

Denmark

Report by
The National Cultural Heritage Agency
Denmark

Introduction - Key Issues

A new museum law has been established in Denmark in 2002.

Definition of Museum

The term “museum” is not a protected designation in Denmark. Only registered museums are eligible for federal funding. Finance authorities are responsible for deciding whether cultural facilities are eligible for tax exemption. The term “museum” is similar to the situation in other countries. The definition of the term “museum” is largely aligned with the ICOM definition and is also set down in Danish Museum Law. Visitors to zoos are not included in museum statistics, as is also true of exhibition spaces, science centers, planetariums and nature reserves. However, some monuments and points of interest are included.

Existence of Museum-related Laws

According to the Museum Law, museums are subdivided into two categories depending on the form of the agency legally responsible for them: State museums (of which there are 7) and state-supported museums (numbering 140, of which 103 are cultural history museums, 35 art galleries and 2 natural history museums. 3 museums are both cultural history and natural history museums).

The annual museum statistics include (2002) 271 museums. 147 are approved by the State and the rest are associated members of a county museum advisory board. In the annual museum statistics there is information about the following topics:

- No. of museums in the different museum categories (national museum, cultural history, art, natural history, other)
- Type of ownership (State, municipality, association/private foundation, private)
- No. of visitors.

Categories used regarding Type of Collection

Museums in Denmark are divided into four categories with regard to their main area of collecting: local cultural museums, specialised museums of cultural history (including technological museums), art museums and museums of natural history. This classification of museum types is only an approximation of the UNESCO classification.

Thus categories b) archaeology and history museums, e) ethnography and anthropology museums, and g) regional museums are combined to form the category Local Museums; the UNESCO categories d) science and technology museums, and f) specialized museums combine to form the category Special Museums of Cultural History (including technology museums). Merely categories a) Art Museums and c) Natural History Museums have been retained. Every four years, Danish museums are called upon to compile a four-year plan of their activities. Statistics concerning the economic circumstances of the state-supported museums are as a rule publicly accessible and the totals are published annually by the Ministry of Finance as part of the national budget.

State museums are almost entirely financed by the state. State-supported museums receive State subsidy along with support from local authorities, from the district in which they are located, as well as from private foundations and the like.

It is determined that in Denmark, on the average US \$9 per capita is spent on state-supported museums. Although a relative rise in revenues has been noted, absolute expenditures for support of museums have increased. It is noteworthy that there has been a greater increase in public funding than in private funding.