

Republic of Serbia

Report by Centre for Study in Cultural Development

Introduction – Key Issues

The Republic of Serbia, as one of the stakeholders in the Balkans, historically has been standing at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. Such position and diversity of heritage dating back from prehistory to the modern age, occasionally raises interest in museums as institutions that present and interpret heritage. Museums are also perceived as important factors in the development of cultural tourism, which is the topic of current debates and also a part of the Strategy for the development of cultural tourism in Serbia.

Official statistics in the domain of culture is kept in several fields – relating to the work of archives, libraries, cinemas, theatres, museums and galleries, and intending to spread to immovable heritage protection. In current official statistics, attention is given to cultural resources, programmes, and audiences. In case of museums, resources are monitored in terms of processing collections and acquisition of new materials; programmes are monitored in terms of temporary exhibitions in the museum(s) and exhibitions held outside museums (in other towns and cities in Serbia as well as abroad); whereas audiences are monitored through data on visitors – based upon nowadays standard division into individual and group visits. Methodological solutions concerning the museum statistics are work in progress, and some changes could be expected in further period.

Definition of a Museum

In the Republic of Serbia, museums are classified as a group of institutions acting in the field of cultural heritage protection. General definition, given in the Law on Cultural Property (see section below: Existence of Museum-related Laws) derive from ICOM Statutes (The International Council of Museums) and Annex of the VIII ICOM statutes (specifying that museums may also be cultural centres and other institutions that facilitate the conservation, continuation, and management of material and intangible cultural heritage). Hence, in Serbian statistics, a museum is a cultural institution registered with the competent body which has a permanent collection of museum artefacts, whose objectives (research, conservation and exhibition) are of public importance. Formation of a unique list of museums in Serbia lies upon the data of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia, National Museum in Belgrade, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and the Centre for Study in Cultural Development. The list has been updated in line with changes in the field, since online access is provided to all cultural institutions included in electronic database of the Center for Study in Cultural Development.

The main criterion for qualification of museums is their capacity to carry out all museum activities, regardless of the legal status, i.e. whether they are independent institutions or incorporated units. Therefore, the list covers:

1. Museums in the strict sense of the word and according to the ICOM definition;
2. Museums incorporated in other museums (museums performing independently the museum activity but being formally and legally qualified as incorporated units of another museum in the strict sense of the word);
3. Museums incorporated in other institutions (museum collections and units being formally and legally qualified as incorporated units of polyvalent cultural and library centres). Within this group are also museums that are part of institutions which are not cultural in the strictest sense, such as the National Bank of Serbia, Serbian Railways, Serbian Post, etc.

Existence of Museum-Related Laws

The Serbian Law on Culture (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 72/2009, 13/2016 and 30/2016-corr.) sets principles and objectives of cultural development as well as a general framework for the operation of all cultural institutions in the domain of culture. Principles upon which cultural development in Serbia stands include a wide range of roles that museums currently perform (e.g. preservation of cultural and historical heritage, promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions on local, national and European levels) or may perform (e.g. integration of cultural development into overall sustainable development, enhancing development of cultural environment as a vital part of the living environment of general population). Accordingly, general interest in the domain of culture includes discovering, gathering information, researching and promoting cultural heritage, providing access to cultural heritage and digitalization of heritage as a tool for heritage promotion and interpretation. Articles 22-49 of the Law on Culture define issues important for functioning of all cultural institutions, including museums – constitution, statutory obligations, management (election of managers and their duties, members of managing boards and their duties, members of supervisory boards and their duties, boards of professionals in charge of providing aid in conceptualization and execution of programmes policies on institutional level).

The Law on Cultural Property (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 71/1994, 52/2011-other law and 99/2011-other law) is a specific piece of legislation that defines the system of protection and usage of cultural properties as well as conditions for performing activities in the field of protection of cultural property. According to this law, institutions in charge of cultural heritage protection are archives (in charge of archival materials), libraries (in charge of books, particularly old and rare books and publications), museums (in charge of movable heritage – pieces of arts, ethnographic artefacts, archaeological findings, numismatic material, military insignias and historical artefacts), institutes for protection of cultural monuments (in charge of immovable heritage – archaeological sites, objects of traditional architecture, ambient complexes, monuments and historical complexes), as well as the Yugoslav Film Archive as a special institution that safeguards film materials, films and publications related to cinematography. This Law defines procedures of classification and proclamation of heritage according to its features (as a heritage of exceptional significance, a heritage of great significance and cultural property). Each type of institution keeps records on heritage under its own jurisdiction and suggests new entries. The Law also defines procedures in preservation, promotion, and usage of cultural properties for different purposes including commercial marketing. In order to enable an efficient system of heritage protection, this Law defines a central institution within each type. In case of museums, the central institution is the National Museum in Belgrade. Like all central institutions in charge of a certain type of heritage, this museum coordinates work of other museums, gives permissions for temporary or permanent export of cultural properties and organizes exams for obtaining curator's licences and promotion of curators into the higher rank of senior curators.

There is also the Law on Cultural Property that defines ownership of cultural properties – cultural properties of exceptional significance are state-owned as well as many cultural properties of great significance. Private ownership of cultural properties is also possible and this Law defines duties of private owners. The Law also prescribes procedures in cases of accidental findings.

An important bylaw in the field of cultural protection is the “Regulation on jurisdiction according to types of artistic and historical artefacts as well as according to territory” (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 28/95). According to the territorial placement, forty-three (43) museums are recognized as regional museums, governed by local communities (cities and municipalities). Regulations referring to the types of collections are described in the following sections.

Categories According to Type of Collection

According to the “Regulation on jurisdiction according to types of artistic and historical artefacts as well as according to territory” (mentioned in the above section), seven museums are nominated as central institutions providing assistance to other museums in technical protection of artefacts and collections, although sometimes also in preparation for presentation of artefacts and collections at exhibitions. The National Museum in Belgrade is nominated as a museum that provides

protection of archaeological findings, numismatic collections and pieces of fine arts created until the beginning of the 20th century; The Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade provides protection and assistance in protection regarding ethnological and ethnographical artefacts and collections; The Historical Museum of Serbia (arms and military equipment dating until the end of the Middle Ages, uniforms, medals, insignias, maps, plans and atlases, memorial artefacts connected with important persons in Serbian history), The Museum of Applied Arts (artefacts that document and represent various types of applied arts – ceramics, textile, furniture, lace, tapestry, carpets, musical instruments except for the traditional/ethnology related instruments etc.), The Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade (pieces of fine arts created from the beginning of the 20th century up to date), The Natural History Museum (geological items, fossils, botany, zoology, fishing and hunting items), The Museum of Science and Technics (artefacts related to the history of science, technics and technology). In 2016, The Museum of Naïve and Marginal Arts was added to this list, as a museum in charge of protection of artistic works of amateur and unrecognized artists.

For the purpose of statistical analysis, museums are further classified according to their dominant collections as complex museums or special museums.

Complex museums mainly have the following collections: archaeological (from prehistory until the end of Middle Ages), numismatic, historical (from the 16th century up to date), ethnographic and artistic. These collections are relevant to the region (regional museums) or local communities (local museums).

Special museums collect, preserve and present to the public artefacts of certain type. For the purpose of the statistical analysis, all special museums are classified as: socio–historical (e.g. archaeological, ethnographical, historical), art (e.g. art galleries, museums of contemporary arts, museums of applied arts), natural history (e.g. fossils, botany, zoology), and economic–technical museums (e.g. science and technique, railway, postal service, etc).

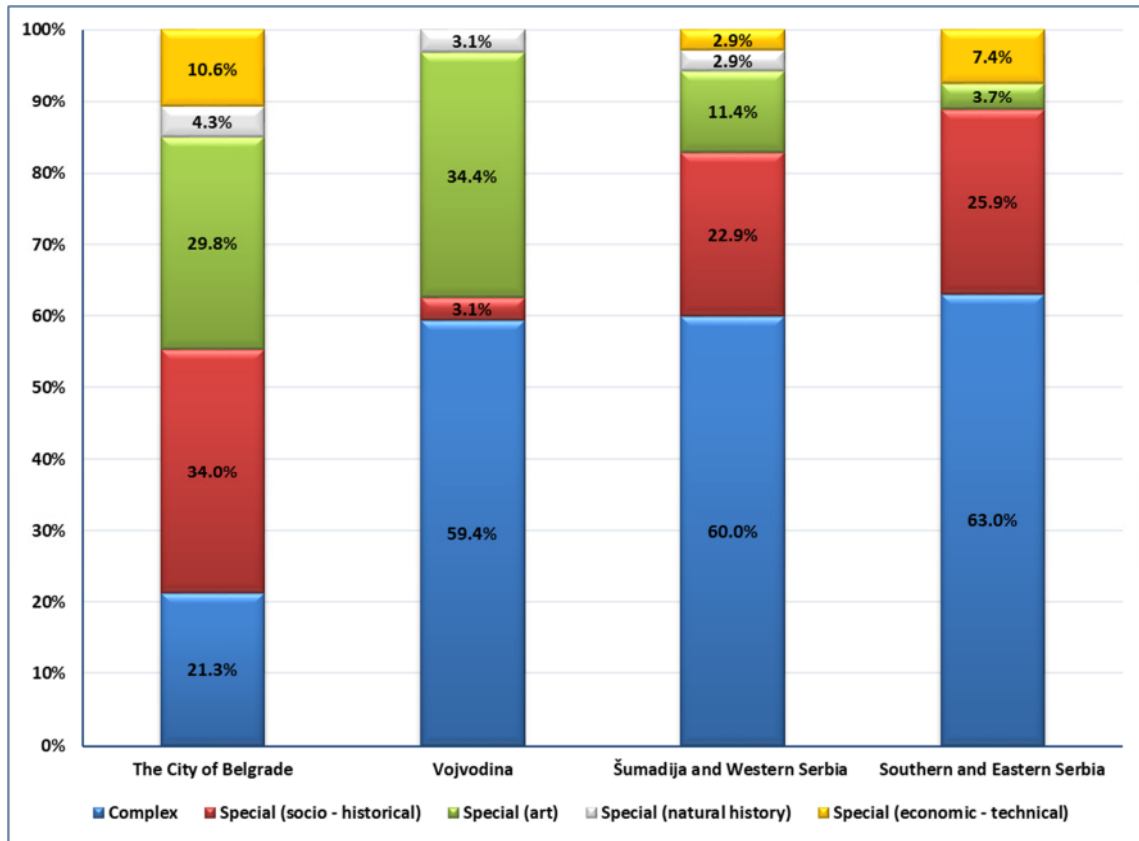
Categories According to Type of Ownership

Ownership of cultural properties is defined by the “Law on Cultural Properties” (see section above on museum-related legislation). Majority of museums are established by the state (national government and/or local authorities). In their depots and exhibition spaces, they safeguard and present collections obtained by individuals and/or legal entities. Most often, museums display special notifications and expressions of gratitude for donations and donors, clearly indicating an origin of artefact or collection. The legislation allows an establishment of private museums and their collections are owned by the museum as a legal entity.

Existing Data – Basic Figures and Diagrams

In 2016, there were 152 museums in total, and 141 that were opened for public and included in the statistical analysis. One third of them are located in the Belgrade Region (33.3%), 24.8% in Šumadija and Western Serbia, 22.7% in Vojvodina, and 19.1% in Sothern and Eastern Serbia. Distribution of complex and special museums in each region of Serbia is presented in the Graph below.

A Guide to European Museum Statistics



Graph. Distribution of complex and special museums in regions of the Republic of Serbia.