



CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THE EUROPEAN MUSEUM OF THE YEAR AWARD

The criteria are concentrated on those aspects of a museum which – more than the quality of the exhibitions, of the building, etc. - contribute most directly to attracting and satisfying visitors beyond their expectations. Kenneth Hudson, the founder of the European Museum of the Year Award and the European Museum Forum, called it 'Public Quality'. This means that the judges try to find out to what extent a museum meets the needs and wishes of its visitors and provides for their comfort and convenience. As such, EMF's main duty is to the public, not to national or international organisations.

The following criteria are the most important in a whole package of factors which are evaluated:

Basic appearance and performance

The building should be suitable for visitors, displays, collections and staff. It should, for example, serve the needs of the exhibition and the public, and not be merely a monument for its architect.

Exhibition, displays should cater for different levels and have a strong storyline supported by objects. For example, does the museum ask questions without providing all the answers?

The European dimension of museums is very important and is regarded as a decisive argument for any decision, especially in the context of the Council of Europe Prize.

Design, media, graphics: their functionality, readability and use of media.

Amenities (taking into consideration the standards of the area) – parking, café or restaurant, shop, information desk, toilets, multilingual facilities, disabled access, publications of various kinds.

Management and staff – customer friendliness; knowledge of current museum trends.

Activities

Events, to include educational programme, adult education, family and/or special group events, courses, workshops.

Website, taking into account its accessibility, quality and quantity, attractiveness, complementary to exhibitions and other activities.

Social responsibility in relation to local, regional, and national communities. Mission statement.

Marketing and PR – scope of media attention, acquiring support (friends, business club, etc.), partners in networks.

General atmosphere and bright ideas

Bright ideas, for example in exhibitions, funding, logistics, co-operation, new audiences.

General atmosphere – visitor satisfaction after the visit.

An important background consideration is to investigate the ways in which a candidate is likely to change the course of museum thinking or museum practice in these respects, nationally and internationally. That is why special attention is given to imaginative interpretation and presentation – conveying the mission of the museum – education, communication and amenities.

Attention is also paid to conservation, storage, documentation and training, even though their influence on the museum's public image is rather small. However, these activities must meet professional (inter-)national accepted standards.

Note:

In practice, the judges compare the information sent by the museum with the reality at the time of their visit. They meet the director and staff, observe the visitors, study the documents provided, and look around in the museum, from the displays to the toilets, experiencing the museum's environment in depth and the services it offers.

The members of the judging panel come from a number of different countries and have different backgrounds, experiences and professions. They therefore deliberately reflect a variety of professional and cultural backgrounds when judging museums. This gives a comprehensive approach to the evaluation of each candidate.