SPICE

Social cohesion, Participation, and Inclusion through Cultural Engagement

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2	AALTO	AALTO KORKEAKOULUSAATIO SR	Finland
3	DMH	DESIGNMUSEON SAATIO - STIFTELSEN FOR DESIGNMUSEET SR	Finland
4	AAU	AALBORG UNIVERSITET	Denmark
5	OU	THE OPEN UNIVERSITY	United Kingdom
6	IMMA	IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART COMPANY	Ireland
7	GVAM	GVAM GUIAS INTERACTIVAS SL	Spain
8	PG	PADAONE GAMES SL	Spain
9	UCM	UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID	Spain
10	UNITO	UNIVERSITA DEGLI STUDI DI TORINO	Italy
11	FTM	FONDAZIONE TORINO MUSEI	Italy
12	CELI	CELI SRL	Italy
13	UH	UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA	Israel
14	CNR	CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE	Italy

Executive summary

This policy brief concerns the H2020 sub-programmes [H2020-EU.3.6.3.1](#) and [H2020-EU.3.6.3.2](#). In this document, we discuss and analyse aspects relevant to policy issues related to the programmes mentioned above, that we extracted from official documents published by the European Commission and other international organizations on cultural heritage. The points of interest we identified are related to X different aspects: (1) promoting the widest possible access to digitised material, (2) encouraging partnerships between cultural institutions and the private sector, (3) enabling the active participation of Europeans, (4) raising awareness of our common history and values, (5) promoting solutions accessible for all, (6) highlighting and stimulating the positive contribution of cultural heritage to society, (7) documenting and analysing the economic impact on museums due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Introduction

SPICE is a research project funded by the Horizon 2020 programme. SPICE is a collaborative project involving seven different countries and fourteen partners, which includes representatives from the scholarly domain, museums and companies. The overall aim of SPICE is to develop tools and methods to support Citizen Curation, in which citizens actively engage in curatorial activities in order to learn more about themselves and develop a better understanding of, and empathy for, other communities. In particular, five case studies will address citizen communities, using participatory, co-design activities to the development of Citizen Curation methods.

This policy brief concerns the H2020 sub-programmes H2020-EU.3.6.3.1 ("Study European heritage, memory, identity, integration and cultural interaction and translation, including its representations in cultural and scientific collections, archives and museums, to better inform and understand the present by richer interpretations of the past") and H2020-EU.3.6.3.2 ("Research into European countries' and regions' history, literature, art, philosophy and religions and how these have informed contemporary European diversity"), that fall within the general programme H2020-EU.3.6.3 on "Reflective societies - cultural heritage and European identity". Among its goals, such a general programme focuses on "European collections in libraries, including digital ones, archives, museums, galleries and other public institutions" representing "the history of individual Member States but also the collective heritage of a Union that has emerged through time", that "should be made accessible, also through new technologies, to researchers and citizens to enable a look to the future through the archive of the past".

In this document, we discuss and analyse aspects relevant to policy issues related to the programmes mentioned above, that we extracted from official documents published by the European Commission and other international organizations on cultural heritage. In particular, we identified the following points of interest:

[Reuse] Promoting the widest possible access to digitised public domain material as well as the widest possible reuse of the material for non-commercial and commercial purposes (European Commission, 2011).

[Partnership] Encouraging partnerships between cultural institutions and the private sector in order to stimulate innovative uses of the material (European Commission, 2011).

[Participation] Making available a wide range of cultural activities and providing opportunities to enable Europeans to participate actively (European Commission, 2018).

[Awareness] Raising awareness of our common history and values and reinforce a sense of common European identity (European Commission, 2018).

[Accessibility] Promoting solutions which are accessible for all, including for persons with disabilities (Directorate General for Research and Innovation, European Commission, 2018).

[Society] Highlighting and stimulating the positive contribution of cultural heritage to society (Directorate General for Research and Innovation, European Commission, 2018).

[COVID-19] Documenting and analysing the economic impact on museums due to the COVID-19 pandemic and demonstrating digital opportunities (Network of European Museum Organisations, 2020).

In the next sections, we introduce how the work done during the first year of the SPICE project addressed all the aspects mentioned above (section "Evidence and Analysis") and how the evidence collected can be translated into possible recommendations (section "Policy Implications and Recommendations").

Evidence and Analysis

Reuse

Promoting the widest possible access to digitised public domain material as well as the widest possible reuse of the material for non-commercial and commercial purposes (European Commission, 2011).

One of the key components under-development in SPICE is the implementation of a technical infrastructure called Linked Data Hub, which is based on Linked Data technologies, to enable the creation of a decentralized network of digitised cultural heritage objects (CHOs) accompanied by data related to curatorial activities performed by citizens – a.k.a. *Citizen Curation* (Mulholland et al., 2021). The systematic use of this infrastructure enables providers of CHOs, such as museums, to share on the Web, potentially, a huge mass of interlinked knowledge that can be queried and reused in several applicative contexts – e.g. to develop Web-based applications to allow museum users, being either physically or virtually within the museum, to interact with the CHOs they are observing through a digital environment.

However, during the first year of SPICE, several partners in the consortium have pointed out possible legal, ethical and practical issues that may hamper the seamless reuse of digitised CHOs across applications. The limitations identified concern two main aspects.

On the one hand, the amount of digitised material could be copyrighted or subject to permissions of an estate which, in principle, may prevent the cultural heritage institution to freely share it on the Web using the Linked Data Hub. In addition to copyright, some institutions obtain an annual revenue selling such digitised images to commercial publications and may perceive the uncontrolled sharing of the images as a threat to their long-term sustainability.

On the other hand, there are also issues with such CHOs that are in the public domain. In this case, the concern is about the distributed and participatory curatorial activity performed by citizens which is enabled by the Linked Data Hub, where the original digitised CHOs and the new content provided by citizens through digital platforms are intertwined. For these hybrid objects, the application of Data Rights Management (DRM) regulations is not straightforward and, as such, cannot be embedded into data management tools, in particular when CHOs' data and citizens' data are produced and shared within different workflows devised by the particular cultural heritage institutions involved.

Partnership

Encouraging partnerships between cultural institutions and the private sector in order to stimulate innovative uses of the material (European Commission, 2011).

The cooperation between cultural institutions and the private sector to design and test the innovative uses of material made available by such institutions for dissemination and communication activities has obvious benefits for the private sector, because it produces expertise and resources which can be capitalized by the private sector. Private companies working in the digital sphere – such as those producing videogames, mobile applications, and GPS and beacon-based technology – may bring innovation and solutions to museums.

Within the SPICE consortium, we are testing these kinds of partnerships actively. For instance, CELI (a company) has made available a Web API for annotating emotions. Such an API has been reused by UNIBO (a university) on the cataloguing data provided by FTM (a museum) to develop a dashboard for data analysis that shows the benefits of reusing CELI's software solutions on museum data. Within another internal collaboration, PG (a company), OU (a university) and IMMA (a museum) are currently studying possible applications of gamification techniques and use of interfaces to engage users with collections, such as involving users in treasure hunt games, allowing them to explore a selection of artworks as part of a trail through a gallery or online collection, or in quizzes and comparison games. All these activities and collaborations permit the creation and testing of an extra layer of engagement to the use of traditional methods of museum mediation. Usually, all these collaborations start from discussions that SPICE partners, stakeholders, and potential customers have within specific events – such as meetings, trials and living laboratories – where people think and experience how to use SPICE artifacts creatively to foster reflection, interaction and citizen curation methodologies.

Of course, as a drawback, cultural institutions might not have immediate benefits from taking such initiatives in case they are not accounted for in the assessment of their annual activities. In addition, maintaining applications and Web-based resources is expensive: it requires time and personnel for the development and demands monitoring and updating – which are activities that usually are beyond the staffing and budgets of cultural institutions.

Participation

Making available a wide range of cultural activities and providing opportunities to enable Europeans to participate actively (European Commission, 2018).

Currently, the integration between preservation, education and engagement activities carried out by cultural institutions in the digital world are not well integrated, partly due to the separation of the tools employed to manage them. This separation hinders the implementation of participatory activities by cultural institution, whose outputs remain confined to communication initiatives.

Within SPICE, we are currently working in reducing these gaps by designing methods and interfaces to support citizen curation, where citizens apply curatorial methods to archival material available in cultural institutions to develop their own interpretations, to share their own perspective, and to

appreciate the perspectives of others. In particular, among the cultural institutions in the SPICE consortium that are setting up online events and material about exhibitions, OU is currently working on the development of a prototype to enable citizen curation on IMMA's Slow Looking Artworks programme (https://imma.ie/learn-engage/art-and-ageing/slow-looking-art-videos/).

Awareness

Raising awareness of our common history and values and reinforce a sense of common European identity (European Commission, 2018).

One of the key objectives of SPICE is to identify methods that assists citizen groups in building a representation of themselves and appreciating variety within groups and similarity across groups, to enhance social cohesion. We are developing a framework based on theories of narrative identity to mine cultural traits and values that will allow people to reflect about their cultural narratives of belonging, participating in a collective reflection, which can potentially enable the grouping or clustering of citizens in novel and innovative ways, possibly revealing surprising connections to others, which in turn is expected to enhance empathy and social cohesion.

We have already organised some internal conferences to see how members of the SPICE consortium interpret and interact with (digitised representation of) cultural heritage objects (CHOs) coming from different countries in Europe. In one of these events, an image related to the conflict in Northern Ireland was shown to participants. Those from outside Ireland and the UK found the image difficult to interpret in line with the intended meaning of the content. This activity showed the importance of museum learning and engagement tools and highlighted the need of devising processes for helping citizens understand and create meaning from artefacts and artworks, especially where those artefacts and artworks are from outside a citizen's cultural or social experience and knowledge, with the goal of making citizens aware of our common history as Europeans.

We are experimenting with several digital technologies towards reaching this awareness, such as videogames: they can be a very effective means of promoting awareness of our common history and values, in particular for younger generations.

Accessibility

Promoting solutions which are accessible for all, including for persons with disabilities (Directorate General for Research and Innovation, European Commission, 2018).

People with disabilities should have the same rights and equal access to works of art and be able to enjoy cultural life with all citizens (Pasikowska-Schnass, 2019). In SPICE, we are currently investigating technological solutions and processes that are inclusive, with the aim of testing them in several case studies that aim at involving people with different social backgrounds, including people with disabilities. For instance, IMMA (a museum) and OU (a university) have been exploring a slow looking methodology (https://imma.ie/learn-engage/art-and-ageing/slow-looking-art-videos/) developed for Older People and the original Meet Me At MoMA programme (https://www.moma.org/visit/accessibility/meetme/) for citizens with dementia and their carers/ relatives. Such a methodology has produced a series videos that have become popular with citizens outside the original target group of older people with cognitive degeneration, including school students and general public who are unfamiliar with modern and contemporary art.

Society

Highlighting and stimulating the positive contribution of cultural heritage to society (Directorate General for Research and Innovation, European Commission, 2018).

All the cultural heritage institutions involved in SPICE are working actively to engage with the communities that are traditionally excluded in society or that find obstacles and challenges in accessing cultural heritage, specifically in museums. In particular, via SPICE, we are attempting to engage with asylum seekers, citizens with health conditions, senior citizens, families living far from the museum, children from lower socio-economic groups, deaf people, and members of religious, secular and minority communities. The system developed in SPICE aims at enabling voices to be heard and for interpretations to be offered by those who traditionally cannot access cultural forums.

COVID-19

Documenting and analysing the economic impact on museums due to the COVID-19 pandemic and demonstrating digital opportunities (Network of European Museum Organisations, 2020).

All the museums involved in SPICE have been closed for the main part of the past year, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. All the activities and revenues that derived from the physical and in-place organisation of events have been cancelled. This has had consequences also to the activities that have been originally planned in the scope of the SPICE's goals. When possible, part of these activities has been reorganised and rescheduled online by means of appropriate digital infrastructures.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Reuse

Promoting the widest possible access to digitised public domain material as well as the widest possible reuse of the material for non-commercial and commercial purposes (European Commission, 2011).

An important aspect for enabling cultural heritage institutions to share digitised cultural heritage objects (CHOs) within digital services and infrastructures, such as the Linked Data Hub implemented in SPICE, is to let such institutions become aware of specific legal tools for regulating the reuse of their material, such as the Creative Commons licenses (https://creativecommons.org/) (Lessig, 2003). These tools, even of most restrictive ones such as the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), enable the sharing of digitised material in a way that possible commercial interests are still protected, while allowing a controlled reuse for non-commercial activities. When curating and producing new contents describing their CHOs in a digital environment, cultural institutions are recommended to adopt such licenses in order to make their material as sharable as possible, which would also enable them to reach a wider visibility.

In addition, though, there is also an urgent need of designing standards for representing the compositional structure, provenance and responsibility of the derivative assets made available in a digital environment, such as the SPICE Linked Data Hub, created by curators in cultural heritage institutions (to promote reflection) and citizens as part of their personal response to material shared by such institutions.

Partnership

Encouraging partnerships between cultural institutions and the private sector in order to stimulate innovative uses of the material (European Commission, 2011).

Sharing and fostering the reuse of data and other digital material by cultural heritage institutions is a key factor to enable and start partnership with the private sector. Thus, in addition to recommend sharing such data and material with appropriate licences (as highlighted in the previous subsection) and guaranteeing their compliancy with the European regulations on data protection such as the GDPR (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, 2016), it is important to encourage cultural institutions to participate in partnerships with companies by ensuring that the innovative actions carried out receive incentives when the activities of the cultural institutions are assessed. In particular, we suggest, when possible, to make available targeted funding to encourage private digital companies to partner with cultural institutions in developing applications and Web-based solutions which engage citizens with on-line collections and physical galleries.

Participation

Making available a wide range of cultural activities and providing opportunities to enable Europeans to participate actively (European Commission, 2018).

The creation of established methodologies and tools for participatory activities in the cultural sector, which assign specific roles to the input provided by European citizens, would enable and, thus, encourage the implementation of such initiatives by cultural institutions, thus expanding the opportunities for Europeans to participate actively. The work on citizen curation methods and tools in SPICE contributes actively to this dimension by providing (a) examples of how this can be done in practice (e.g. through heterogeneous case studies) and (b) a scripting/authoring framework for the development of further citizen curation activities.

To maximise citizens' engagement and participation, we recommend that cultural heritage institutions make known and accessible in a digital and Web-based environment the rich heritage inventories under their custody, even when such cultural resources are not part of permanent exhibitions. This can be done by developing digital resources that are publicly accessible (as already highlighted above in Section "Reuse"), which accommodate a variety of didactic and self-reflecting activities and possibilities to ensure cultural diversity and inclusion.

Awareness

Raising awareness of our common history and values and reinforce a sense of common European identity (European Commission, 2018).

Several actions are needed in order to raise awareness of our common European history and values, that can be reached by promoting collective reflection and measured and scrutinized through publicly available digital tools. First, citizen participation should be encouraged by appropriate funding and promoting the development of prototypes and guidelines for participatory initiatives in the field of cultural heritage. Second, there is an urgent need of setting up initiatives to actively search for hidden histories of groups that have traditionally been excluded from direct (and digital) participation, and to continuously enhance and expand existing resources carrying such histories, such as Europeana (Isaac & Haslhofer, 2013). Third, it is crucial to accompany the sharing of data and material by cultural institutions with tools and other resources which aid interpretation and understanding of artefacts and artworks from other cultures. Finally, cultural institutions should make available creative, safe, and digitally-aware *cultural spaces* to put many overlapping identities in relation in constructive and innovative ways.

Accessibility

Promoting solutions which are accessible for all, including for persons with disabilities (Directorate General for Research and Innovation, European Commission, 2018).

Enabling accessibility mediated by a digital environment is one of the key issues to address in SPICE. Considering our preliminary experiences on this topic, in order to guarantee accessibility, it is necessary to tailor cultural activities (e.g. citizen curation activities) to specific groups in risk of exclusion, in order to give them voice and space in the central cultural debates in contemporary society. Often, this has indirect benefits also for other groups of citizens. Indeed, encouraging accessibility of cultural heritage objects and institutions, even when tailored for a particular target group, universally improves access for the wider public.

Society

Highlighting and stimulating the positive contribution of cultural heritage to society (Directorate General for Research and Innovation, European Commission, 2018).

Cultural heritage institutions should offer systems, resources and activities, supported by a digital environment, that go beyond the factual and encyclopaedic dissemination of information. They should make available their collections to accommodate societal needs for debate, interpretation, reflection, research and freedom of thought and expression, and to enable the citizens who are traditionally excluded to gain access to and contribute to cultural heritage sites and organisations. These actions benefit the whole of society, strengthening inclusion and increasing mutual understanding.

COVID-19

Documenting and analysing the economic impact on museums due to the COVID-19 pandemic and demonstrating digital opportunities (Network of European Museum Organisations, 2020).

In order to continue to bring people to visit the museums during the lock down imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is strongly recommended to develop hybrid activities to promote empathy, health and well-being online by the adoption of appropriate technologies. For instance: 3D virtual technology can be accessed by anyone around the world with internet access; video content targeting the specific requirements of groups may benefit also other groups of citizens; use of video conferencing for virtual engagements can be used between museum mediators and school students in class or at home as a substitute for gallery guided tours; using museum website for exclusive online-only content, by fostering citizen engagement, reflection and exchange of interpretations and insights mediated by a digital environment.

Project Identity

Project name	Social cohesion, Participation, and Inclusion through Cultural Engagement
Project acronym	SPICE
Grant agreement ID	870811
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	Aalborg Universitet, Denmark
	the Open University, United Kingdom
	Irish Museum of Modern Art Company, Ireland
	Gvam Guias Interactivas Sl, Spain
	Padaone Games Sl, Spain
	Universidad Complutense De Madrid, Spain
	Universita Degli Studi Di Torino, Italy
	Fondazione Torino Musei, Italy
	Celi Srl, Italy
	University of Haifa, Israel

	Consiglio Nazionale Delle Ricerche, Italy
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Duration	May 2020 – April 2023 (36 months)
Budget	EU contribution: € 3,124,131
Website	https://spice-h2020.eu
Social Media	Twitter: @SpiceH2020 Instagram: @spice_h2020 LinkedIn: @spice-h2020 YouTube channel: SPICE Consortium

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