Decrease in visitors (decrease in income)

The most important changes their organisation made as a result of the crisis. In general, for the whole of the museum such ideas were given:

- restoration of building began,
- adjustments to the structural changes, the strategy plan and the marketing plan are being prepared to adapt to possible changes,
- virtual communication with visitors: virtual exhibitions, educations,
- the museum was closed,
- localised rooms have been set up for education and events,



- distance working,
- safe access to the museum,
- prepared new educational activities for schoolchildren,
- conducting distance education programmes.

The explanations of the rationale behind the selection of the changes were:

- funding became available,
- responding to the consequences of the crisis,
- need to keep visitors' attention, remind them of themselves,
- to be more accessible to customers,
- had been forced by the pandemic,
- to ensure the safety of visitors at the Museum,
- needed at least a minimum income to continue the work of the museum.

Evaluation of the success of the selected changes:

- changes are underway and employees are positive,
- on average,
- very successful,
- became more proficient in the use of IT, but there is no more live communication,
- more visitors after the crisis,
- a lot of distance education for students took place.

The difficulties in implementing changes during and after crisis were: finances (3), lack of equipment, stopping the possibility of working directly with artefacts, lively human interaction, communication and marketing issues, developing attractive distance education content adapted to students of different ages, abilities.

For governance and business model development such things were estimated: the relationship between flexibility and people's interest in change; distance working, meetings and briefings via video applications; more localised events have been reoriented; the situation was very unclear at the time and the only challenge was to survive.

The explanations of the rationale behind the selection of the changes were: the crisis has forced a rethink, the need to coordinate activities and processes, economic efficiency and cost savings.

Evaluation of the success of the selected changes: “too early to evaluate”, “still opened for visitors”, “everything was great”.

The difficulties in implementing changes were only economical.

For digital development and sustainability such things were estimated:

- the crisis has forced a rethink,
- more virtual exhibitions and services created,
- it was not chosen to digitise the museum as it is experiential, where you can touch everything: there was simply no benefit in this,
- minimal expansion due to financial possibilities.

The explanations of the rationale behind the selection of the changes were based on the need to work with visitors, to provide a minimum of museum services and remind visitors about the museum.

Evaluation of the success of the selected changes: “too early to evaluate”, “on average”, “got few compliments”.

The difficulties in implementing changes were:

- the relationship between flexibility and people's interest in change,
- lack of equipment in the museum, the need for visitors to switch to digital content,
- exhibits had to be retrieved from storage, transported, properly photographed and scanned.

For economic sustainability such things were estimated: the crisis has forced us to look at alternative solutions, distance working, with downtime in the absence of opportunities, prepared materials, virtual exhibitions remained permanently on the museum website.

The explanations of the rationale behind the selection of the changes were: the crisis has forced us to look at alternative solutions, to preserve staff and rational use of the institution's resources, to promote the museum and disseminate the material it holds.

Evaluation of the success of the selected changes: “too early to evaluate”, “don't know”.

The difficulties in implementing changes were: staff had distance work that was new and have a lot of discussions.

5 museums worked together with other museums / memory institutions in the change planning and implementation process. Few of them had consultations on operating principles, internal operating procedures, etc., other cooperating education programmes with neighboring museums, keep networking with social partners (regular cooperation).

5 museums thought about, what would they had done differently and the answers sounded like that “hard to say”, “the situation and how we acted in it was dictated by global changes in the world, so we acted on them as we did”, “there was no choice to act or manage the crisis differently”, “the company's responsible approach to the safety of employees and residents, and the government's approach to crisis management, obliged the museum to close”, “nothing. We did everything that could be done”, “by opening the museum's doors to visitors earlier” and “I don't know”.

6 museums of their learning experiences and/or shortcomings should in their view be most important to share with other museums and memory institutions are:

- The team (staff) understands and knows where it is going and why it is doing something. While working together, a lot can be done.
- By taking activities into virtual space, by working in different exhibition units: indoor spaces, outdoor exhibitions, etc.
- Each museum is individual and has its own problems to solve, so it is impossible to give advice to everyone. I think it is necessary to look at each case individually and find the best solutions for it.
- To be attractive, to offer interesting educational programmes, to cooperate in attracting local and foreign tourists to museums.