

## Project information 30/06/2010

### *A Taste of Europe—why do we eat like this?*

The project “A Taste of Europe” involves nine museums across Europe, in Sweden, Finland, Scotland, Hungary, Estonia, Slovenia, Denmark, Czech Republic and Portugal. The project is funded by the EU Culture Programme and is coordinated by the Museum of Work in Sweden. The aim is to produce an exhibition about European food production and consumption that sheds lights on the question—why do we eat like we do?

Food production is, and has always been, a basic fundamental of all human societies. Past and present, it has been a source of joy and struggle, hopes and threats connected to ideals and realities. In modern European society food production and consumption have become closely linked to existential, ethical and health questions. Issues of climate change, environmental development, sustainability, ‘natural’ food, animal breeding, gene manipulation and inequalities on a national, European and global level, are often in focus in public debate about food. These issues are also of increasing importance to all European citizens in their everyday life and consumption.

By highlighting national differences and similarities, changes over time, climate and environmental issues, the aim with the *A Taste of Europe*-project is to stimulate intercultural dialogue about food, heritage, environment, production and everyday consumption.

The target group of this project is young Europeans, which is indeed a challenge. One central task for the project is therefore to develop educational activities suitable for young people, closely connected to the exhibition production.

### **Nine stories together**

Each museum will focus on one food product, its production and consumption, that is of special national importance for their country. The museums have chosen the following products:

|                          |                               |                              |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Honey</b><br>Slovenia | <b>Milk</b><br>Sweden         | <b>Wheat</b><br>Hungary      |
| <b>Pork</b><br>Denmark   | <b>Beer</b><br>Czech Republic | <b>Potato</b><br>Estonia     |
| <b>Bread</b><br>Finland  | <b>Fish</b><br>Scotland       | <b>Olive oil</b><br>Portugal |

Each museum will tell their national story by using their chosen product as point of departure. These nine national stories based on historical material, photo documentation and interviews with people employed in the food sector and with consumers, as well as economic statistics and information of environmental effects, will be put together in a joint- exhibition by the coordinating museum in Sweden. When forming their national stories all museums use shared questions that highlight:

- Historical change: Modernized/traditional production and consumption
- Gender and power aspects of production and consumption
- National importance of the products from economical, social and cultural perspectives, historically and in contemporary society
- Environmental aspects such as pollution, gene manipulation and impact on the landscape

### **One exhibition with nine variations**

The exhibition area will be 120 m<sup>2</sup>, consisting of two parts:

1) **an overarching story** sketching an overall picture of the agricultural development in Europe in terms of modernisation, industrialisation and globalisation. The overarching story will outline overall trends in Europe and highlight differences and unexpected similarities between the countries. The national stories from each country will illustrate examples within this overarching framework. This part of the exhibition will be built in Sweden and will be shown in all museums.

2) **a local part** (app. 20 m<sup>2</sup>, produced and shown in the different museums). The exhibition also contains an extended story of the national production focused by each museum. In this part of the exhibition each country will use objects, films and other material, to further illustrate their national stories.

The overarching story will be produced in nine copies and will be shown at the same time in all the participating museums. The joint launch will take place on 26 January 2011 and the exhibition will then be shown during the spring and summer.

### **What have we achieved so far?**

The project participants have met twice during the first six months of the project. The first project meeting was held 16–18 September 2009 in Slovenia and was hosted by The Technical Museum of Slovenia. The agenda included discussions about the overall exhibition ideas, coordination and financial reports. The second meeting was held 10–12 February 2010 in The Scottish Fisheries Museum in Anstruther, Scotland. This time we focused on educational work and continuing discussions about the exhibition content and design.

### **Young Europeans—how do we reach them?**

In order to reach young people the project will also develop educational activities, interactive elements and ways to encourage dialogue between pupils in the different countries. We want to encourage young people to contribute to the exhibition. One way is to invite them to take photos of their typical eating situations and to create a gallery of those photographs in the exhibition. The photo gallery will develop along with the ongoing exhibition. The photos will

illustrate differences and similarities between the countries, as well as stimulate reflections upon our eating habits and choices. Thanks to support from the Nordic Culture Fund, the Nordic educators were able to meet again on the 20 –21 April 2010 to further discuss exhibition interactivity and how to connect people across Europe in order to encourage intercultural dialogue

### What are the results of the project?

By raising questions about our food consumption and food production the project deals with urgent questions highly relevant to contemporary European everyday life and identity.

The project will contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing our food production and consumption—on individual and societal levels. It will also increase the understanding of national similarities and differences. By illuminating these questions in cultural forms and in continuous dialogue with partners—researchers, cultural workers, societal organisations and the public—we hope to develop creative ways to present these issues from unexpected angles and perspectives. On a long-term basis we hope that the highlighting of European consumers’ choices and attitudes connected to food will contribute to more conscious and environmentally-friendly ways of producing and consuming.

One of the most important and immediate results of the project is the establishment of the international networks and the valuable collaboration between the European museums and schools. We hope this project will result in further cooperation between our museums, and between the school-classes that have established contact during this project.

The project is supported by the Culture Programme of the European Union, the Nordic Culture Fund, the Swedish-Finnish Cultural Foundation and the Swedish Research Council Formas.

For more information about the project please visit [www.atasteofeurope.eu](http://www.atasteofeurope.eu) or contact project coordinator [sofia.seifarth@arbetetsmuseum.se](mailto:sofia.seifarth@arbetetsmuseum.se).

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The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning