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Cultural tourism, museums and COVID-19 pandemic impact

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Turystyka kulturowa, muzea i konsekwencje pandemii COVID-19

Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono niektóre aspekty wpływu COVID-19 na turystykę kulturową i sektor muzealny. Sektor turystyczny jest jednym z najbardziej dotkniętych pandemią, a turystyka kulturowa nie jest wyjątkiem. W 2020 roku ok. 95% muzeów na całym świecie zostało zmuszonych do zamknięcia – zgodnie z rządowymi przepisami sanitarnymi [17].

Celem badania była identyfikacja wpływu pandemii COVID-19 na turystykę kulturową (mierzone liczbą odwiedzających najpopularniejsze muzea w 2019 i 2020 r.) oraz odpowiedź muzeów na kryzys w czasie pandemii COVID-19 (zbieranie danych w 2020 i 2021 r.). Od kilku dekad muzea eksperymentowały z nowinkami technologicznymi IT. Współczesna oferta wirtualna muzeum obejmuje nie tylko edukację online, lekcje muzealne i zwiedzanie, ale także konkursy i programy informujące o unikalnych muzeach i kolekcjach. W okresie pandemii większość muzeów starała

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się ulepszyć swoją działalność cyfrową (programy edukacyjne, wirtualne wycieczki). Te działania nabrały szczególnego znaczenia podczas zamknięcia muzeów dla zwiedzających. W 2021 r. pandemia może nadal poważnie wpłynąć na muzea we wszystkich regionach świata. Niektóre muzea są ponownie otwierane (jednak ze ścisłymi ograniczeniami wynikającymi z restrykcji sanitarnych), ale wiele placówek pozostaje zamkniętych. Tym ważniejsze wydają się w tej sytuacji oferty wirtualne.

Artykuł kończy się przemyśleniami na temat perspektyw turystyki kulturowej i oferty muzealnej w okresie po zakończeniu pandemii.

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka kulturowa, muzea, pandemia COVID-19.

Abstract

This paper presents some aspects of COVID-19 impact on cultural tourism and on the museum sector. Museums are closely linked to cultural and heritage tourism, considered a significant attraction.

The tourism sector is among the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and cultural tourism is not an exception. In 2020 around 95% museums around the world were closed – according to government sanitary regulations. The aim of the research was to identify the impact of COVID-19 disease on cultural tourism (measured by a number of visitors in the most popular museums in 2019 and 2020) and museums' adaptation to the sanitary restrictions during the pandemic time. For a few decades museums have tried to enhance their digital activities such as online educational programmes, online collection display, online exhibitions, live events, learning programs, brochures, podcasts, social media and virtual tours. These activities and various projects became especially important during the lockdown caused by the pandemic outbreak, as many museums continued their missions during the pandemic. Some museums have reopened (with strict limitations defined by sanitary restrictions), but many institutions remain closed. It shows how crucial IT innovations are. The paper concludes with some reflections on museums' offer during the pandemic time and cultural tourism prospects in the post-pandemic time.

Keywords: cultural tourism, museum, COVID-19.

Introduction

Cultural tourism, as well as heritage tourism and edu-tourism, are important parts of tourism industry. There are numerous definitions of these terms [5, 12]. They might be defined as 'travel focused on experiencing the arts, heritage, cultural event and knowledge of people and places', encompassing many different types of experiences during the journey.

According to the definition developed by the UNWTO (United Nation World Tourism Organization) and adapted by the General Assembly at its 22nd session in 2017, 'cultural tourism' might be defined as: 'A type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/ products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music,

creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions' [15].

In the 21st century cultural tourism was welcome in many regions of the world as a strong generator of economic activity and jobs. The economic and non-economic benefits of cultural tourism are obvious, relating to the profile of visitors: on average they have higher incomes, are better educated and ready to spend more money and stay longer [12].

Museums are believed to play a significant role in cultural tourism as a display of art collections, education space and chance for leisure. To answer the needs of contemporary tourism, museums have been evolving in the last decades. For example, recently museums are using internet and digital technology more and more frequently to promote their collections and activities.

These activities and various projects became especially important during the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, when museums faced many unexpected challenges. In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic could still seriously affect museums in all regions of the world. It is true, that some museums have reopened (however, with strict limitations imposed by sanitary restrictions), but many institutions remain closed.

So far, tourism suffered from its worst year on the record in 2020, with international arrivals dropping by 74%, which means 1 billion fewer international arrivals than in 2019, as a consequence of travel restrictions [12]. In 2021, due to the evolving nature of the pandemic, many countries reintroduce travel limits. These include mandatory testing, vaccination passports, quarantines and in some cases a complete closure of borders (for example US borders).

In 2020, as many as 90% of the countries closed (or partially closed) World Heritage Sites [8, 13]. In 2020 – 2021 about 90% of the world's museums were forced to close and what is worse, more than 10% may never be able to re-open (mainly private institutions, located in Latin America and Africa, museum sector dependent on the income generated by visitors) [13, 17]¹.

Since 2020, despite the COVID-19 crisis, many museums around the world have continued to serve communities as a source of resilience and wellbeing comfort, leisure and intellectual pleasure, education, science and research. It was possible due to various digital innovations such as virtual tours, webinars, conferences and exploring museum collections online, and helped to build and sustain links with the general public by different online projects and activities as a response to the pandemic crisis. However, in most cases it was possible if a given museum had developed digital investments before the pandemic. In this

¹ According to the TEA AECOM 'Annual Report 2020,' on average, museums worldwide were closed for more than 100 days in 2020, for example: the Tate Modern in London – 173 days, the British Museum in London – 209 days [34].

perspective, the AECOM Report emphasised that ‘Museum attendance in 2020 was not an indicator of scale, popularity, marketing, market size, or special exhibitions, but rather the unusual conditions imposed by the pandemic’ and ‘Museums everywhere showed themselves to be innovative in finding ways to continue serving their missions and their communities during the pandemic’ [34]. This paper presents some of the aspects of COVID-19 impact on cultural tourism and on the museum sector.

Research material and methods

In 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced the governments around the world to announce the total closure of all non-essential establishments, cultural institutions and museums included.

The aim of the research was to identify the impact of COVID-19 disease on cultural tourism (measured by a number of visitors in the most popular museums in 2019 and 2020) and classify the museums’ answer to the sanitary restrictions, staff and visitor wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic time (data collection in 2020 and 2021), explore and understand how the sector adapted to the pandemic crisis, and what the museums’ adaptation to the sanitary restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic time consists in.

The method used to assess the number of museum visitors consisted in analysing the International Council of Museums (ICOM), TEA AECOM and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) statistic data and reports [13, 17, 34]. The method used to compare museum sanitary restrictions and their effort to attract potential visitors considered: museum rules displayed on their websites and their digital offer, i.e. virtual tours and access to exhibitions, electronic information brochures and education areas. The study explores the reaction of museums to the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, taking the perspective of their digital activities (measured by online engagement) and investigates the guidelines for visitors once they are reopened. Empirically, this study investigated the most popular museums in the world (according to the statistics provided by ICOM, data of 2019 and 2020) by collecting and analysing quantitative data available from these institutions and providing some insights through the qualitative analysis.

Overall, the analysis of the aforesaid data showed how differently museums and governments responded to the COVID-19 crisis, both during the lockdown and when museums gradually started to reopen their exhibitions to visitors.

Museum as a cultural institution

According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM) a museum could be defined as a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society, that cares for collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical or scientific importance. Their mission is to collect, preserve, interpret and display these objects for the study and education of the general public [17]².

In 2015, the United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) developed a document 'Recommendations concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums, Collections, their diversity and their Role in Society,' which places a considerable emphasis on the social role of museums: 'Museums are vital public spaces that should address all of society and can therefore play an important role in the development of social ties and cohesion, building citizenship, and reflecting on collective identities' [14].

The tradition of a museum institution has its roots in ancient times. Possibly the oldest one was a private collection of artifacts and curiosities owned by Princess Ennigaldi (Babylonian Empire, about 530 BC). Public access to museums was possible in ancient Athens: about 450 BC it was possible to visit an art collection at Acropolis (Propylaea gallery of Polygnotus' paintings and Phidias' sculptures) [3].

At present there are more than 55 000 museums in 202 countries according to the International Council of Museums ICOM [17] (or 95 000 of museums according to the UNESCO current statistics [13]). The most famous and most popular museums are located in major cities (London, Paris, New York, Beijing) [21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30].

Museums are present in all regions world-wide, however, they are not evenly distributed: 65% of museums are located in Western Europe and North America, and 33% in Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia. Less than 1% of museums is located in Africa and less than 1% in the Arab States. There are no museums in some African states and small islands [13], [Table 1 and 2]. Inequalities between regions around the world are seen even more clearly when the number of museums per million inhabitants is taken into account. More than 100 museums per 1 million inhabitants are in 13 countries only: Andorra, Niue, San Marino, Monaco, Iceland, Montenegro, Georgia, Malta, Estonia, Switzerland,

² According to the International Council of Museums Status, adapter by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24th of August 2007, the current definition of a 'museum' is as follows: 'A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment'. It is to be underlined that the ICOM will be engaging its members in two different participatory processes that will shape the museum of the future: the revision of the museum definition and the review of the ICOM Code of Ethics [17].

Norway, Mongolia and the US. The countries with more than 50 museums per 1 million inhabitants are located in Western Europe. Half of the states across the world (about 100 countries) have fewer than 5 museums per million inhabitants, and 13 states have no museums at all (Africa, Latin America, Asia, small islands).

Poland with about 1000 museums and the population of 36 million is located in the group of 22 countries, having more than 25 museums per million inhabitants, but fewer than 50 per million inhabitants (position along with New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Greece, Japan, Slovenia, Armenia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Lithuania, the Russian Federation, Spain, Australia, Moldova, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cuba, Sweden, Albania, Mauritius and Belize) [13].

Museums have various aims, some are focused on research and documentation, some on collection and preservation, while others mainly favour serving the general public and education, even at primary school syllabuses level, over preservation and research. There are many different types of museums: art museums, natural history museums, war museums, science museums, archaeological museums, biographical museums as well as historic houses and historic sites. Most museums have permanent displays and occasionally organized temporary exhibitions.

Today museums play a vital role in modern societies, not only preserving tangible and intangible heritage, but also providing spaces (physically and virtually) that promote local culture, help education institutions, inspire local communities and foster creativity, also strengthen social cohesion. They also help to build bridges and dialogue, as these cultural institutions are based on values of respect, tolerance and cultural diversity. In many countries around the world the role of museums in the promotion of sustainable cultural tourism is a key driver of economic development, both locally and nationally.

The UNESCO 'Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society' placed particular emphasis on the importance of digital technologies: 'The functions of museums are also influenced by new technologies and their growing role in everyday life. These technologies have great potential for promoting museums throughout the world, but they also constitute potential barriers for people and museums that do not have access to them or the knowledge and skills to use them effectively' [13].

In 2020 and 2021 the growing importance of digital projects in the museum sector was demonstrated by the rapid transformation of museum activities such as exhibitions, conferences, museum classes into their digital form - in order to bring them to life on the Internet (museum websites, social media platform as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). It should be noted that many of these activities had been launched before the COVID-19 pandemic, being underway for some years. It included the whole range of museums' digital strategy and very seri-

ous investments: the digitisation of collections, an up-to-date inventory of collections, sufficient IT infrastructure, stable Internet access, dedicated staff with the knowledge and skills to carry out digital projects³. The actions taken by museums during the lockdown showed inequalities in the access to digital technologies, and consequently to education and culture, seen in different regions of the world.

Museums and COVID-19 pandemic crisis

The tourism sector is among the most affected industries by the COVID-19 pandemic and cultural tourism is not an exception. Since March 2020 onwards, most governments have taken radical measures to stop the spread of COVID-19, resulting in the closure of cultural institutions, museums included, to the general public. The closure of the majority of museums on all continents was an exceptional event and has had economic and non-economic consequences.

In 2020, about 95% museums around the world (more than 85 000 cultural institutions worldwide) were closed – according to their government sanitary regulations [13, 17]. These severe law regulations that were meant to safeguard the safety of staff and visitors, resulted in serious economic consequences, as well as in social and cultural repercussions. According to the ICOM report, developed in September 2021 [13], in 2021 most museums in Europe were open, but the majority of cultural institutions were closed in Latin America, Caribbean, Africa and Asia. With museums closed and countries in lockdown, the number of visitors dropped, causing reduction of revenue in some cases as much as up to 90% annually. Expected immediate consequences include the necessity to downsize the staff, reduce the number of exhibitions, reduce the scope of educational programs, limit opening hours and even close a given museum (about 10% museums is endangered, mainly located in Africa and Latin America). On the other hand, most museums in Europe and North America have access to different kind of resources and financial support: emergency funds, compensations for losses, emergency tax policy, fundraising campaigns, suspension of tax, rents or mortgages [10] [Table 3, 4]⁴. The physical closure of museums has

³ For some decades the largest, most popular (in terms of number of visitors) museums have solidly invested in digital technologies and as a result enjoyed a substantial rise in the number of visitors to their websites during the lockdown. For example, the Louvre Museum in Paris experienced a ten time increase in visits to its website in 2020 [26]. It is believed that such initiatives could also inspire other museums, especially small cultural institutions and museums located in Africa, Latin America and some Asian regions [13].

⁴ According to the UNESCO survey on the impact of COVID-19 on museums in Europe, 30% of museums have reported to lose up to 1000 Euro per week and 25% up to 5000 Euro per week. Several large museums reported to lose between 100 000 Euro and 600 000 Euro per week [13].

forced these institutions to look for alternative solutions and opportunities for recovery.

The impact of COVID-19 has changed our everyday life: millions of people around the world changed their occupations, social and education activities moved from 'ground-based' to digital platforms, due to lockdown we experienced restrictions of physical access to buildings and services. Nowadays, museums try to cope with the crisis by implementing various digital activities, trying to diversify their communication tools and to introduce new social channels to reach their audience, or by adapting digital online activities to keep in touch with potential visitors. In 2020 and 2021 many museums took advantage of the digitisation investments and work already done before the COVID-19 crisis. It includes online collections, virtual tours, virtual guided tours, digital exhibitions, podcasts as well as online publication and brochure information [Table 3]⁵.

For example, the Smithsonian Museum has released as many as nearly 3.0 million high-resolution images from across its collection onto an open-access online platform. It offered its numerous virtual visitors the possibility to remix, repurpose and re-imagine the collection.

Museum activities on the most popular social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) have also been developed and numerous webinars, online conferences have been organized. These projects included games, colouring activities, school lessons, quizzes – initiated to alleviate the challenges of confinement. [20].

In response to lockdown, most museums regularly offer virtual streaming guided tours of their collections and exhibitions (as a walkthrough of the exhibition experience), hosted by exhibition curators; among them such projects have been recently launched by New Pinacotheca in Munich, National Gallery in London, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam [4, 24, 29]. Today, the online museum activity encompasses not only education and museum classes, but also quizzes, contests, competitions (Prado Museum in Madrid). Other online offers are podcasts informing about works in art galleries, unique museums (such as 'Museums in Strange Places', 'Museum Buzz', 'Museum People', 'Speaking Culturally' and many others) [17].

In 2020 and 2021, museum digital projects and actions were present on all continents, but their intensity was connected with the distribution and number of museums in a given region. There are countries with a great number of museums, well-equipped cultural institutions, with a considerable experience in digital projects, which could use previously developed digitised resources.

⁵ It should be noted in this context that not only did traditional museums and cultural institutions make an effort to oppose museum closures, but also initiatives like 'Google Arts and Culture' website were a subject of great interest during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, helping to overcome cultural and education limitations.

At the same time, digital activities of museums were almost absent in Africa, Latin America and small Pacific islands. It means that for milliards of people around the world access to virtual museums remains out of reach. Not to mention an important gender and generation gap in terms of access to digital technologies [13, 17]⁶. According to the ICOM Report, in 2021 most museums in Europe and North America enhanced their digital activities such as online educational programmes, online collection display, online exhibitions, live events, learning programs, brochures, podcasts, social media and virtual tours.

However, the situation on other continents (in Africa, Latin America, some regions of Asia) is alarming, mostly due to the lack of funds and poorly equipped cultural institutions. It shows how impact of COVID-19 on museums and cultural activities varies considerably depending on a region. It is true that social media have brought about democratization of communication, however, poor access to the Internet limits the possibilities in less developed regions. It means that milliards of people are deprived of online access to cultural events which could potentially help to overcome the COVID-19 crisis: reduce isolation, improve mental health, support educational needs and give leisure and fun retreat. It is estimated that in 2020–2021 confined populations of Africa, Latin America and some regions of Asia had no access to the Internet, resulting in unequal access to cultural resources and education (currently it makes roughly half of the world's population) [13, 19]. What is more, there are further regional inequalities between museums and their inclusiveness.

Museums in Europe and North America are not endangered by political crises, armed conflicts and natural disasters. These are considerable concern of cultural institutions in Latin America, Africa, Caribbean and some Asian regions.

This might explain why so many museums in these regions are struggling without any satisfactory effect to be reopened and are still closed. The reasons of not being reopened are government directives concerning staff and visitors' sanitary safety, but also lack of security of collections, reduced staff, crime danger, in some cases even bankruptcy (as a result of loss of revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis).

Another important problem, which museums around the world must face and seek a solution for, is how to attract back visitors to museums, as the long-term effect of lockdown might have weakened potential visitors' interest in collections, made a poorer link with a local community and changed habits of the general public on the ground of the socially distanced world caused by the pan-

⁶ According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), almost half of the world's population does not have access to the Internet. Data shows also gender and generation inequalities, for example around 400 million women less than men have a smartphone and can access mobile Internet [19].

demic (for example, people might be afraid of indoor public space, virtual visits could be preferred) [1, 6, 7, 10, 11].

In 2021, museums could be reopened to the general public, however in most countries with major limitations. To ensure the safety of staff and tourists, museum managers had to obey the government, local government regulations and meet specific safety measures. These safety management measures encompass: temperature screening, regular sanitization, hand sanitizers, regular ventilation, enforced physical distancing, favouring individuals or small groups over large throng of visitors [9, 10].

Museums' safety measures vary, even within the EU countries. In September 2021, visitors had to obey different regulations in different countries (the rules and safety protocols might also differ within a country and within its regions) [23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31]. For example, in September 2021, the Uffizi Galleries in Florence (Italy) did not allow the museum visitors having body temperature above 37.5°C and visitors not having proper face masks, covering fully their mouth and nose, to enter. It was recommended there to keep interpersonal physical distance of 1.8 m and any mass gathering was prohibited (visitor groups could not exceed 10 people) [28].

In September 2021, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam (the Netherlands) required an interpersonal distance of 1.5 m, although face masks were no longer compulsory (however, one could wear a mask if it helped them to feel more comfortable), the coronavirus entry pass was expected, i.e. the COVID-19 passport proving double vaccination was required [29].

In September 2021, the National Museum in Warsaw (Poland) remained open for visitors, expecting three simple precautions: wearing a face mask covering mouth and nose, hand disinfection when entering the museum and keeping physical distance (without specification of how many metres between individuals had to be secured) [23].

In September 2021, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (US) had very specific guidelines for its visitors: all visitors aged 12 or older had to be vaccinated against COVID-19, face masks were required for all visitors (no exceptions considered), physical distancing of 1.8 m (two arms' length) was required, regular hand disinfection during a visit was strongly recommended, no large bags were allowed as a coat check was closed, all visitors aged 18 or older had to show a valid photo ID (Driver's licence, passport, School ID Card, IDNYC Card, Government ID Card). The visitors could enter the museum according to the time shown on their ticket. Children under the age of 12 had to be accompanied by a vaccinated adult. The pre-visit information displayed on the museum website ended with a statement: 'Visitors, who cannot display their proof of vaccination, are welcomed to enjoy the Museum's virtual offering. The Met reserves

the right to ask visitors who do not follow these guidelines to leave the Museum's premise' [21].

This policy, as the director and president of The Metropolitan Museum explained, is focused on the wellbeing of visitors, staff and volunteers and is an act of responsibility and respect for public health precautions [2, 17, 21].

Final conclusions and recommendations

Museums have traditionally played a major role in cultural tourism. Cultural institutions were among the first to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which resulted in severe restrictions including shutdowns. Since 2020, museum visitors have been facing several challenges in adapting to the new COVID-19 regulations, such as social distancing, disinfection routine, COVID-19 passports possession and an obligation to wear a face mask.

One of the most important challenges of museums today is to be flexible, ready to adapt quickly and respond effectively at short notice to the changing sanitary restrictions. It is true that the COVID-19 pandemic has severely damaged the cultural tourism industry and there were major decreases in museum visitors numbers in 2020 and 2021. However, at the same time, as it was proved by the statistic data in the ICOM, UNESCO and TEA AECOM reports, it was a period of unprecedented innovation and efforts of many museums worldwide.

In 2021, in many countries lockdown gradually came to end and museums struggled with the possibility of their reopening. Nevertheless, these institutions had to obey government and local sanitary regulations, revise and update their health security protocols.

Although national law directives might differ, depending very much on the specific pandemic situation in a given region, there are some basic measures that should be considered to protect staff and visitor wellbeing and maintain health safety:

- information about health safety protocols for the public and staff, obligatory law regulations (pre-visit, online information),
- maximum number of visitors allowed into the museum indoor space (defined on the base of a maximum number of people per square meters and safety distance of 1.5 m between two individuals),
- determining average visit time in a museum to establish time slots,
- booking system online, by phone, by email (online tickets can be scanned by visitors at the entrance to the museum),
- determining opening hours dedicated to certain groups of visitors (seniors, school children),

- denying access to a museum to visitors showing symptoms of the disease (consider temperature screening, COVID-19 passports),
- considering ground markings and lines to ensure recommended physical distance,
- closing cloakrooms and any services requiring staff presence (glass partitions to protect staff at ticket offices and reception/ information desks),
- guided tours allowed only in small groups of visitors with the safety physical distance maintained,
- opening of commercial areas such as cafeterias, bookshops, souvenir shops to be a subject of government regulations,
- hand sanitizers should be installed at the entrance of the museum, in its commercial area, in the bathrooms,
- ensuring that electronic devices such as headphones, audio guides etc. are disinfected after each use,
- all exposed devices at the museum (door handles, control buttons at lifts) should be cleaned frequently and disinfected,
- lifts should be used only by persons with special needs as mobility impairments; they should be cleaned, ventilated and disinfected frequently,
- access to the public space or exhibition rooms having facilities that cannot be cleaned and disinfected, for example, contemporary art installations, should be restricted,
- encouraging visitors and staff to wear facemasks and keep physical distance of 1.5 m.

It is to be underlined that the regulations and restrictions listed above are meant to secure the wellbeing and health safety of staff and visitors. They meet the standards and guidelines developed by the International Council of Museums Committee, concerning protection and promotion of museums, their diversity and role in society, including museum inclusiveness and accessibility for all (ICOM Code of Ethics) [17]. Nevertheless, they have to be subject to revision, as the health situation changes dynamically and more effective ways to protect museum staff and visitors' health safety and wellbeing are available with time.

In February 2021, the UNWTO Ethics, Culture and Social Responsibility Department issued an Inclusive Recovery Guide – Sociocultural Impacts of COVID-19, issue 2: Cultural Tourism. It was aimed to help governments and tourism industry to respond efficiently to the pandemic crisis. Among other issues, a new role and significance of museums in the tourism recovery process is presented and highlighted. The report stressed the possibility of virtual access to numerous museums' collections as a source of enjoyment and strong inspiration for future visits 'in real life'.

In September 2021, the UNWTO together with UNESCO (its sister agency), collaborated to produce a set of new guidelines focusing on the responsible re-

start of cultural tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic, with an emphasis on the leading role of museums in this process.

In 2021, the gradual rollout of a COVID-19 vaccine is expected to help restore consumer confidence, contribute to relaxing travel restrictions and possibility to re-open cultural institutions. Furthermore, it is believed that in the post-pandemic time cultural tourism will have an important role to play in promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, fostering innovations and providing more resilient, responsible and resource efficient business models [15].

Table 1. Estimate number of museums around the world and impact of COVID-19 on this sector

	Region	Estimated number of museums in the given region (estimated number of museums temporarily closed)	Estimated share (in percent) in the museums worldwide (estimated percentage of museums temporarily closed in region)
1	Western Europe and North America	61 634 (58 281)	65.1% (94.6%)
2	Eastern Europe	11 465 (11 311)	12.1% (98.7%)
3	Latin America and Caribbean	8067 (8061)	8.5% (99.9%)
4	Asia and Pacific	12 195 (7237)	12.8% (59.3%)
5	Africa	841 (738)	0.88% (87.8%)
6	Arab States	473 (473)	0.5% (100%)
	Total: 195 States	94 675 (86 101)	100% (90%)

Source: UNESCO Report on museums around the world in the COVID-19 pandemic time [13].

Table 2. Number of museums in the country (density of the museum network world wide)

	Number of museums	Number of countries	States in descending order: from the state with the largest number of museums (Germany in item '1')
1	More than 5000	4	Germany, Japan, Russian Federation, the United States of America
2	2000–5000	5	France, Brazil, Canada, Italy, the United Kingdom
3	1000–2000	7	Poland, Spain, Mexico, Switzerland, the Republic of Korea, China, Argentina
4	500–1000	9	Australia, Belgium, Hungary, Austria, the Netherlands, Iran, Norway, Georgia, Ukraine
5	200–500	23	India, Greece, Turkey, Romania, Portugal, Colombia, Denmark, Czech Republic, Mongolia, Cuba, Finland, Ireland, Chile, Sweden, Croatia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, South Africa, Bulgaria, Peru, Slovakia, Israel
6	100–200	13	Philippines, Ecuador, Estonia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Latvia, Serbia, Armenia, Moldova, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Lithuania, Myanmar

Table 2. Number of museums in the country... (cont.)

	Number of museums	Number of countries	States in descending order: from the state with the largest number of museums (Germany in item '1')
7	50–100	17	Cyprus, Montenegro, Slovenia, Thailand, Egypt, Albania, Tunisia, Malaysia, Malta, Tajikistan, Iceland, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Uruguay, Cambodia, Nepal, Venezuela
8	25–50	16	Nigeria, Pakistan, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, Luxembourg, the Dominican Republic, Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, Mauritius, Saudi Arabia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Namibia, North Macedonia
9	1–25	88	All other countries
10	No museums	13	Antigua and Barbuda, Djibouti, Cook Islands, Dominica, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Palau, South Sudan, Tuvalu

Source: UNESCO Report on museums around the world in the COVID-19 pandemic time [13].

Table 3. Digital services of museums during the pandemic crisis – regional comparison ('yes' answers of museum professionals to a question: 'Does your museum provide...?' – ICOM survey 2021)

Region	Online collections	Online exhibitions	Live events	Learning programs	Podcasts	Social media
Europe	63%	46%	54%	37%	26%	95%
North America	67%	54%	69%	75%	40%	97%
Latin America	62%	49%	58%	56%	30%	92%
Africa	30%	28%	45%	20%	43%	83%
Arab Countries	33%	33%	44%	22%	44%	100%
Asia	72%	48%	56%	48%	62%	91%

Source: International Council of Museums (ICOM) Report of September 2021: 'Museums, museum professionals and COVID-19' [17].

Table 4. List of the most visited museums in the world (comparison of the year 2019 and 2020)

	Museum	Country	Number of visitors in 2019	Number of visitors in 2020
1	Louvre Museum in Paris	France	9 600 000	2 700 000
2	National Museum of China	China	7 390 000	1 600 000
3	Tate Modern in London	UK	6 100 000	1 433 000
4	Shanghai Science and Technological Museum	China	4 820 000	1 351 000

Table 4. List of the most visited museums in the world... (cont.)

	Museum	Country	Number of visitors in 2019	Number of visitors in 2020
5	Vatican Museums	Vatican	6 880 000	1 300 000
6	British Museum	UK	6 210 000	1 275 000
7	Museo Reina Sofia Madrid	Spain	4 430 000	1 248 000
8	Hermitage Museum Petersburg	Russia	4 960 000	1 203 000
9/10	National Gallery London Natural History Museum London	UK	6 010 000 5 420 000	1 197 000
11	Metropolitan Museum of Art NYC	US	6 770 000	1 125 000

Source: International Council of Museums (ICOM) Report: 'Museums, museum professionals and COVID-19' [17].

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