



Guidelines for the
enjoyment of the museum
heritage of Emilia-Romagna
for persons with disabilities



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Table of contents

• Presentation	page	3
• Introduction	page	4
• Inclusion and accessibility	page	5
• The museum heritage	page	6
• The venues, assets and activities	page	6 - 8
• The stakeholders	page	8 - 9
• Enjoyment for different types of disabilities and museums	page	9 - 11
• The museum territory and “special” occasions	page	12
• Disability, a cultural business	page	12
Initial outline ideas	page	13 - 16

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- *Presentation*

Since 1971, the process of including pupils with disabilities in the Italian state school system has raised awareness about that form of “special education” and has helped us to understand how it is also a resource for all pupils and a way to improve the entire education system. Similarly, we now aim to consolidate the converging process promoted in museums, offering further incentives, guidance and resources.

With unwavering determination and thanks to a great team of collaborators, last year the Institute for Artistic, Cultural and Natural Heritage (IBACN) set up a Working Group that included the Directorate General for Culture, Training and Labour and the Directorate General for Health, Social Policies and Immigration of the Emilia-Romagna Region and was committed to drafting guidelines on the enjoyment of the museum heritage and disability.

In compliance with the commitment undertaken and following far-reaching and fruitful dialogue, numerous stakeholders participated in the process, from persons with disabilities to their associations, from museums to institutional bodies.

This hereby marks an initial milestone in this work that must focus on continual improvement, in a symbiotic process between the various stakeholders targeting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in a society that is better for everyone.

Our commitment now has to tackle its implementation and both in terms of the excellent results hoped for, as well as the critical areas that will undoubtedly arise, this will bring theoretical and practical work for the future.

Supported by guaranteed yet limited resources, this three-year experimental phase will result on the entire regional territory, in a synergic and even critical dialogue between persons with disabilities and their families, their respective associations, the inclusive world of education and vocational training, work placement, residential and semi-residential facilities and the world of museums and cultural institutions.

This is a process that contaminates the territory, not only to ensure a correct understanding of its culture, but also between subjects, including businesses, in order to spread the inclusive process of persons living with disabilities in all the economic sectors that characterise our community and help it flourish.

Along with the entire Emilia-Romagna Region, the Institute for Artistic, Cultural and Natural Heritage aims to stimulate the inclusive development of the museums in our community as a gathering place, even an online one, that can offer best practices and develop a demand that, thanks to the contribution of persons with disabilities, cannot fail to improve the quality of these cultural institutions and the operators of this service – which we hope to improve for everyone.

This is a commitment we pledged last year on 3 December, the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities and we reiterate it this year by presenting these guidelines. In future, every year on this day we will assess and develop it further with the help of everyone, for everyone.

Bologna, 12/11/2015

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Introduction

Full enjoyment of human rights and the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities is the cornerstone of the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the Italian Republic by national law no. 18 of 3 March 2009.

Thanks to these guidelines, the Emilia-Romagna Region aims to favour the realisation of this shared objective in the specific cultural field represented by the regional museum heritage.

Supported by the Emilia-Romagna Region since it began thanks to the establishment of the Institute for Artistic, Cultural and Natural Heritage and from a unique cultural perspective, this heritage is not limited to the assets exhibited or stored at the museums or to the containers and the activities carried out in them; it is symbiotically linked to the territory that generated them and the geographical, economic and cultural fabric that fuels them.

Part of a broader scientific and educational system, this heritage is the source of cultural, economic and occupational business; this also applies to persons with disabilities as much as it does to everyone else.

The commitment that led to these guidelines being conceived and drawn up, does not intend to limit itself to “evening the score” between the opportunities offered by the museum system to persons with “certified” disabilities or with no disabilities. Nor does it intend to fizzle out in a compilation of regulations regarding accessibility to museum assets and spaces within them dedicated to cultural activities or recommendations and/or provisions for their fulfilment.

Whilst considering fulfilment of these provisions fundamental, in the spirit of a universalist planning approach capable of reasonably accommodating disabilities, the commitment underlying these guidelines is to promote enjoyment of the museum heritage by adopting solutions, developed specifically to satisfy the special needs of persons with disabilities, that also determine an additional opportunity for the enjoyment of the same for everyone and in particular, for those “without” disability.

A commitment to develop and fulfil the creative, artistic and intellectual potential of persons with disabilities, not only for their own benefit, but also in order to enrich the inclusive community.

Indeed, the term disability covers a constantly revised and extremely complex list of conditions that can only be understood by combining limits imposed by pathological impairments with those generated by society. According to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), drafted by the World Health Organization in 2001, this is a concept that brings us back to the variable interaction between persons with impairments and the physical, economic and social barriers that prevent their full, effective, efficacious and equal participation in society like all other citizens.

We must tackle this challenge not by restricting it to measuring the aforementioned limits experienced by persons with disabilities, but as well as trying to remove them, also concentrating on developing their capabilities, focusing on participatory potential and proposing a model that includes biological, psychological and social aspects.

A similar approach can certainly offer everyone another opportunity that focuses on both emotional and experiential aspects, in order to develop enjoyment of this heritage, but also an opportunity to broaden self-awareness.

Inclusion and accessibility

As explained in the introduction, with regard to museums and cultural heritage sites in general, these guidelines do not aim to be a tool for achieving ordinary fulfilment of existing applicable laws guaranteeing the rights of persons with disabilities. Without taking it for granted or considering it of secondary importance compared to the objective set, this fulfilment nevertheless remains key to realising the objective we have hereby set ourselves.

With regard to the inclusion of persons with disabilities, Italy boasts laws that, in terms of content if not necessarily application, are amongst the most cutting-edge on a global level. This Italian approach is significant and in the educational sector in particular, has been and should be exported to the rest of the world. A product that must always be assessed in terms of its effective implementation and impact on the daily lives of persons with disabilities, their families and the entire inclusive community.

Whilst reiterating that our aim here is not to list or offer solutions to fulfilling existing applicable legislation on issues relating to accessibility – at the end of the chapter we provide references to revised sources of the same – it is opportune to recall that in that legislation the very concept of accessibility extends from the mere ability to move through the spaces, to services and activities.

The decree issued on 10 May 2001 by the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities – **“Atto di Indirizzo sui criteri tecnico-scientifici e sugli standard di funzionamento e sviluppo dei musei”** [*Guidelines on scientific-technical criteria and standards of operation and development of museums*] (Art. 150, paragraph 6, Legislative Decree 112/1998) and in particular, Chapter VII: “Rapporti del Museo con il Pubblico e relativi Servizi” [*Relations of Museums with the Public and Relevant Services*] – deems it opportune to renew the obligation for each museum to guarantee the public appropriate levels relating to:

- access to exhibition spaces;
- consultation of existing documentation at museums;
- enjoyment of the museums’ scientific and cultural activities;
- information for better enjoyment of the services themselves.

On the website www.museionline.it, on 13 January 2015, 1,635 museums out of 3,195 on the applicable databank, were classified as accessible to persons with disabilities, that is 51.17% of the total.

These sources clearly show that accessibility, although compliant with the provisions of the aforementioned UN Convention, primarily concerns sensory and physical disabilities, only referring to cognitive, relational and neurological disabilities in a much more limited way. However, even the mere mention of the latter disabilities is positive as, compared to the past when they never emerged, it expresses an ongoing commitment to their equal inclusion/participation.

In combining accessibility with the due safety and inclusion of persons with disabilities, we must necessarily make reference to the following documents:

- “Linee guida per il superamento delle barriere architettoniche nei luoghi d’interesse culturale” [*Guidelines to overcome architectural barriers in cultural heritage sites*] – Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities (Decree of 28 March 2008 – Official Gazette no. 114 of 16 May 2008);
- “Il soccorso alle persone disabili: indicazioni per la gestione dell’emergenza” [*Helping persons with disabilities: indications for managing emergencies*] – Italian Ministry of the Interior – The Department of firefighters, public rescue and civil defense – National Fire Corps, circular letter dated 8 August 2006;

as well as the following websites, amongst others, with regard to revised applicable legislation:

- www.handylex.org
- www.disabili.com

The museum heritage

Like all values, the one relating to the museum heritage is not the mere inventory listing or cataloguing of the assets a museum owns or the services it offers, assessed in relation to their usefulness, limitations and ability to be enjoyed.

Often incalculable, their value is also expressed and perceived by their ability to work with the local territory and inclusive community to develop hand-in-hand with them.

As well as the economic and symbolic value of museum venues themselves, evaluation cannot merely be limited to the assets exhibited or in storage, the services offered and the occupational resources involved. Their value can and must also be assessed in terms of their ability to develop a business culture, both on a local level and on a wider scale.

The value of a museum is therefore given by the relationship between itself and the geographical, economic and cultural context that developed it and with which its future development must measure itself. An analysis of the balance sheet and social balance sheet of a cultural business in which the inclusive action of persons with disabilities can and must be a factor for its promotion and development.

The venues, assets and activities

In our concern about “overcoming steps”, we sometimes fail to notice the other critical areas and opportunities that a museum venue offers.

Geographical location, its changing value and economic function over time and within the urban/rural fabric, as well as its cultural contribution, are aspects that are often more easily and hastily overlooked than when we try to overcome steps.

The architectural and urban characteristics of the museum venue itself, along with the reasons why that particular cultural institution developed there, are certainly an objective that should engage our inclusive/participatory commitment. Overcoming the barrier of “where I find myself” means seizing the first of many opportunities that the museum heritage offers.

This dimension is an opportunity to experiment our ability to see, hear, smell, taste, touch and understand a museum. We will realise that the location of the museum venue in the relevant urban fabric, as well as the architectural barriers we have to overcome, explain the evolution of the very right to culture and social emancipation denied to others; of a lasting battle for social classes and categories previously excluded. These social barriers, which have only recently been overcome and whose return cannot be excluded, have prevented or limited access to culture to most people.

The nature of an individual museum is not exclusively determined by the assets it owns. The very idea that generates a museum is an asset we must understand if we are to improve our enjoyment of all the museum heritage. This is therefore, the first asset the inclusive/participatory offer for all disabilities must focus on. Marrying the different disabilities with the individual assets or all of them together, as well as with all the activities and services offered by the museum and its relationship with the territory, is therefore undoubtedly a challenge that, if not always proportionate to the fundamental objective of personal development, risks generating actions contrary to those hoped for.

Making full scale or reduced scale copies of museum assets – two and/or three-dimensional, discernible to the senses – in order to offer access to enjoyment of the originals to persons with sensory, physical and/or cognitive disability can, without doubt, be part of an inclusive process to help everyone understand figurative works, bacteria, physical spectral waves, star clusters, etc. Likewise, the transformation of pieces of music in a sensory experience or their dramatization in order to offer access to the enjoyment of symphonies to persons with disabilities, can also favour the acquisition of skills and know-how in everyone,

to help them appreciate and enjoy the world of music and the musical scores themselves. However, mixing up these tools with the objective of inclusive participation, would generate the pointless duplication of the entire world multiplied not so much by the individual disabilities, if it were possible to list them, but by the peculiarities of the individuals who experience these disabilities.

In fact, creating specific museum activities only for persons with disabilities could take us back to that sad design solution that led not to toilet facilities accessible to everyone, but to the generalised creation of three toilets - one for women, one for men and a third for sexless persons with disabilities. By using universal planning techniques and being open to promoting and supporting reasonable adaptations, both museum activities and “museum itineraries” themselves must be designed to be accessible to all.

Accessibility that doesn't claim to be nor indeed can it be, access to everything for everyone, but rather a way of expressing the cultural concepts at different levels of complexity. This is designed to permit everyone, whether with a disability or not, to actively enjoy museums, drawing from it a means for developing personal skills and potential self-confidence, autonomy and self-sufficiency; clearly not a limited approach.

If established museum activities can and must be reviewed, new ones should be redesigned with everyone in mind, starting precisely from trying to include the world of disability and offer everyone a different approach, a different opportunity for growth. The planning and subsequent implementation of projects especially designed for persons with disability – and even more so, those with specific disabilities – is not in conflict with the general assumption of universally inclusive actions. This contradiction between universal and specific approaches can certainly generate experimentation, with positive outcomes for everyone if indeed practiced experimentally, in order to broaden access to enjoyment for everyone. Thanks to the positive results achieved it can also contaminate other specific and general areas.

Just as entrance to museum venues and overcoming any barrier within them is facilitated by understanding of the cultural value and history of its physicality, access to museum assets is made possible thanks to understanding of their being and not in the duplication of copies, of their relationship with each other and with whomever wishes to enjoy them, seeking individual and community growth in an inclusive/participatory process.

SUMMARY

1. Signaling, even as an initial sign of inclusion, a specific opportunity for visitors with disabilities to enjoy the museum heritage is proposed as an opportunity for growth for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Make the special offer for everyone, developed with the contribution of persons with disabilities, clearly visible at the point of entrance for the public.
- b. Participate in the proposal and promotion of a unified symbol and posters on the entire regional territory.

2. Presenting the general features of the museum helps to explain its complex offer of assets and activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Develop a simple and concise interpretative key, accessible to all the senses and to different cognitive levels, to help explain the general sense of the museum.

3. Universally targeted and linked to the territory, the proposal of key concepts favours the development of interest in and understanding of the vaster museum heritage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Prepare interpretative keys to the main individual concepts underlying the museum offer, putting the reference asset(s) exhibited with those present on the territory.
- b. Offer interpretative keys to specific cultural themes, even those apparently extraneous to the specific nature of the museum, by providing alternative interpretations of the museum

heritage.

- c. Ensure these offers stimulate an emotional and experiential approach.

4. Comparing “current barriers” with past architectural, urban and social ones favours the growth of an inclusive commitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Using the urban and architectural expression of the museum venue, highlight how the barriers that now hamper physical and cultural access to persons with disabilities, were barriers in the past to individuals discriminated against for economic or social reasons.
- b. Favour the idea that promoting culture goes hand-in-hand with promoting social emancipation.
- c. Compare the achievement of social rights and in particular, cultural rights, in various historical phases, highlighting the importance of everyone’s commitment.

The stakeholders

Especially if supported by access to dedicated resources, the first stakeholders of this process of enjoyment of the museum heritage are the persons with disabilities, their families and associations. Beyond the role of mere users, these subjects are fully entitled to propose methods and request experiments for their inclusion.

Without doubt, a dialogue on this specific theme, between them and between them and other subjects operating in the sector can generate and develop key approaches and solutions. This is something that will develop and will certainly increase on another contradiction that cannot be summarised: personal disability and the disability of others. No universal solutions that “impose” enjoyment on all those with or without disability, but rather the possibility for all individuals to be stakeholders in some way.

The realisation amongst all stakeholders of channels of access, gathering places, territorial and/or theme networks, whether real and/or virtual and permanent or temporary, will facilitate the development of a wealth of inclusive offers and proposals.

All other subjects are equally protagonists – from museum owners and operators, to the related cultural associations, and to the political and administrative directors of the competent bodies and authorities for these cultural institutions and related activities.

Of no less importance is the fundamental contribution of educational institutes that, by including pupils with disabilities in mainstream school classes, have helped to develop “special education” – although critical areas remain –, which starting precisely from the needs of these pupils has led to an improvement in education for everyone.

Returning to what we stated in the introduction, we believe we cannot underestimate the role that stakeholders with economic interests generated by this inclusive action can and must have. Without excluding others, we refer in particular to operators working in the mobility, catering and accommodation sectors.

The museum heritage has or in any case, can and must have a positive economic impact on these subjects. Promoting such relationships not only can but should have a positive economic effect on the museum, thanks to a more organised relationship between them and other economic subjects; however, the inclusive effect this implies, through these operators, on their broader community and relevant territory is certainly not of secondary importance.

SUMMARY

1. Researching and promoting the active role of users with disabilities, both in the communication of critical areas/opportunities and in the innovative planning and experimentation of enjoyment of the museum heritage and activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Declare this goal at the main point of access to the museum, perhaps by offering a form,

- even with possible suggestions and requests, for collecting contributions.
 - b. Contact associations representing persons with disabilities and their families, operators of public services dedicated to them to discuss and come up with shared offers.
 - c. Promote dialogue and collaboration with schools, especially on the general curriculum, but also on specific personalised educational plans for pupils with disabilities with projects for either classes, small groups or individuals.
 - d. Stimulate possible synergies with residential and/or semi-residential facilities for persons with disabilities.
 - e. Assess, encourage and promote the economic subjects directly or indirectly involved in museum planning and offer developed with persons with disabilities.
2. Verifying, especially when addressing groups of people, if the proposal can determine a diversified approach that gives the possibility for different conditions and abilities to enjoy the offer proposed, which will feature different actions that when pieced back together will permit different subjects to play a part in enriching the entire group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Structure the offer on as many emotional and experiential approaches as possible that allow a greater number of subjects to actively enjoy the same, with everyone, to their own ability, playing the role of leading stakeholder.

Enjoyment of the museum heritage: different types of disabilities and museums

Assuming that all disabilities can be dealt with in the same way, is equally unsustainable with regard to different types of museums. This is clear given the impossibility to precisely list invalidating conditions and due to types of museums where, both in terms of research activities and in terms of presentation, an interdisciplinary approach is increasingly diffused.

The very approach to certifying disability, passing from a mere health approach focused on impairments to a biological, psychological and social approach based on the removal of obstacles and consolidation of potentials, let us avoid an approach that would be limited to an incomplete list of invalidating conditions and the proposal/suggestion of a specific solution to each of these, multiplied by the unique nature of the assets that make up museum heritages.

This does not eliminate the need to recognise and support the great value of both what has led to a legislation that guarantees accessibility to spaces and information, and actions developed on specific disabilities, such as the tactile rendering of figurative works and meals in the dark organised by associations of persons with visual impairments.

As far as possible, these guidelines seek to focus on drawing up a series of approaches that offer all disabilities the possibility to enjoy the museum heritage and to provide an innovative approach to the enjoyment of the same by other subjects. Not an indication of the ideal final accomplishment, but rather a practical search by the various stakeholders for technological solutions that – even if influenced by their everyday choices - can transform a flat screen used to broadcast a video clip into an experience accessible to all those with sensory and/or physical and/or neurological and/or cognitive and relational disabilities.

It is undoubtedly not a one-way journey, departure point and direction. The approach to pre-, during and post-visit, as well as the role of the stakeholders, is indicated here with regard to the ladder of objectives. Continuing with the allegory of the ladder, we could say that for however many rungs we want it to be made up of, each one is nevertheless kept upright by the first and last rungs. Leaving aside the metaphor this means that, planning of any inclusive project or action must focus not only on the disability itself, but on the transparency of every detail in the general sense.

The first element to tackle is understanding of the museum overall. Whether this consists in an archaeological, artistic, ethnological or scientific heritage, the main objective that will allow us to continue

dialoguing with the individual assets and services of the museum, will be what the museum is, what it is needed for in general, and why we go there. Offering this element of awareness, even if organised on different levels of analysis and possibilities of access, is essential for developing the processes of enjoyment of the assets and services offered by the museum in the best way possible and favouring the growth of the people they are being offered to.

As well as compliance with the provisions, what we are trying to promote with these guidelines is commitment to an offer of assets and services that will lead to the enrichment of the person/group, although at different levels, in order to raise – either in standard or unexplored ways – awareness of what the museum is offering, both in terms of permanent or temporary assets exhibited as well as its activities.

The offer of the value of a painting in its broader dimension of art history is not diminished if we draw from the same a small element that permits, if not understanding of it, at least the development of the person, in both the physical and cognitive/relational dimension.

Comparing two Madonna with Child paintings should not necessarily force us to acquire sufficient awareness to carry out complete comparative technical and scientific analysis of the two paintings and their standing in art history. Simply assessing the features of the Child, His plumpness or thinness or any other simple detail, for example, the quality of the clothes or the texture of the brushstrokes, can offer us an opportunity for personal growth that can help us engage with and better understand the paintings themselves, the museum or something external to these.

Presenting the table of atomic weights of the elements shouldn't mean we need to understand or memorise their being, development and/or relationships with the evolution of the universe and the star clusters. Simple awareness that two equal forms can have a different weight helps us understand and address the complexity of the matter.

Basically, whilst a “barrier-based” approach leads us to look for aids that grant access to the information generally offered for a single asset, the exhibition itinerary, the activities carried out, ease of mobility around the venue and access to services etc., the approach we are additionally supporting here is one that offers everyone the possibility to gradually understand what is offered by the museum thanks to summary elements, the simplest of which, even thanks to the use of the most universal tools possible (for example, video-audio guides), facilitates understanding of the vaster and more complex museum offer.

Museums must envisage and set gradual objectives for both their ordinary and temporary offer that, as they are accessible to all disabilities, can ensure approximate enjoyment of the entire heritage and facilitate an approach for everyone. Whilst doing this, they must remain committed to inclusive/participatory research and open to innovative suggestions.

We believe that what may appear to be a simplistic and consolatory approach, can instead offer everyone a different access to the enjoyment of everything; favouring accessibility for everyone by working on simplification and not superficiality. For some, understanding a panorama can start from a general view, whilst for others it starts with focusing on a particular detail.

SUMMARY

1. Preparing aids to welcome unexpected or planned visits by providing proposals, including tools, for the gradual enjoyment of the museum heritage based on interpretative keys of the whole or themes that are universally or selectively approachable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Offer interpretative keys for the museum's general heritage and/or theme interpretative keys as an opportunity for dialogue and growth of the museum itself, favouring even critical contributions.
- b. Attempt to favour enjoyment of the theme keys, testing them on sensory, motor, cognitive

- and relational aspects.
- c. Favour, even for specific disabilities, the offer of general and/or theme interpretative keys seeking to develop them for the enjoyment of other specific disabilities.
 - d. As far as possible, illustrate the general and/or theme interpretative keys from the point of interest or contact manifested by the person with disability.
 - e. With the direct contribution of persons with disabilities, test and perfect visits, workshops and instrumental aids.
 - f. Assess the offer, even in terms of emotional and experiential aspects, seeking to develop the highest level of independence, self-sufficiency and self-confidence in the subjects it targets.
 - g. Assess the possibility for training opportunities and opportunities for the targeted placement of persons with disabilities based on projects relating to the enjoyment of the museum heritage.

The museums' territory and "special" occasions

The link between the territory and the museum is inseparable and symbiotic.

Just like understanding the value of the single asset of the museum heritage offered in its exhibition layout undoubtedly leads us to an understanding of the life of the territory it relates to, the location of that asset in the territory helps us to better understand its value.

"Special" events or itineraries to favour the enjoyment by persons with disabilities not only offer this important dimension, but also provide a great opportunity to focus on the theme of inclusion of persons with disabilities, offering an opportunity not only for social but also personal growth to those who have none.

SUMMARY

1. The geographical, economic and cultural re-contextualisation of an asset and the entire heritage facilitates its comprehension and innovative capacity for interpretation.

RECOMMENDATION

- a. Retrace the chain back to finding the asset and its context in the territory by reconciling it with the relevant economic and social expressions and if possible, by dialoguing with subjects of the same.

Disability, a cultural business

The relationship between the museum and the territory does not only hinge on the individual assets found in the two environments. As mentioned, for the venue it is a source of dialogue, relationships and development on all the activities linked to the visit. Mobility, accessibility, purchases, catering, accommodation and other areas are closely linked to the visit to the museum itself and its territory. Accessibility to and enjoyment of the museum heritage does not only involve moving along the relevant itineraries on the territory compatible with the asset or activity proposed by the museum. Dialogue on the territory, the setting up of networks between territories on themes and events, for a cultural offer focused on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities generates inclusive demand in all the commercial and cultural sectors concerned.

If on the one hand, specific competences can come together to create offers and events in the museums and related territorial/environmental itineraries, similar competences can offer the opportunity to develop inclusive commercial synergies that qualify the culture of the community and the territory related to the museum.

SUMMARY

1. Favours the coming together of the different subjects, whether directly or indirectly involved, in the museum offer in order to agree on a synergic action and mutually advantageous results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Promote on specific themes, paths and/or events the offer of the museum's cultural heritage as an opportunity, even on the territory, to involve cultural and economic subjects that offer specific packages for its enjoyment that are mutually beneficial.
- b. Offer solutions for one day or more, accessible to all regarding, amongst other things, mobility, catering, accommodation and leisure, focusing on individuals and groups.
- c. Assess proposals and actions to diffuse the culture of inclusion of persons with disabilities throughout the territory, with the various economic subjects directly and/or indirectly related to enjoyment of the museum heritage.



**Musei ...
speciali,
per tutti!**
Regione Emilia-Romagna
ibc Istituto per i beni artistici
culturali e naturali

Outline ideas

Constantly reviewed contributions gathered and processed during the territorial meetings with the representatives of the associations representing persons with disabilities and the museums of the Emilia-Romagna Region.

The venues, assets and activities

VENUES:

- The original idea for the museum and the evolution of its role offer a certain element to understanding its entire heritage, just as the history of its founders and users become the key to facilitating the understanding of it as a whole.
Understanding how beliefs evolve into know-how – from the wonder rooms to scientific museums – can also be acquired on the basis of the evolution of the idea of a single asset (e.g. geological forms between life force and concretionary processes).
- The architecture and original function of a museum or its adaptation, its location or move into the urban/rural fabric means we can reflect on the concept of accessibility and its evolution, not only from a physical point of view, but also from a social one.
Whether a museum has grown in a dedicated venue or has occupied it at a later date offers us the opportunity to understand the evolution of the cultural importance of the museum, as recognised by the community that generated and hosted it. The original function of these buildings makes it possible to access understanding of the evolution of the cultural offer amongst different social categories and classes.

ASSETS

- Understanding two or more individual assets of a museum, but more so understanding their relationship, can be the basis for understanding the general meaning of the museum, as well as a specific exhibition layout and/or temporary exhibition.
Simple and direct comparison between two or more individual assets or between a single asset and the user, can generate that emotional and experiential willingness that facilitates the understanding of an interpretative key for the entire museum heritage: for example, the position of facial orifices in two species or the location of the senses in different species.
- The offer of one or more interpretative keys to the museum heritage, proposed in a way that is accessible to persons with sensory, physical, cognitive and relational disabilities gives an opportunity for everyone to follow unusual paths leading to the understanding of the aforementioned keys.
- The very layout of the exhibition of single assets makes it possible to understand the evolution of the scientific mindset of the subject that generated the museum. Comparing two exhibition models of the same assets brings us closer to the process of understanding them in relation to the period in which they were made and the present: for example, the orderly listing of flakes and their position in the historical and social context.

ACTIVITIES

- All workshop and excursion activities can offer the opportunity for a different approach to the same with regard to the complex world of disability. Although, aside from any possible discrimination, activities specially designed for persons with disabilities or specific disabilities are deemed positive, the normal offer of workshop or excursion activities should also contain inclusive actions.

- Inclusive action can also be limited and even realised externally to the group or the museum itself although in conclusion, it must guarantee the involvement of everyone and a leading role to persons with disabilities.
- Even in the absence of inclusive and/or dedicated offers we believe that the museums, schools and associations respectively can become promoters, thanks to reciprocal invitations, of related experimentations and processes.
- A tool for collecting suggestions, proposals and the willingness to collaborate on the theme, especially if in plain sight, can push towards an inclusive culture and stimulate participation.

The stakeholders

- Self-sufficient and autonomous access for persons with disabilities to the museum heritage is undoubtedly the highest level of inclusion sought and hoped for. However this possibility can be realised for persons with different levels of disabilities that can range from an individual visit, to a visit with an escort, to visits with members of a group, whether this is a group of family members, an association, a school group, friends or a random group. As for everyone, a visit to the museum can be planned or unexpected. It is however opportune for museum operators in particular, but also education and welfare operators, to be prepared for such occasions.
- For museum operators, a visit by a person with disability, cannot be limited to “shirking responsibility” by merely offering accessibility to the museum venue and guaranteeing his/her safety. Whilst these factors are still essential and seen as standard, it will be necessary to prepare in order to favour enjoyment of the museum heritage. The realisation of simple aids to offer persons with disabilities, whether on an individual visit or members of a group, in order to facilitate accessibility and guarantee safety means taking the first step on a very complex ladder. The second is offering aids that favour understanding of the general sense of the museum, as well as the main interpretative keys of the museum and/or temporary exhibition/activity itinerary. Approaches to individual themes from several disability points of view, not as a comprehensive offer of the inclusive commitment of the museum, but as bridgeheads on which to develop greater enjoyment of the museum heritage, an invitation to take part in development of the inclusive culture.
- If for persons with disabilities, both individuals and those part of a group, preparing or not before visiting the museum remains, just as it does for everyone, a free choice that cannot be claimed by whoever offers this opportunity, preparing a visit is not the exclusive task of museum operators. Therefore, the relationship between the latter and whoever – a person with disability, a group that includes them or a contact person for these – intends to promote the visit is fundamental; this relationship is symbiotic and not unidirectional. For example, the visitor/visitors cannot limit themselves to asking museum operators about the level of accessibility, safety and enjoyment of the museum, but must develop a dialogue and plan based on the special needs that would enrich both. In particular, if the person with disability is part of a group, it will be important not only to identify an itinerary that includes this, but also and above all, the enjoyment of the museum heritage by the other components as protagonists. Both in the preparatory phase and in its realisation, the possibility that the person with disability determines a special preparatory itinerary to the visit must be envisaged: for example, whilst the rest of the class studies the succession of populations of a territory mnemonically, a group can even physically or theatrically organise symbolic elements featuring different populations and facilitate understanding and memorising of other things. If during the general visit, one of the aspects of the itinerary focuses on the person with disability and/or the special perspective of the person with disability as the cornerstone element/action for understanding that aspect of the museum heritage this offers everyone an opportunity for cultural and social growth. Likewise, for museum operators, focusing on the special needs of a person with disability and giving them a key role can offer everyone a different approach to enjoyment of an asset or a concept and without doubt, this multiplies the value of the museum heritage and related inclusive role in the benchmark community, as well as

in the community of visitors.

- Targeted training activities for museum operators, in collaboration with experts in special education, professors and assistants working on the inclusion of pupils with disabilities, operators of residential and semi-residential facilities for persons with disabilities and with a focus on mutual growth. Workshops and experimental courses provide the opportunity for teachers and learners to grow.

Enjoyment of the museum heritage: different types of disabilities and museums

- Use tools and events to favour dialogue on the enjoyment of the museum heritage and activities and disability between similar as well as different types of realities.
- Promote dialogue with associations representing persons with disabilities, both to favour a universal approach and to create and/or experiment a specific approach on a certain condition of disability to then be reviewed on a broader spectrum and lead towards universal planning.
- Encourage dialogue and collaboration with school institutes and in particular, with bodies working directly on the inclusion of pupils with disabilities so that their now consolidated experience of “special education”, which is now for everyone, has a positive effect on helping to develop “special museology” for everyone.
- Create theme events to promote dialogue/experimentation between the museum, educational, recreational and tourism systems: e.g. The Senses, Memory and Intelligence, The Space between Measure and Perception, Health and Saints.

The museum territory and “special” occasions

- Creating aids that connect the museum heritage and the territory, can also be enhanced, even in relation to specific special needs that limit the co-existence of members with disabilities on the museum itinerary, **with the reintegration of this into the group with recognition of the element of the territory with a converging action to the itinerary followed by the group through the museum.**

Disability, a cultural business

- This opportunity can develop both in order to overcome the critical areas regarding accessibility, health and safety and enjoyment of the museum, but also in the very offer of setting up, planning and realising permanent or temporary workshop/training activities.
- It is not therefore, only a matter of listing additional accessible offers – from eating, to sleeping, etc. – but of favouring the museum as a place that offers this inclusion with financial effects on the same.
- These complementary resources can become a further opportunity to develop the business if they are combined in complete, comprehensive or trampolines offers that are, not only, a means for promoting subjects that support them, but also subjects committed to realising them and developing these economies.
- Developing offers for complex visits to the museum:
 - for individuals and groups of people;
 - for a single day or several days;
 - on a visit to the museum and other cultural(/environmental) facilities on the territory;
 - on the theme illustrated by the museum and its effects on the territory;
 - on a theme illustrated by several museums in the region and/or different areas, both for similar museum types and across-the-board for different types;
 - supported by an accessible proposal of mobility, catering, accommodation and recreation of subjects willing to make reasonable accommodation.
- Adopting aids that communicate the main themes of the museum in different languages:
 - visual aids
 - general and specific types
 - key themes
 - special internal itineraries

- special external itineraries
- special tourist offers
- collection of proposals and/or requests
- Identification of a key theme, approached in a universal way, that offers everyone the opportunity for a “special” visit to the museum.
- Treasure hunt for the assets displayed, giving a sense to a theme by bringing together one or more of the museum’s assets.
- Treasure hunt bringing together one or more of the museum’s assets with others in the museum’s reference environment.