



## The Stars of Europe

### Museum of Contemporary History Celje - Children's Museum Herman's Den 2005/2006

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#### 1. Exhibition Concept

Herman's Den opened in 1995 as a part of the MCHC and is still the only children's museum in Slovenia. The museum for children draws its contents both from the past and the present, from festivities and everyday life. It houses two collections connected to children and their lives. Children are guided through the museum by Herman the Fox, the ever-present museum's mascot. Herman can be seen in the exhibition spaces, in the storehouse, the play room, the gallery, the patisserie and in other places. Through diverse forms and methods of working, the Children's Museum Herman's Den helps children discover and understand the world. The exhibition The Stars of Europe is related to Slovenia's accession to the EU. At the exhibition, children were able to learn about the life, tradition and culture in all EU countries. The exhibition displayed traditional and typical products, the visitors could hear their music, learn about their sports, cuisine, science, etc.

## **2. Reception**

The goal was to present the diversity of all by then 25 EU countries and give the children the opportunity to diversify the exhibition by putting on display some souvenirs from the places in EU, where they had travelled to. The authors strongly defend the idea that the children should be raised in a mutual tolerance and diversity, encouraging the development of their own integrity and learning about their own culture. They need to be enabled with the awareness of the world around them in all its bipolarity. The idea of the exhibition and the children's museum is to introduce to the children the world that surrounds them in a spontaneous and flexible way, with the changes brought about by time, and among other things to introduce an institution - museum as a pleasant institution.

The exhibition, dedicated mainly to the youngest visitors, represented the diversity of geographical, historical and cultural backgrounds of all 25 European countries. The authors of the exhibition selected typical, traditional and recognizable objects, identifying each country, its culture and people, language, music, and throb. In it the children learned about the diversity in our common dwelling, as it should be to get used to mutual tolerance and respect for diversity. The total number of the visitors was 19.826.

## **3. Exhibition Design**

Tour of the exhibition started as a journey with its beginning in the home town of Celje and Slovenia and then continued all around the European countries. Cohesive thread throughout the exhibition was multiculturalism. The diversity and similarity was presented with typical and representative objects (at least three per county), representing countries, contemporary music, contemporary and past life throb, diversity of languages, etc. The importance was given also to the fact that people, environment, society and culture are constantly changing. Europe was the source and the base, from where the exhibition was leading to Slovenia and other countries. EU was represented with common values, such as freedom, democracy, human rights and writ of law. The exhibition will be again partially repeated in cooperation with another museum on a castle Rajhenburg in the second half of 2013.

## **4. Visitors Approach-Activation/Participation**

Children were able to add their value to the exhibition by bringing souvenirs from the places in Europe, where they have been. There were also various workshops, separately dedicated to every country out of 25, to introduce them to the children even easier. Children had a chance to realize, that some things, supposedly typical for Slovenia exist or even characterise also other countries around Europe. One of such examples was the Idria lace – a symbol of Slovenia, which happen to be a symbol of Belgium as well.



## **5. Conclusion: the Stars of Europe in respect to the COP1 and COP2**

As we learned from the exhibition in “the language of children” - same objects can be perceived as national symbols in different countries. From the idea to introduce 25 countries the side effect was to learn about the similarities as well. With its final result, that we have more similarities than differences (Toolkit 1 – the object immanent, comparative, and thematic and beyond Europe approach). The content was especially prepared for children, meaning: the information was given on their level in “the language of children” and in belief we need to start early by raising cosmopolitan, tolerant and proficient people, who are aware of the land where they live as well as the EU. And the museum is seen as exactly the place for this and this is also the idea behind the exhibition – for the children to learn and debate about (Toolkit 2 – integrating cultural Europe (social arena)). Children were able to add personal value to the exhibition by bringing their souvenir items from travelling in the EU countries, which made the exhibition more homely for them (Toolkit 3 – activation, participation and & role modification). Children were able to find certain similarities in so apparently different objects and ways of living (Toolkit 4 – synesthetic translation of perspective). There was basically no web interaction while the exhibition was on a display, but it will be now, when a part of the exhibition will be hosted in Museum of Krško (Toolkit 5 - Social web and interaction).

## **6. Bibliography**

<http://www.muzej-nz-ce.si/index.php?id=79&L=1> (14.08.2013)



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Part of the display 'The Stars of Europe', CHMC (Photo: Helena Vogelsang, 2005)



A part of the display The Stars of Europe, CHMC (Photo: Helena Vogelsang, 2005)



A part of the display where more information on EU was available, CHMC (Photo: Jožica Trateški, 2005)