

The MuseIT Project: co-designing inclusive technologies for better access to culture

Maud Ntonga — Juliette Pokorny - Michael Culture Association
Nasrine Olson - University of Borås

Advancements in digital transformation have enriched the interactive experience of cultural heritage. The adoption of digital technologies has benefited the development of virtual museum tours, the preservation of cultural assets and digitised archives enabling broader and more engaging means of access to cultural heritage.

Despite critical advances, structural deficiencies remain: lack of accessibility for all, limited opportunities for all members of society to participate in cultural and creative industries on an equal basis, and limited interoperable digital repositories for archiving accessible multisensory cultural assets and related archival structures. With one billion people

experiencing some form of disability and one-fifth of these experiencing significant disabilities, access or opportunities to engage with cultural assets are not equally available to all.

The MuseIT Project - *Multisensory, User-centred, Shared Cultural Experiences through Interactive Technologies* runs from 2022 to 2025 and is co-funded by the Horizon Europe programme of the European Commission. The project is developing technologies that facilitate and widen access to cultural assets for people with disabilities and helps preserve and safeguard cultural heritage in an inclusive way. MuseIT is on the way to co-design, develop, and co-evaluate a multisensory, user-centred platform for enriched engagement with cultur-



Figure 1. Photo collage showing the remote music co-creation and haptic tools that will be used and developed in the MuseIT project. Copyrights: ShareMusic & Performing Arts

¹ <https://www.muse-it.eu/>.

al assets with inclusion and equal opportunity for all as core principles.

The three main outcomes of the project will be:

- Multisensory representations and rendering of cultural assets
- Remote inclusive co-creation services for multi-modal born-digital cultural assets, and cultural engagements
- Formal specification and novel methodologies for multisensory, multi-layered repository towards (long-term) preservation of cultural assets.

Participatory co-design activities will be integral to enable users with disabilities to be involved in decisions and designs that will affect their lives. Enriched experiences of cultural assets created by MuselT will not be limited to this group and is likely to enhance the level of participation and enjoyment for all people. Impacts are likely to include the democratization of cultural asset experiences

and tangible growth in creative and cultural industries.

In October 2022, our project was kicked off at the University of Borås (Sweden) with an international symposium “Towards Access for All – Inclusion through Multisensory Interactions”. This research-based scholarly symposium brought together not only academics but also various societal stakeholders including technologists, policymakers, national and international agencies and associations, designers, and professional experts dealing with issues related to disability and themselves living with some form of disability (recordings are available via project website). Beginning in 2023, the project started to carry out a series of participatory workshops, with the first workshop held in Paris with the support of IRCAM: The Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics/Music. It involved cultural heritage professionals and people with disabilities



Figure 2. Infographic on the project's outputs. Realised by the MuselT project
Copyrights: MuselT Project



Figure 3. Infographic on the project's approach. Realised by the MuseIT project
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through exchanges and working sessions in order to identify the user's requirements and expectations, paving the way to the co-design of the MuseIT interactive technologies².

The principles of Inclusion, Accessibility and "Equal Opportunities for all" are central to the MuseIT project. Particular focus is placed on the development of systems that can satisfy all people's needs for cultural activities and experiences. Though not explicitly mentioned, the concept of "all" or "for all" refers to all people regardless of their perceptual modalities and variations in cognitive and functional abilities. MuseIT is concerned with cultural heritage as both physical evidence of human activities and intangible societal attributes. Beyond the development of technologies, the MuseIT partners will develop methodologies for transfer, capacity-building and awareness-raising, addressed to cultural organisations, policymakers and civil society, with the aim of supporting the

change of narratives on disability.

To carry this ambition, the project relies on an international multidisciplinary partnership bringing together 11 organisations from 9 countries in Europe and beyond from cultural, technological, research and user communities.

The MuseIT project is coordinated by Högskolan i Borås - University of Borås (Sweden). The consortium is composed of: CataLink Limited (Cyprus) Information Technologies Institute, Centre for Research & Technology Hellas (Greece); EXUS Software Monoprosopi Etairi Periorismenis Evthinis (Greece); ShareMusic & Performing Arts (Sweden); Michael Culture Association (Belgium); Actronika SAS (France); Ministero della Cultura - ICCU (Italy); Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen-DANS (Netherlands); Stanford University (USA) and King's College London (UK).

² <https://www.muse-it.eu/museit-events>.

Links to the project:

Website: <https://www.muse-it.eu/>

Newsletter: <http://eepurl.com/ihu5Fr>

Social media:

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@MuseIT-Project>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/MuseIT_EU

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/muse-it/>

CORDIS Page: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101061441>



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