

Report about Erasmus+ project in Horsens/Denmark to participate at NEMO conference 2025

Participant: Maria Vogeser-Kalt, Financial Director at Museum Arbeitswelt (Museum of the Working World), www.museumarbeitswelt.at, 4400 Steyr, Austria

Since our museum is a member association and quite small compared to other museums, the budget for travelling is very limited. Exchanging ideas with colleagues is therefore something we often do online or during our holidays. The possibility to join a group of museum experts with support of Erasmus+ was a very interesting and rewarding experience. It already started during the travel time (by train) and a first contact with other participants at a train station. We enjoyed informal talks about the daily life and challenges at the museums, exchanged ideas about caring for a team and ourselves, while being away from the day-to-day stress. This was really engaging – and my **first learning** was – **I am not alone with** these troubles about difficult budgeting, an uncertain future and an overload of work.

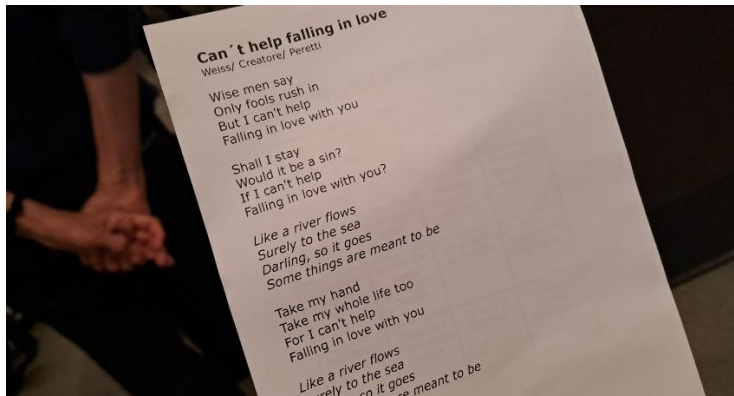


© Vogeser, conference audience

The first event after arriving at the conference in Horsens / DK about 'Who cares? Museums, wellbeing, and resilience' was a get-together on Sunday, 26th October 2025 in the late afternoon at the prison museum. The place itself was really inspiring – huge and completely different to every other museum I've seen before. However, the atmosphere amongst the conference participants was **truly warm and welcoming** – from the very beginning onwards. **My next learning** was, that **welcome notes** don't have to be long. All **speakers** explained the core subject and their specific part in the whole setting very **clearly and understandable**. The goal of the conference was laid out: „*We are all here to learn about the role of museums in supporting mental health, wellbeing, and community resilience*“.

Another learning was, **how music could create a magic moment**. In Austria - especially in my area - openings are understood as an opportunity to invite the best performers of the town, often highly recognized musicians. In contrary, in the case of the NEMO conference it was the 'Lung Choir' with amateur singers of about 30 people suffering from different kinds of lung diseases and conditions that affect the airways. Singing is a kind of treatment, at the same time it is fun and brings people together. The choir invited all conference participants to join their singing. This event created a real touching moment. After that opening ceremony there grew a feeling of belonging together and knowing each other – although the participants came from all over Europe and some of them didn't know anyone before. In that way, this first conference day was a real

opener into the topic of museums that want to embrace their potential as spaces for **emotional healing and social connection**.



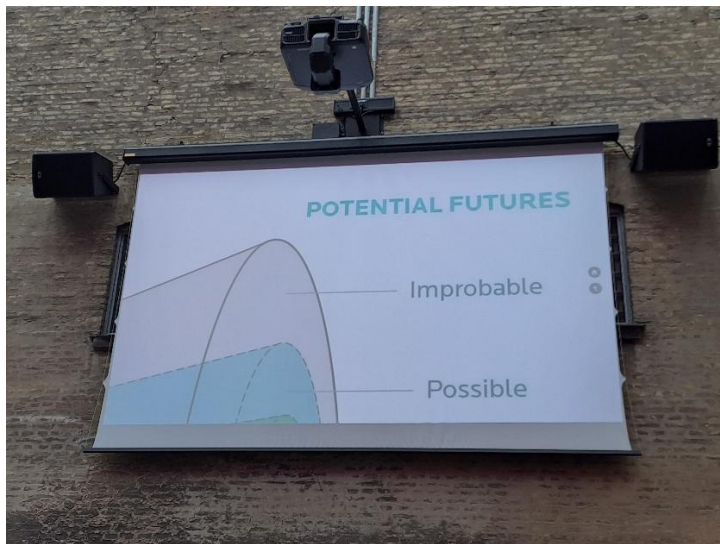
© Vogeser, singing with lung choir

On the second day, Monday 27th October, we started with insights in therapeutic experiences, learned from inspiring case studies and innovative approaches that some museums already had evaluated – often in cooperation with other institutions, for example from the health sector. My next **learning** was, that **cooperations between museums and the public sector** are very vital and useful. They function like **uplifting contributors to our society** – especially during difficult times, with war, inflation, climate crisis and so on. My personal highlight was the key note about the future, which sounded even more inspiring than anything I've heard before and opened our hearts and minds to feel the power of positive thinking and building up a collective strength amongst generations and nations.



© Vogeser, key note by Elizabeth Merritt

Elizabeth Merritt, the Founding Director of a Center for the Future of Museums in the USA did a very good job in catching the attention of the audience – not just with what she said, but also by the way she entered the stage and interacted with the listeners. **Another learning** for me – I will try to **be more proud about working for a museum** after this conference. The potential of the **future museum** is open and we are eager to **shape and develop** it.



© Vogeser, potential of museums