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From the museum object to the protected cultural property (how to inscribe the museum collection on the Register of Cultural Goods of the Republic of Croatia

The registration, i.e., the determination of the cultural property status for museum collections and their inscription on the Register of Cultural Goods of the Republic of Croatia is mandatory for all museums pursuant to the Law on Museums (Official Gazette, 148, 1998), the Law on the Protection and Conservation of Cultural Goods (Official Gazette, 1999), and the Regulations on the Form, Content and Management of the Register of Cultural Goods of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, 89, 2011).

According to Article 10 of the Regulations, the mandatory data on the collections(s) include the following:

- number of objects in the collection with the basic data for every object in the collection (name, dimensions, material, author, photograph with indication of the author);
- list of collections in the museum with the (total) number of objects and basic data on objects in the collection (description of collection);
- system of measures for the protection of mobile cultural property (collections in the museum).

Therefore, the requirements for the registration of a museum collection include a collection printout with the basic data for all museum objects, and a document listing the total number of objects in the collection, description of the collection content and the system of measures for the protection of the collection. The list of the collections in the museum with the total number

of objects is not required because these data are reported in the Register of Museums and Art Galleries of Croatia in the Museum Documentation Centre (delivered to the MDC by each museum).

The mentioned documentation for the registration of the collection is presented to the professional commission for the determination of cultural property status for museum and gallery collections (address: Ministry of Culture, Board for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, 2 Runjaninova, Zagreb). It must include the following:

- duly registered application of the museum director;
- CD or DVD with the record of document (in Word) with the description of the collection content; computer printout of the collection: pdf printout from the M+ + program (tabular printout with pictures of the art collection); printout from another data base or list of the collection with the respective photographs of the objects in Excel or Word.

Completely processed collections are eligible for registration; the number of reported objects must not be lower than the total number of objects in the collection reported to the MDC in the Register of Museum and Art Galleries of Croatia.

In the yearly reports to the MDC every museum must indicate the number of objects in the collection(s) in order to enter the changes of the material or of the name of the collection. Since summer 2015 museums can directly access the On-Line Register and enter directly the data or data changes on the collection. In order to access the On-Line Register every institution wishing to update its data in this fashion is given a user name and password. Along with regular yearly reports museums must report the possible changes of the number of objects in each collection due to unexpected circumstances (flood, theft or another reason).

A relatively low number of museum collections has been registered since 2008 when the systematic registration of museum collections started. The total number of collections in Croatian museums is 2,553, out of which 852 have been registered, meaning that only 33% have been registered so far.

It is difficult to discuss the reason(s) underlying such a low number of registered collections, especially when one bears in mind the fact that the data on museum objects required for registration of the collection(s) are the basic, unchangeable data on the object(s) which, as a rule, need to be entered into the inventory book immediately after object accession to the museum – the more so as the basic list of museum material with documentary photographs is also the basic and primary element of museum object protection. The professional and scientific processing of the collection or specific segments are carried out after inventory.

One of the underlying reasons for such a low number of registered museum collections is are the many understaffed museums (especially local ones). Moreover, some museums have quite a few non-inventoried objects, a condition inherited from their predecessors. Another possible reason is the large volume of material in some museums or material inventoried in hand-written inventory books (in all Croatian museums). Museum managers have failed to organise the copying of inventory data into new computerised inventory books as laid in 2002 in Art. 41 of the then enacted Regulations on the Content and Management of Museum Documentation on Museum Material (Official Gazette, 108, 2002). A number of museums also neglected to review the holdings every five years, and the exact number of objects and their re-inventorying into computer programs are determined just now.

Paradoxically, in Croatian museum practices some national museums with first class museum material have no registered collections, or have registered only some, while some “small” understaffed museums have registered all their museum collections.

Regardless of these reasons, and there are others, museums are recommended to organise their inventory and photographic recording as soon as possible, and to be aware of the importance of registration, i.e., the inscription of their museum collections in the Register of the Cultural Goods of the Republic of Croatia. That is the basis for the future quality of museum activities in Croatia.