

Weimar, 19 December 2022

“We have to get to know our guests better.”

Presentation of the results of the visitor study at four cultural institutions of the KNK

“Integration and participation are central values of today’s museums and are the basis for fulfilling the social responsibilities of our institutions. But to do this, we must first get to know our guests and ask them what they expect from their visit and what their needs are,” explains Prof. Dr Christoph Vogtherr, spokesperson of the Conference of National Cultural Institutions (KNK), describing the motivation behind the KNK’s “Audience Development” project.

The successfully completed visitor research project was jointly conducted by the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg (SPSG), the Chemnitz Kunstsammlungen, the Cultural Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt, the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg Halle (Saale) and the Friedenstein Castle Foundation in Gotha. Between 2020 and 2022 the project organisers surveyed just under 2,500 visitors and over 250 non-visitors. Extensive audience data from the participating venues of the four institutions is now available.

<https://konferenz-kultur.de/dokumente/%40webroot/Abschlusspra%CC%88sentation-Audience-Development-2022.pdf>

The report contains insights into the visitors’ motivation, structure and potentials, as well as the thresholds and obstacles to visiting museums. An important focus of the study was the question of what concrete changes and improvements could be made to better meet the museums’ social, societal and educational tasks. Not only is the aim to reach new audience groups, but also sustainably retain existing ones.

Naturally, one cannot simply ask visitors the key questions: What keeps people from visiting museums, and what hurdles have to be overcome? Instead, the organisers conducted one-hour-long guided interviews with selected staff at daycare facilities, schools and universities, multipliers from associations and organisations, tourism representatives and regional cultural producers. Many of these experts wished for, e.g. better networking opportunities within the region, improved visibility, reducing the hesitation to visit the museums, and programmes that encourage visitor participation and self-exploration.

Despite their many differences, the participating cultural institutions received similar feedback and results in their visitor surveys. For example, around two thirds of their guests are older than 50, over 50 percent have a university degree and almost half earn a household income of over 3,000 euros per month. And although visitors reported generally being very satisfied, the survey did highlight certain desired themes and tasks: improvement of the quality of the visit, better communication work and participation opportunities. The connection to one’s everyday life apparently played a role in whether guests viewed their visit as a rewarding experience.

“The responses are not always what we want to hear and present us with challenges. Ultimately, we have to conduct a review of our entire programme in order to remain relevant to large segments of society and their everyday reality. These are all topics we’ve been discussing for some time now and will continue to the focus on even more intensively in the future within the Conference of National Cultural Institutions (KNK),” says Prof. Dr Christoph Martin Vogtherr, summing up the tasks ahead as a result of the visitor surveys.

In addition, sharing experience and discussing the limits and opportunities of the visitors’ needs among the project participants is just as important and exciting as the results themselves. It is absolutely necessary to continue the dialogue within the KNK on the principles, guidelines and tasks of cultural institutions with respect to their social responsibility.

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Press information

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