

Wallace Collection

Sir or Madam,

The ALBs of the DCMS have been asked to contribute to the Call for Evidence on the Government's review of the balance of competences between the UK and the EU. I would like to contribute some evidence, remarks and impressions from the perspective of our National Museum that might be of wider relevance for the cultural sector.

The main positive effects of the UK's membership in the EU for museums are not necessarily in the area of cultural policies in the narrow sense.

Among the great advantages of the EU membership and of the present state of EU legislation are the following points:

- The museum sector is reliant on excellence and expertise in his staff for positions that often require a high degree of specialisation. This is particularly true for Curatorial, Research and Conservation Departments, but it also applied to many other fields. Most expertise on many areas of our collection can be found in other countries of the EU. For National Museums it has become more difficult to find the right candidates from British Universities for many fields. The best often have a career with elements in other EU countries. Free and uncomplicated access to the European labour market is an important asset for the museum. This is also true for other staff e.g. in the restaurant and front-of-house areas.
- Much of the competence that we are looking for today is language based and requires experiences in different cultures. I would strongly urge that the UK takes a more active part in European exchange programmes like ERASMUS that are highly beneficial and often produce successful careers and candidates.
- The research activities of our museum benefit from EU programmes such as CHARISMA. CHARISMA has enabled us to develop high-level research that would otherwise be impossible – and that is important for the understanding and conservation of our collections. We would need closer collaborations with institutions (museums, universities and research institutes) in other EU countries in order to produce better work in our fields. Expansion of these programmes would be highly desirable.
- EU programmes for tourism as part of the Regional Fund do not necessarily apply to London but are highly relevant for regional museums, among them some of our close partners. The EU Regional Fund is very beneficial in its successful combination of support for cultural institutions and the strengthening of the tourism infrastructure.

It has to be remarked that the general level of knowledge about European funding and the level of networking with or via European institutions is underdeveloped at UK institutions. At a recent networking trip to Brussels with representatives of many National Museums I could see a widespread lack of understanding. Much of the present criticism or lack of action is firmly rooted in a lack of knowledge and information, probably also of language skills. The UK could go a long way to benefit fully from all options for collaboration, expertise and funding that are available within the EU.

Our museum is about to take part in the EUROPEANA project, organised by the European Commission, that is a very welcome initiative to pool digital information about culture and heritage in the EU countries and create alternatives to American search engines that are not necessarily geared towards the needs in European countries.

Let me conclude with some more general remark on the question: The EU is the obvious framework for cultural activities and commemorations on many issues. Over the next years, the First World War commemorations, the anniversary of 1714 and of the Battle of Waterloo are obvious examples of topics that can best be celebrated, commemorated and analysed when seen in the European context of all the historical players that were involved.

The same is true for many of our collections and works of art in our responsibility. The Wallace Collection is a good example for this: collected by a British aristocratic family that lived in Paris for the crucial decades of their collecting, given to the British Nation by the French wife of the last owner, the collection is one of the best collections of French art world-wide with important holdings of British, Dutch, Flemish, German and Italian art alongside. It reflects – like many other National Museums – the framework of reference that is today supported, encouraged and protected by the EU. Many of our present collaborations with institutions in France, Germany, Austria and Italy are easy within the framework of the EU.

In the future, the different cultures of Europe will have increasing difficulties to be heard globally in an environment that will be dominated by players of the size of the US, China and Brazil. An increasing coordination of European cultural initiatives and a support of collaboration within the EU is thus highly desirable. The EU responsibility for culture on the supporting level is highly appropriate for that, as is the EU's strong commitment to cultural and linguistic diversity. The support given by the EU for the coordination of European cultural initiatives in individual member countries and between them needs to be encouraged and expanded.

I hope that these remarks might be of some help.

