

Kirsch, Otakar

On the beginnings of the professional association of museums in Cisleithania : Association of Austrian Museums of Applied Arts and its development until 1918

Museologica Brunensia. 2025, vol. 14, iss. 1, pp. 15-28

ISSN 1805-4722 (print); ISSN 2464-5362 (online)

Stable URL (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5817/MuB2025-1-2>

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/digilib.82391>

License: [CC BY-SA 4.0 International](#)

Access Date: 05. 07. 2025

Version: 20250703

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

STUDIE/ARTICLES

ON THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS IN CISLEITHANIA: ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRIAN MUSEUMS OF APPLIED ARTS AND ITS DEVELOPMENT UNTIL 1918¹

OTAKAR KIRSCH

<https://doi.org/10.5817/MuB2025-1-2>

ABSTRACT/ABSTRAKT:

Professional associations in the sphere of museums have traditionally been perceived as an important element boosting the development of the field (e.g. International Council of Museums, Network of European Museum Organisations, the same applies to museum associations operating at national level). A similar view of them prevailed in the late 19th century and early 20th century, when the first organizations of this type were established on the European continent. One of their prominent representatives at that time was the Association of Austrian Museums of Applied Arts (later the Association of Austrian Museums), operating in the Cisleithanian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The main aim of this paper is to present this forgotten phenomenon with the help of period sources (especially the preserved reports on activities) and current professional literature and to describe the main motivations leading to its origin, internal functioning and also the activities carried out. At the same time, the story of this association will be set in the context of museum culture of that time and the impact of its influence in the successor states of Austria-Hungary, especially in Austria and Czechoslovakia, will also become a subject of interest.

K počátkům profesního sdružování muzeí v Předlitavsku: Svaz rakouských uměleckoprůmyslových muzeí a jeho vývoj do roku 1918

Profesní sdružení v oblasti muzejnictví jsou tradičně vnímána jako výrazný prvek vedoucí k rozvoji oboru (např. International Council of Museums, Network of European Museum Organisations, totéž platí také pro muzejní svazy fungující na úrovni jednotlivých států). Podobný pohled na ně panoval již v období konce 19. století a počátku 20. století, kdy docházelo k zakládání prvních organizací tohoto typu na evropském kontinentě. Jedním z jejich tehdejších výrazných reprezentantů se stal Svaz rakouských uměleckoprůmyslových (později Svaz rakouských) muzeí působící v předlitavské části rakousko-uherské monarchie. Hlavním cílem předloženého příspěvku je za pomoci dobových pramenů (zvláště dochovaných zpráv o činnosti) i současné odborné literatury představit tento

pozapomenutý fenomén a přiblížit hlavní motivace vedoucí k jeho vzniku, vnitřní fungování a také provozované aktivity. Příběh tohoto sdružení bude zároveň zasazen do kontextu dobové muzejní kultury a předmětem zájmu se stanou i dopady jeho vlivu v nástupnických státech Rakouska-Uherska, zvláště pak v Rakousku a Československu.

KEYWORDS/KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:

museums of applied arts – professional association of museum workers – historical museology – museums in Austria-Hungary – Julius Leisching uměleckoprůmyslová muzea – profesní sdružení muzejních pracovníků – historická muzeologie – muzejnictví v Rakousko-Uhersku – Julius Leisching

Professional associations currently play a crucial role in influencing events within the museum community and at the same time act as its main representatives externally. The global organization *International Council of Museums* plays a leading role in this respect. It shapes the contemporary discourse in the field (e.g. the museum definition, code of ethics) and tries to find and open up current topics and challenges resonating with global society (e.g. decolonization, climate

¹ This text was written as part of the project DHP03OVV041 – “The contribution of applied arts and technical museums to the economic development and educational culture of Moravia and Czech Silesia: Foundations – situation – perspectives” implemented within the framework of the programme of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic to support applied research and experimental development of national and cultural identity NAKI III, in which Masaryk University, the Technical Museum in Brno and the Brno University of Technology participated.

situation, diversity, inclusion, sustainability).² A significant position in this respect is also held by organizations associating museums within the borders of individual states, which, however, form a rather incompact conglomerate in terms of goals, methods of operation and activities performed. The differences result from locally conditioned cultural and historical development, while the area of Central Europe can be considered very specific in many regards.³ In the so-called short twentieth century, in addition to the democratic system, its population went through the direct experience of two world wars and totalitarian regimes, which brought various strategies on the part of the state authorities, oscillating from direct support for their independent activities through targeted ideological abuse to the denial of their existence.⁴ The newly formed associations of this type therefore often did not directly follow the activities of the previous ones. It was often a strategic plan through which they sought to legitimize themselves in different social conditions. A number of original associations

thus gradually fell into oblivion. One of them is the *Association of Austrian Museums of Applied Arts* (Verband österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen, hereinafter also referred to as the Association), which during its relatively short existence included a number of museums from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in its midst and became a significant perennial star on the cultural scene.⁵ The aim of this paper is to analyse the key aspects of the creation and development of this organization until 1918 on the basis of period sources and to present the way of its functioning, including several key figures. Special attention will be paid to selected associational activities, which will be set in the period museum-historical context.

Period prerequisites for the establishment of the Association and its foundation

The oldest professional museum organization in the territory of the so-called Cisleithania⁶ was founded as an association bringing together museums with a focus on applied arts. The cradle of the Arts and Crafts movement is believed to be the United Kingdom. In 1851, the first world exhibition was held in London, which gave immediate impetus to the foundation of the first museum of this type – the *South Kensington Museum* (today the *Victoria and Albert Museum*).⁷

2 Our commitment. Online. In: *ICOM's Strategic Plan 2022–2028*, p. 3. Available from: <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/ICOM-SP-Booklet-EN.pdf>. [accessed 2024-12-29].

3 By this rather vague and changeable term, the author understands an area that includes today's members of the so-called Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland), some countries of the former Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia), the western part of today's Ukraine and, due to the crucial historical role in the formation of this area, also Austria and Germany.

4 On the issue of professional associations active in this period, e.g. in Germany KLAUSEWITZ, Wolfgang. *66 Jahre Deutscher Museumsbund*. Köln: Rheinland-Verlag, 1984, in Slovakia PALÁRIK, Miroslav. *Zváz slovenských múzeí v období slovenského štátu 1939–1945*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 2011, in Poland MURAWSKA, Agnieszka. *Związek Muzeów w Polsce w latach 1914–1939. Muzealnictwo*. 2015, vol. 56, pp. 115–125, in the Czech Republic ŠEBEK, František. *Cesta českých muzejních institucí ke vzniku Svazu československých muzeí*. Online. *Museologica Brunensia*. 2020, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 21–27. Available from: <https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/sites/default/files/pdf/143048.pdf>. [accessed 2024-12-20].

5 On this issue, most comprehensively so far KIRSCH, Otakar. *(Po)zapomenutí nositelé paměti: německé muzejnictví na Moravě*. Brno: Paido, 2014, pp. 58–63.

6 Officially, The Kingdoms and Lands Represented in the Imperial Council (Die im Reichsrat vertretenen Königreiche und Länder) formed one of the two parts of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy from the time of its establishment in 1867. The second one was called Transleithania, see also fig. 1.

7 For its early history, see the trilogy by BRYANT, Julius. *Designing the V&A: The Museum as a Work of Art (1857–1909)*. London: Lund Humphries and the V&A, 2017; *Creating the V&A: Victoria and Albert's Museum (1851–1861)*. London: Lund Humphries and the V&A, 2019; *Enriching the V&A: A Collection of Collections (1862–1914)*. London: Lund Humphries and the V&A, 2022.

The new ideas refined by the theorist Gottfried Semper (1803–1879) gradually began to spread throughout continental Europe. In addition to the monumental expansion in the territory of unified Germany,⁸ they significantly affected a number of areas of the Habsburg monarchy, where the Vienna *Austrian Museum of Art and Industry* (Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie), founded in 1863, became their natural inspiration and methodological centre.⁹ However, the most significant expansion of museums of this type occurred mainly in the heavily industrialized Czech lands,¹⁰ while other areas of the monarchy, where these institutions were mostly concentrated in administrative centres, were much less proactive in this regard.¹¹

Nevertheless, the result was the creation of a relatively large group of museum institutions focused on applied arts. They primarily grew out of the need to improve the aesthetic and technological quality of mass-produced domestic industrial and craft products,¹² which was closely related to the general effort to refine the taste of the manufacturers and customers themselves. They were to achieve

8 See MUNDT, Barbara. *Die deutschen Kunstgewerbemuseen im 19. Jahrhundert*. München: Prestel, 1974.

9 On the beginnings of the development of the museum, see LEISCHING, Eduard. *Geschichtlicher Überblick*. In *Das k.k. österreichische Museum für Kunst und Industrie 1864 bis 1914*. Vienna: Oesterr. Museum, 1914, pp. 11–50.

10 PUBAL, Václav. *Zakládání uměleckoprůmyslových muzeí a jejich výchovná a vzdělávací činnost*. In: *Acta regionalia*. Praha, 1965, pp. 56–67; ŠOPÁK, Pavel. *Prostor pro umění: výtvarné umění na Moravě a v českém Slezsku do roku 1918 jako téma historické muzeologie*. Opava: Slezské zemské museum v Opavě, 2016, pp. 51–70.

11 RAMPLEY, Matthew; PROKOPOVYCH, Markian and VESZPRÉMI, Nóra. *Liberalism, Nationalism and Design Reform in the Habsburg Empire: Museums of Design, Industry and the Applied Arts*. New York: Routledge, 2020, p. 24.

12 HARTUNG, Olaf. *Kleine deutsche Museumsgeichte: von der Aufklärung bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert*. Köln: Böhlau, 2010, p. 38.



Fig. 1: Map of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the beginning of the 20th century. Cisleithania consisted of so-called crown lands marked with numbers 1–15: 1. Bohemia, 2. Bukovina, 3. Carinthia, 4. Carniola, 5. Dalmatia, 6. Galicia, 7. Austrian Littoral, 8. Lower Austria, 9. Moravia, 10. Salzburg, 11. Silesia, 12. Styria, 13. Tyrol, 14. Upper Austria, 15. Vorarlberg (Cisleithania. Online. In: *Wikipedia*. Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cisleithania#/media/File:Austria-Hungary_map.svg. [accessed 2024-12-04].)

the set goals by various means, including permanent and temporary exhibitions, lectures, workshops, courses, publications, libraries, laboratories or information and consulting offices. Thanks to the specific focus and wide range of activities, contacts with a number of different economic and social groups, including industrialists, medium- and small-scale craftsmen, designers, artists, chemists, as well as collectors and owners of applied art, were developed very intensively.¹³ Traditionally, the

relationship to the then arts and crafts education was also very close.

At the same time, the formation of museums of applied arts in Cisleithania was closely related to the often-rapid formation of the local civil society. It was its representatives who became the main actors in the dynamic development of museums of applied arts and stood at the birth of the organizational forms that ensured their functioning (associations, curatoriums, foundations). In this respect, they could often rely on municipal and provincial governments, which took over

material responsibility for the operation of these institutions, but let the representatives of the civic sector decide on professional matters. The role of the state was also crucial, as it was aware of the importance of these institutions for economic expansion and technical innovation in the field of industry and crafts. Rather than a targeted cultural policy or direct intervention, however, it created a favourable environment through its legislative decrees (e.g. Act No.134/1867 Coll. on the Code of Association).

Despite the continuing recognition from the founders, business

¹³ MUNDT, Barbara. *Die deutschen Kunstgewerbemuseen im 19. Jahrhundert*. München: Prestel, 1974, pp. 19–20.

circles, members of the museum community and the public, the representatives of museums of applied arts were very well aware of their own limits. From the 1990s onwards, they therefore tried to respond to a clear decline in interest from the manufacturing sector. As a result, museum professionals increasingly turned their interest from the mediation of innovative technologies towards documenting the historical development of applied arts and pointing out their aesthetic quality. As Barbara Mundt commented on the causes of the gradual transformation of these museums – “*In the eyes of their funders, however, they lost their purpose for existence without the aim of supporting “industry” and most of them were thus incorporated into existing cultural history museums.*”¹⁴ Criticism also spread from the ranks of museum theorists, who mainly criticized the lack of conception in the acquisition of suitable collection items encouraging the mindless copying of old styles.¹⁵ On the other hand, the transition from the 19th to the 20th century brought a number of challenges for museums of applied arts. As a result of state and provincial policies aimed at maintaining the economic competitiveness of the Austrian state, they were involved in a movement called “*advancement of crafts*” (Gewerbeförderung) which aimed at improving the overall situation, especially among small-scale producers.¹⁶ Due to the

international dimension of the Arts and Crafts movement, numerous impulses to improve the quality of museum work came from abroad. The most intensive impulses, also thanks to the non-existent language barrier, came from imperial Germany, where issues related to the forms of work with the visitor or the concept and social role of the museum were widely discussed.¹⁷ Due to the active participation of museum workers from Cisleithania, a great inspiration was drawn from the congresses of the International Museum Association established in 1898.¹⁸ In Cisleithania, however, there was probably no significant awareness of the activities of the “national” professional associations of that time.¹⁹

The accumulation of various period impulses also brought the first ideas of establishing a common platform that would defend the interests of museum workers and thus overcome the existing isolation of individual institutions in solving topical problems. The creation and subsequent functioning of a professional organization is often conditioned by the existence of a charismatic, organizationally capable personality accepted by other participants. Already

in the prenatal stage of the association's development, this role was played by the director of the *Moravian Industrial Museum in Brno* (Mährisches Gewerbemuseum in Brünn), Julius Leisching (1865–1933),²⁰ who was and still is ranked among the important figures of Central European museums for his opinions.²¹ However, it was first necessary to explain to potential candidates why the initiative did not come from the institution that was originally planned to lead the Association – the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna. The legitimization of the largely provincial town of Brno as the leading force of the planned project officially consisted in the refusal of the central institution to take on this role.²² Several factors could have played an important role here, among which was probably the planned organizational structure of the association based on equal treatment of individual members, which would have made it impossible to guarantee the dominant position of the Viennese institution.²³ The ambitious

²⁰ A native of Vienna, Leisching initially devoted his interest to architecture, but gradually – perhaps under the influence of his brother Eduard, who worked at the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry – he focused on the issue of museums and applied arts. He ended his engagement at the museum in Brno in 1921 and subsequently left for the museum in Salzburg, where he held the director's post and re-initiated the establishment of the Austrian museum professional organization. HUSTY, Peter. Julius Leisching ... “ein durchaus moderner Museumsorganisator”. In: *Das Wesen Oesterreichs ist nicht Zentrum, sondern Peripherie. Gedenkschrift Hugo Rokyta (1912–1999)*. Praha: Vitalis, 2002, pp. 131–142.

²¹ Most recently: MEYER, Andrea. *Kämpfe um die Professionalisierung des Museums. Karl Koetschau, die Museumskunde und der Deutsche Museumsbund*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2021, pp. 157–161.

²² LEISCHING, Julius. Zweck und Grenzen der Museen. Zum dreissigjährigen Bestande des Verbandes österr. Museen. *Salzburger Museumsblätter*. 1930, vol. 9, no. 4/5, p. 2.

²³ On the other hand, it was at this time that the director Arthur von Scala freed the Vienna Museum from its connection with the industrial association, and in the following years it took the path of a state institution. However, for other museums of applied arts, this type of associational organization remained the cornerstone of their existence, which could have led to a certain distrust of potential members of the Association

of Applied Arts, see KIRSCH, Otakar. Moravské uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum jako integrující prvek vlastivědného muzejnictví na Moravě. *Bulletin Moravské galerie v Brně*. 2024, no. 90, pp. 68–81.

¹⁷ MEYER, Andrea. *Kämpfe um die Professionalisierung des Museums. Karl Koetschau, die Museumskunde und der Deutsche Museumsbund*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2021, pp. 31–74; JOACHIMIDES, Alexis. *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880–1940*. Dresden: Verl. der Kunst, 2001, pp. 53–186.

¹⁸ KIRSCH, Otakar. Association of museum workers in defence against counterfeiting and unfair trade practices: comments on the origins of organised meetings of museum workers on an international basis. Online. *Museologica Brunensia*. 2015, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 48–55. Available from: <https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/sites/default/files/pdf/134748.pdf>. [accessed 2024-12-20].

¹⁹ LEISCHING, Julius. Zweck und Grenzen der Museen. Zum dreissigjährigen Bestande des Verbandes österr. Museen. *Salzburger Museumsblätter*. 1930, vol. 9, no. 4/5, p. 1.

¹⁴ “In den Augen ihrer Geldgeber verloren sie ohne das Ziel der Gewerbehilfe jedoch die Existenzberechtigung, und so wurde die Mehrzahl in bestehende kulturhistorische Museen eingegliedert”. MUNDT, Barbara. *Die deutschen Kunstgewerbemuseen im 19. Jahrhundert*. München: Prestel, 1974, p. 20.

¹⁵ KRÍŽOVÁ, Alena (ed.). *Moravské uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum v Brně*. [Brno]: Metoda, [2013], p. 47.

¹⁶ The position of the museums of applied arts here consisted mainly in educational and information activities, but in some cases also in reviewing applications for the provision of funds and technology for production purposes. On the situation in Moravia and in the Brno Museum

Leisching, with a close relationship to the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna, where, among others, his brother Eduard worked, was probably an acceptable option for its representatives, which guaranteed professional management of the emerging organization and at the same time the opportunity to influence its activities. However, the museum did not refuse certain forms of cooperation and, according to later statements, it became an imaginary “cradle” for the association members, which was available here for a “newborn baby”.²⁴

The museum in Brno thus took the initiative and in 1899 sent a questionnaire to the then Cisleithanian museums focused on applied arts, in which, among other things, they were asked to comment on whether they would welcome closer forms of mutual cooperation. Although the “closer connection” mentioned here, which also included foreign institutions, was to be preliminarily directed towards regular meetings and the resolution of one specific matter (cooperation in organizing exhibitions), the text clearly indicated that it would not have to be the only thing.²⁵ Leisching used a similar strategy as the International Museum Association. While the initial unifying themes for this association were the fight against illegal trade in cultural heritage and counterfeiting, the director of the museum in Brno found cooperation in organizing travelling exhibitions to become an imaginary decoy. The initial concerns about the lack of interest of the institutions addressed in this way, whether due to a wide thematic range or too authoritarian

and their founders in the goals and interests of the Association under the leadership of Vienna.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Archiv Moravské galerie v Brně, fund Moravské uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum, box 52 (1899), inv. no. 95, f. 273 and 274.



Fig. 2: Julius Leisching, director of the Brno's Museum and the main initiator and leader of the Association (Julius Leisching. Online. In: *Wikipedia*. Available from: https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Leisching#/media/Soubor:Julius-Leisching-1889.jpg. [accessed 2024-12-04].)

leadership, were soon dispelled. The constituent meeting held on 15–18 March 1900 in Vienna brought together a total of twelve museums from virtually all corners of Cisleithania.²⁶ The efforts of

the new association, called the Association of Austrian Museums of Applied Arts, were then officially supported by the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna, whose director, Arthur von Scala (1845–1909), also provided his meeting room for the needs of the first session of the association.²⁷

²⁶ These were the institutions from Brno, České Budějovice, Chrudim, Liberec, Opava, Pilsen and Prague (today's Czech Republic), Graz and Linz (today's Austria), Chernivtsi and Lviv (today's Ukraine) and Krakow (today's Poland). Bericht über die erste Konferenz österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen in Wien (15.–18. März 1900). *Mittheilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*. 1900, vol. 18, no. 6, p. 41.

²⁷ Bericht über die erste Konferenz österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen in Wien (15.–18. März 1900). *Mittheilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*, 1900, vol. 18, no. 6, p. 43.

Internal functioning and structure of the Association

Each organization is a system with a certain hierarchical internal structure with various links and interrelationships, the main purpose of which is to achieve a defined mission. The overall way of managing such a unit, which affects the competencies of its components, is also crucial in this regard. Immediately after its foundation, the Association always acted as a voluntary union (*freiwillige Vereinigung*), whose aim was to arouse initiatives leading to the improvement of the overall condition of the member museums and their social status rather than to authoritatively intervene in their internal affairs. The voluntariness in the adoption of the association's decisions was perceived as an effective method of overcoming the numerous differences between the participating entities governed by their own internal regulations, which could prevent their implementation.²⁸ The chairmanship within the association was created at the very end of its activity in 1916, and this act seems to be more of a formal matter.²⁹ The democratic, but rather egalitarian approach limited the overall reach of the organization to a certain extent. The failure to adopt the official statutes or at least the rules of procedure, which was partly the result of different views of strong individuals working in the structures of the Association on certain operational matters, made it in fact impossible, for example, to set sanctions for the violation of the ever-increasing

number of agreements and commitments or to clearly declare the association's own goals towards the professional and lay public.³⁰

Despite the absence of these binding documents, the association had mechanisms to manage its internal operations, organize numerous activities and maintain the necessary contacts. The most extensive powers belonged to the so-called conferences (*Tagungen*), usually held once a year in a pre-selected seat of one of the association's member museums. At these multi-day events, all major decisions, opinions and joint activities were approved. The proposals presented were decided on the basis of a vote of the members, where the absent institutions could be represented by proxy if necessary. However, there was a tendency to ensure a certain degree of control over the course of these conferences. For example, it was required that the topics to be voted on were sent to those responsible well in advance.³¹ In addition to purely professional interests, the representative, legitimizing and integrating function of these events cannot be overlooked. The strategy was primarily to organize the conferences in important locations, so the members of the association gradually visited all the important cultural centres of Cisleithania. The political dimension also played a role in the selection, as evidenced by the holding of an association meeting in the recently annexed

Bosnia and Herzegovina (1910).³² The programme was attended by numerous guests, including representatives of political, economic and cultural elites, domestic and foreign organizations and institutions with a similar focus (e.g. from the field of museums, librarianship, monument care).³³ In addition to discussing museum matters, mutual contacts between the members were deepened by lectures on significant cultural and historical topics of the relevant area, tours of local monuments and especially the host museums, where the conference participants got acquainted with traditional and innovative methods of their work in practice.

For the period between the successive meetings, the so-called centres (*Vororte*) were selected from among the member institutions, which had the task of dealing with all the agenda arising mainly from individual conferences and at the same time representing the Association externally. The organizational and professional demands necessary for the performance of this function caused that the museums in which the most prominent personalities of the Association worked (Julius Leisching – Brno, Edmund Wilhelm Braun – Opava, Ernst Schwedeler-Meyer – Liberec)

²⁸ Die zehnjährige Tätigkeit des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*, 1911, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 25.

²⁹ Julius Leisching was elected chairman for his many years of merit. Verband österreichischer Museen: Fünfzehnte Tagung. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*, 1917, vol. 35, no. 1, p. 12.

³⁰ Bericht über die Bozner Tagung des Verbandes Oesterreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*, 1907, vol. 25, no. 1, p. 11.

³¹ On the basis of a decision made at the conference in Prague in 1907, it was necessary to deliver these documents to the centre four weeks before the start of the meeting. Bericht über die Prager Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*, 1907, vol. 25, no. 5, p. 72.

³² The programme of the conference was devoted to presenting the cultural specifics of the newly incorporated territory rather than to solving purely museum-related problems. Elfte Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Museen. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*, 1911, vol. 29, no. 6, pp. 88–93. For an overview of the venues of the association meetings together with their dates, see LEISCHING, Julius. Zweck und Grenzen der Museen. Zum dreissigjährigen Bestande des Verbandes österr. Museen. *Salzburger Museumsblätter*, 1930, vol. 9, no. 4/5, p. 2.

³³ For example, the opening conference was also attended by representatives of the then Ministry of Cultus and Education. Bericht über die erste Konferenz österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen in Wien (15.–18. März 1900). *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*, 1900, vol. 18, no. 6, p. 45.

became the centres.³⁴ The activities of the centres were supplemented by the work of committees (Ausschüsse) and subcommittees (Unterausschüsse). These were entrusted with a specific task at the association's conferences, which required a certain degree of cooperation between several institutions. A narrow and repetitive group of proven museum workers was delegated to these bodies.

However, a decisive role in the overall direction of the Association and its perception was played by a relatively large and representative community of members organized on the basis of institutional membership. Its most apt characteristic is diversity, which was directly supported by the main representatives of the association. In rejecting uniformity and, on the contrary, emphasizing the uniqueness of the associated institutions, many of them saw an opportunity for a multi-layered exchange of views on common topics³⁵ and thus for the further development of the Arts and Crafts movement and museums of the time. The differences between individual museum institutions consisted mainly in the different founders (associations, foundations, chambers of commerce and trade, self-governing bodies) and the overall thematic profile. Although most of them were purely focused on applied arts, we can find institutions that were only partially devoted to this issue, and collections of this type formed only one of several parts of their collection holdings.

³⁴ For a complete overview of them, including meetings of the successor organization after 1918, see LEISCHING, Julius. Zweck und Grenzen der Museen. Zum dreissigjährigen Bestande des Verbandes österr. Museen. *Salzburger Museumsblätter*. 1930, vol. 9, no. 4/5, p. 2.

³⁵ Die zehnjährige Tätigkeit des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1911, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 25.

This stratification did not change fundamentally even after the association was opened to other types of museums. Despite these changes, most of the member institutions can be assigned to the then frequently used category of so-called larger museums (grössere Museen), which were perceived as natural cultural centres of the given region in the period perspective.

Despite proclamations emphasizing the unity of the membership, the Association naturally encountered some problems during its operation due to the specific conditions in culturally and economically different parts of Cisleithania. The national factor came into play (albeit often latently), when the association's member museums were located in areas inhabited by a wide range of ethnically different peoples (Germans, Czechs, Poles, Italians, Slovenes, Ukrainians).³⁶ The mutual antagonism manifested in a number of aspects of the then social life was overcome on the ground of this organization. The emphasis on state patriotism proved to be far-sighted, when the adjective "Austrian" was included in the name of the association itself. Certain difficulties were perhaps brought about only by the use of the unofficial communication language within the association, which logically became German as the Central European "lingua franca". However, the conflict in this regard arose only because German was to be listed in the Rules of Procedure as the only language of communication.³⁷

³⁶ On the issue of relations between individual ethnically different peoples in some of the museums of applied arts in Cisleithania, see RAMPLEY, Matthew; PROKOPOVYCH, Markian and VESZPRÉMI, Nóra. *Liberalism, Nationalism and Design Reform in the Habsburg Empire: Museums of Design, Industry and the Applied Arts*. New York: Routledge, 2020, pp. 162–163.

³⁷ The museum in Chrudim threatened to withdraw if this section was approved, which was joined by the representatives of Pilsen and Hradec Králové. Bericht über die Prager Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen.

As far as the number of member museums in the Association is concerned, it gradually grew from the initial twelve to a total of 23 in 1918, among which the most prominently represented were those from the most industrially developed part of the monarchy – the Czech lands.³⁸ The only important institution that remained outside the official structures of the association for a long time was the aforementioned Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna. In the period just before the World War I, however, it was possible to appoint its then director Eduard Leisching to the post of honorary president³⁹ and later probably to get him as a member.⁴⁰ Despite the emphasis on institutional membership, the Association was primarily a showcase of a number of prominent personalities, many of whom were considered recognized experts in their time, and not only within the scope of the then Arts and Crafts movement. In addition to Julius Leisching from Brno, these were particularly important art historians Karel Chytil (1857–1934), Edmund Wilhelm Braun (1870–1957) and, until his departure to

Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn. 1907, vol. 25, no. 5, pp. 78–80. That is also why the approval of the Rules of Procedure was constantly postponed and eventually it was not adopted.

³⁸ LEISCHING, Julius. Zweck und Grenzen der Museen. Zum dreissigjährigen Bestande des Verbandes österr. Museen. *Salzburger Museumsblätter*. 1930, vol. 9, no. 4/5, p. 3. In addition to the traditional centres like Brno, Liberec, Opava and Prague, which also most significantly determined the direction of the development of this association, we can also find their counterparts from České Budějovice, Chrudim, Olomouc, Pilsen and Teplice.

³⁹ Bericht über die vierzehnte Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Museen (Wien 1913). *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1914, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 39–40.

⁴⁰ In 1916, the museum is listed among the other members as a direct participant at the association's conference. Verband österreichischer Museen: Fünfzehnte Tagung. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1917, vol. 35, no. 1, p. 11.

Locality	Institution	Crown land	Current country
Bolzano (German: Bozen)	City Museum (Museum Association)	Tyrol	Italy
Brno (Brünn)	Moravian Industrial Museum/Museum of Art and Industry	Moravia	Czech Republic
České Budějovice (Budweis)	City Museum	Bohemia	Czech Republic
Chernivtsi (Czernowitz)	Bukovinian Industrial Museum	Bukovina	Ukraine
Chrudim (Chrudim)	Industrial Museum	Bohemia	Czech Republic
Graz (Graz)	Museum of Cultural History and Applied Arts (part of Museum Joanneum)	Styria	Austria
Hradec Králové (Königgrätz)	City Industrial Museum	Bohemia	Czech Republic
Innsbruck (Innsbruck)	Tyrolean Museum of Trade and Industry/Tyrolean Museum of Folk Art	Tyrol	Austria
Krakow (Krakau)	Museum of Technology and Industry	Galicia	Poland
Liberec (Reichenberg)	North Bohemian Museum of Industry	Bohemia	Czech Republic
Linz (Linz)	Museum Francisco Carolinum	Upper Austria	Austria
Ljubljana (Laibach)	Museum Rudolfinum	Carniola	Slovenia
Lviv (Lemberg)	City Industrial Museum	Galicia	Ukraine
Olomouc (Olmütz)	Industrial Museum	Moravia	Czech Republic
Opava (Troppau)	Museum of Art and Industry	Silesia	Czech Republic
Pilsen (Pilsen)	West Bohemian Museum of Applied Arts	Bohemia	Czech Republic
Prague (Prag)	Museum of Applied Arts	Bohemia	Czech Republic
Salzburg (Salzburg)	Commission of modern Applied Arts	Salzburg	Austria
Salzburg (Salzburg)	Museum Carolino Augusteum	Salzburg	Austria
Teplice (Teplitz)	City Museum (Museum Association)	Bohemia	Czech Republic
Vienna (Wien)	Lower Austria Provincial Museum	Lower Austria	Austria
Vienna (Wien)	Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art	Lower Austria	Austria
Vienna (Wien)	Austrian Museum of Art and Industry	Lower Austria	Austria

Fig. 3: List of the members of the association

Germany, Gustav Edmund Pazaurek (1865–1935). However, there are also representatives who won recognition in other fields, including the prominent musicologist Josip Mantuani (1860–1933), the painter Tony Grubhofer (1854–1935), the sculptor Karl Lacher (1850–1908), the historian, writer and theatre critic Max Vancsa (1866–1947) and the architect Tadeusz Stryjeński (1849–1943). Thanks to their significant contribution, the Association gradually became the top representative and mouthpiece of Austrian museums, accepted not only by the professional and lay public, but also by state and local authorities.

Operation of the Association and its activities

If an organization strives to achieve the set goals, it must fulfil them through its activities. An official document that would clearly state their exact form or at least a simple list has never been created during the development of the association. Some of them were already outlined in general in Leisching's questionnaire from 1899 (e.g. organizing joint exhibitions), but they were used more as a factor that should have motivated museums to join the newly constituted organization. Individual activities were thus expected to naturally result from

the further development and needs of the association. The way to fulfilling the most important declared goals in the form of *“establishing regular official and personal contacts between sisterly institutions”*⁴¹ was seen especially in the joint discussion of current topics in the field of museums of applied arts, from where it soon moved into the sphere of solving “everyday questions” regarding all aspects of museum life. As a result, in 1912, the words “applied arts”

⁴¹ *“Die Anbahnung eines regelmäßigen amtlichen und persönlichen Verkehres zwischen Schwesteranstalten...“.* Die zehnjährige Tätigkeit des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn. 1911, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 24.

were omitted from the original name of the association,⁴² but it continued to associate mainly museums of this focus. The results of joint debates, whether in the form of declarations, resolutions, measures, experts' reports or proposals, were primarily intended to serve the associated entities to obtain new impulses leading to the improvement of internal museum activities and at the same time to influence the overall position of museums in society. Although a significant number of them were never implemented, their preserved content is one of the distinctive expressions of museological and museum thinking at the transition from the 19th to the 20th century.

Of the many diverse topics, considerable attention was paid to efforts to increase the professional qualifications of museum workers. The plenum found its main speaker in the person of Julius Leisching, whose detailed conclusions on this issue even appeared on the pages of the first volume of the prestigious German journal *Museumskunde*.⁴³ He perceived work in a museum as a set of knowledge and specialized skills that an individual could only very hardly acquire through empiricism or the study of relevant literature. A way to remedy this condition was seen by him in courses, which were to be organized by experts in the given field of museum activities. However, despite some attempts, the Association was not very successful in putting this idea in practice and rather pointed with appreciation to its implementation in Germany.⁴⁴ Such a way of solving

the problem was perceived as more acceptable than the plans of the central Austrian authorities and academic community (e.g. Franz Wickhoff, a representative of the Vienna School of Art History) to make the work of the curators of museums of applied arts conditional on the fulfilment of strict qualification criteria (e.g. a doctorate in art history) or the completion of special professional training for museum staff. The cautious reaction of the Association was that if this necessary platform was not created, persons from other artistic professions, who are often very successful in their work, could also hold their current positions.⁴⁵

Among the frequently discussed matters was the mutual relationship of the so-called larger museums to the smaller ones (*kleinere Museen*), which included institutions with local and national historical focus. The members of the Association, as representatives of the first group, perceived their counterparts, often not adhering to the basic rules of professional museum activities, as a factor causing a decrease in the overall credit of these institutions in society and an undesirable fragmentation of forces. Some even saw one of the possible ways to resolve the situation in reducing the number of museums subsidized by state and individual lands. Among these, only the well-managed institutions were to receive further support.⁴⁶ At the same time, however, they strove for closer cooperation, which was given not only by a certain moral obligation towards the lower components of the museum network, but also by

the awareness of mutual benefit.⁴⁷ A more extensive exchange of views on whether to invite representatives of this type of museums to closer cooperation on the associational activities took place just before the World War I. In the end, the view of Julius Leisching from Brno prevailed that the acceptance of the element of national history in the ranks of the association would dramatically reduce its overall readiness for action. At the same time, however, Leisching drew attention to the possibility of a somewhat different approach, which he himself had been practicing for several years in Moravia, where he initiated the creation of a professional organization of local museums.⁴⁸

At their meetings, the Association and its representatives did not miss out on discussing international issues, which undoubtedly included the export of cultural monuments and the closely related illegal trade. The loss of objects of cultural value and their sets disappearing into private collections outside the borders of the home country was, after all, the focus of interest of a number of other institutions of the time (e.g. the International Museum Association). Although the association could not condemn private collecting across the board, it naturally strove to ensure that important evidence of the development of society and nature should preferably get into domestic public museums. Therefore, it has long supported efforts to pass the appropriate law, primarily through exerting pressure on the relevant

⁴² Bericht über die 13. Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Museen in Bozen. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1912, vol. 30, no. 10, p. 156.

⁴³ LEISCHING, Julius. *Museums-kurse*. *Museumskunde*. 1905, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 91–96.

⁴⁴ Bericht über die 13. Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Museen in Bozen. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1912, vol. 30, no. 10, pp. 155–156.

⁴⁵ Bericht über die Prager Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbmuseums in Brünn*. 1907, vol. 25, no. 5, pp. 73–74.

⁴⁶ Bericht über die Reichenberger Konferenz des Verbandes Österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbmuseums in Brünn*. 1904, vol. 22, no. 12, p. 95.

⁴⁷ According to these considerations, larger museums were to leave duplicates from their collection holdings to the smaller ones, which in turn were to draw the attention of their counterparts to objects that they could not afford for financial reasons. Bericht über die 13. Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Museen in Bozen. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1912, vol. 30, no. 10, pp. 152–153.

⁴⁸ KIRSCH, Otakar. *(Po)zapomenutí nositelé paměti: německé muzejnictví na Moravě*. Brno: Paido, 2014, pp. 64–65.

legislative bodies and later also through critical comments on some legislative proposals. For example, in 1912, there was criticism of the draft imperial decree, according to which commercial trade in cultural monuments was to be subject to a concession. The dissenting attitude was justified, among other things, by the fact that such licensed persons would not be able to carry out an accurate and professional inventory of movable monuments according to the wording of this legal regulation. In this context, the representatives of the Association also came to the conclusion that it is inevitable to register these cultural assets in museums, at least according to their affiliation to the given cadastre. However, the planned records should only be kept in the internal card catalogue and not published, because it might arouse undesirable interest of traders and the subsequent export of these items abroad.⁴⁹

Activities directly related to the management of the collections naturally became the subject of discussions. Somewhat surprisingly, less attention was paid to the acquisition issues that were often addressed in the period discourse, where the planned exchange of duplicates between the association's member museums became another significant topic alongside the works created by students.⁵⁰ On the contrary,

considerable emphasis was placed on the issue of conservation (in addition to the discussion of the specifics of some materials, there was also an effort to organize practical courses), as well as on the protection and safety of collection items,⁵¹ especially on the prevention of theft, where the representatives of the association sought a wider involvement of state institutions in raising awareness among museum workers. At the same time, the association centre cooperated with police headquarters and sent photographs of well-known art thieves to its members. One of the important topics in this regard was the exchange of experience with the insurance of museum collections against burglary and fire as well as during transport.⁵² Discussions about presentation activities became a key factor. Various methods of installation were discussed, and in addition to the then dominant technical-historizing concept of permanent exhibitions, greater focus began to be laid on field specifics (e.g. the method of exhibiting ethnographic material on mannequins). It was consulted to what extent interested persons should be allowed to make records of collection items (taking sketches, measurements, photographs). Statistical data on attendance and opening hours, obtained by the Association on the basis of a questionnaire sent out to

its members, was also collected and published.⁵³

The ambition to actively influence their surroundings did not include only the museum audience, but related to a number of other political, professional, industrial and educational entities, of which the association's museum workers developed a particularly strong bond with the arts-and-crafts and art schools. The cooperation, also conditioned by some regulations from that time, required museums to take into account the educational needs and to lend their own objects as teaching aids (preferably high-quality replicas). On the other hand, many museums of applied arts gratefully used the offer of these educational institutions in the form of student works in the field of arts and crafts and high art (imitations, but also modern products), which represented a suitable means of filling the gaps in the collection holdings at the expense of minimal funds.⁵⁴ The discussion of this issue made Julius Leisching to divide museum collection items into originals, which need to be protected because of their age and cultural value, and materials primarily serving educational purposes. These "teaching objects" (Lehrstücke), which included mainly copies faithful to their original model, were also to be created on the initiative of schools. Karl Romstorfer (1854–1916) from the museum in Chernivtsi then understood the museum in this respect as a connecting chain between school and practice, where student products are first confronted with the public. At the same time, he added that it

⁴⁹ Bericht über die 13. Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Museen in Bozen. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1912, vol. 30, no. 10, pp. 151–152. Later, other comments were also made, according to which the implementation of the relevant decree would only encourage further sale of objects of cultural value abroad and "shroud it in mystery". This applied not only to the activities of traders, but also private collectors, who would have to disclose their names when selling their collections. Bericht über die vierzehnte Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Museen (Wien 1913). *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1914, vol. 32, no. 3, p. 40.

⁵⁰ See Bericht über die Troppauer Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*. 1905, vol. 23, no. 6, p. 94.

⁵¹ The lecture on fire safety in museums delivered by Gustav Edmund Pazaurek at the 1904 conference in Liberec became the basis for an article in the journal *Museumskunde*. PAZAUERK, Gustav E. *Feuersgefahr in Museen. Museumskunde*. 1905, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 97–104. The association centre then even investigated the situation regarding the insurance against theft at sixty museums. X. Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen: Innsbruck 11.–14. September 1909. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1909, vol. 27, no. 12, p. 185.

⁵² These questions became an important part of the meeting in Lviv in 1908. Bericht über die IX. Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Museen in Lemberg. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1908, vol. 26, no. 8, pp. 124.

⁵³ Bericht über die Prager Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*. 1907, vol. 25, no. 5, pp. 78–80.

⁵⁴ Bericht über die erste Konferenz österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen in Wien (15.–18. März 1900). *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*. 1900, vol. 18, no. 6, p. 46.

is necessary to be critical and moderate when selecting these works, so that the exhibition space does not become a kind of warehouse for these works. Within the scope of mutual interaction with schools and other institutions, he also saw a suitable opportunity to equip them with artistically valuable products (e.g. furniture).⁵⁵ Later, the Liberec musealist Gustav Edmund Pazaurek even proposed to create a “travelling collection of suitable museum objects” (Wandercollection geeigneter Musealobjekte) for the needs of schools.⁵⁶ Another example of this kind of contacts was the effort to directly support artistic circles and popularize art, an example of which can be the announced competition for the creation of a plaque on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the reign of Johann II, Prince of Liechtenstein (1840–1929), for his support of Cisleithanian museums.⁵⁷ Representatives of the Association also made strong efforts to get involved in the preparation and implementation of the so-called travelling museum (Wandermuseum), which presented collections travelling from Vienna around various Cisleithanian towns.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ibidem, pp. 47–48.

⁵⁶ Bericht über die Zweite Konferenz oesterreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mittheilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*, 1901, vol. 19, no. 10, p. 79.

⁵⁷ The plaque was created by the Viennese sculptor and medal maker Hella Unger and was handed over to the jubilee in October 1908. Von den Verbandmuseen: Verband österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mittheilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1909, vol. 27, no. 1, p. 13. The strong involvement of the aristocracy in the museum sector was typical for both parts of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, see also VISKOLZ, Noémi. *Collected Privately, Presented Publicly: The Collections of the Esterházy Princes and the Public in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century. Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*. 2024, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 5–22.

⁵⁸ Bericht über die Dritte Konferenz des Verbandes Oesterreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen zu Brünn. *Mittheilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*. 1902, vol. 20, no. 12, pp. 92–93.



Fig. 4: Title and opening lines of the report on the first meeting in Vienna in the association journal (Bericht über die erste Konferenz österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen in Wien (15.–18. März 1900). *Mittheilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*. 1900, vol. 18, no. 6, p. 41.)

From 1901 onwards, the journal *Mittheilungen* (from 1903 *Mitteilungen*) des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn (from 1908 under the new name *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe in Brünn*) became a communication platform directly open to the members of the association and the cultural public. This “Association body” (Organ des Verbandes) was primarily intended to bring news from the member museums, which was fulfilled by a section entitled “From Association Museums” (Von Verbandmuseen), which remains to this day one of the key sources of information about events in the museums of applied arts at that time. In addition, regular reports on the annual conferences of the Association were published here. However, the Brno journal also brought papers and excerpts from lectures by important members, thus fulfilling one of the original intentions of the Association – to support professional production. Thematically, these texts mainly reflected research in the field of applied arts and high art, but there

were also purely museum-related issues discussed at the meetings (e.g. the arrangement of museum objects, the role of museums of applied arts in the cultural-historical area, the importance of local museums).⁵⁹

Influencing the period museum discourse through proposals and statements, together with the publication of the journal, completely overshadowed the holding of joint events under the patronage of the association. The reluctance to cooperate was most often related to the fear of violating internal regulations, financial possibilities and in some cases even misunderstanding on the part of the founder. For

⁵⁹ For an overview of the papers and lectures published by the members of the association in this journal (e.g. Leisching, Stroner, Lacher, Pazaurek, Kopera, Chytil, Grubhofer), see *Die zehnjährige Tätigkeit des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. Mittheilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1911, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 32. In addition, the theoretical work of Gottfried Semper, for example, was presented and extended here in an innovative way. LEISCHING, Julius. Gottfried Semper und die Museen. *Mittheilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums*. 1903, vol. 21, no. 24, pp. 185–192.

example, the exhibition planned for the 60th anniversary of the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph I or the proposal to publish a book on rarities stored in the collections of member museums of the association were not put into effect.⁶⁰ The realization of travelling exhibitions thus remained the most developed and at the same time the publicly most visible joint activity. Although this was a characteristic element of working with the visitor in museums of applied arts, the arrangement of these exhibitions had not been coordinated in any way until then. Museums thus spent considerable resources (e.g. transport, insurance, customs), which would have been eliminated by organizing the exhibitions collectively. The practice eventually developed in such a way that if one of the member museums was going to create an exhibition itself or take it over from elsewhere, it first announced everything to the association representatives. They then won over interested members from the ranks of the association, set the schedule of exhibition events in individual museums and resolved the financial side of the matter. In this way, it was possible to organize dozens of travelling exhibitions in a number of cities of the Habsburg monarchy within a few years.⁶¹ The association was proactive in organizing lectures by domestic and foreign experts,

which were also provided for museums in Germany.⁶²

Epilogue

The previous flourishing of the association was abruptly interrupted by the outbreak of World War I. The activities of member museums were gradually reduced, in many cases even suspended. Meetings of the association were therefore held on a minimum scale, and instead of factual debates on the problems of the then museums, their participants increasingly focused on supporting the war policy of the Central Powers.⁶³ After the end of the more than four-year conflict, it was no longer possible to fully continue the previous form of cooperation. Individual museums found themselves in the territory of several successor states of Austria-Hungary (Czechoslovakia, Austria, Poland, Yugoslavia, Italy and Romania) and their representatives thus lost one of the main reasons for maintaining close contacts. However, this did not entirely apply to German-speaking museum workers divided by the state border, some of whom continued to meet at events of the International Museum Association and, after the annexation of Austria and the border areas of Czechoslovakia to the Greater German Reich in 1938, also within the German Museums Association (Deutscher Museumsbund).

In some newly created states, the activities of the association were followed up, but the level of the original association was nowhere reached. The most notable activities continued in Austria,

where the professional association of the same name soon began to function again. Julius Leisching, who in the meantime had been forced to leave his position at the Brno Museum of Applied Arts and took up the director's post at the Museum Carolino-Augustinum in Salzburg, took the lead again. The organization was perceived as a de facto successor of earlier efforts, even though it partially included representatives of national history museums in its ranks.⁶⁴ A somewhat more complicated situation occurred in Czechoslovakia. The large German population here found itself in the position of a national minority, yet the relatively benevolent state policy led to the establishment of the *Association of German Museums of National History in the Czechoslovak Republic* (Verband der deutschen Museen für Heimatkunde in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik). The top positions in it were held by prominent figures from the association (e.g. Schwedeler-Meyer, Braun), and its proven organizational methods (association centres) were also adopted.⁶⁵ Certain partial influence was also exerted on Polish museums. In 1914, Polish museum workers from three countries (Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary) met in Krakow in the premises of the Museum of Technology and Industry, and the then active members of the Austrian Association, Feliks Kopera and Władysław Stroner, were directly involved in the preparation and realization of this convention. Moreover, the resolution adopted here bore distinct elements that were clearly declared by this organization a few

60 In the first case, "impracticability" and "insurmountable obstacles" became the official justification, while in the second case, it was mainly about an effort to present collection items from the museum's holdings under its own power. Bericht über die Prager Tagung des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*. 1907, vol. 25, no. 5, pp. 75–76.

61 Until 1910 alone, there were a total of 21 joint exhibitions. For an overview of them, see Die zehnjährige Tätigkeit des Verbandes österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1911, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 28–29.

62 For example, Bericht über die Dritte Konferenz des Verbandes Oesterreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen zu Brünn. *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*. 1902, vol. 20, no. 12, p. 92.

63 Verband österreichischer Museen: Fünfzehnte Tagung. *Mitteilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn*. 1917, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 11–12.

64 LEISCHING, Julius. Zweck und Grenzen der Museen. Zum dreissigjährigen Bestande des Verbandes österr. Museen. *Salzburger Museumsblätter*. 1930, vol. 9, no. 4/5, p. 5.

65 KIRSCH, Otakar. (Po)zapomenutí nositelé paměti: německé muzejnictví na Moravě. Brno: Paido, 2014, p. 76.

years earlier (e.g. preference for a “free” type of association, mutual support in museum and scientific work, publication of a common periodical). Although these plans were not implemented until after the end of World War I, the whole initiative is considered the factual beginning of museum associations in Poland.⁶⁶

Conclusion

The professional organization called the Association of Austrian Museums of Applied Arts (later the Association of Austrian Museums) can be described in many regards as a unique historical phenomenon. At a time when the issue of museums was rather away from the interest of the state, it represented a fundamental platform striving for the professionalization of museum work and the defence of its interests in public. The original elite conglomerate, associating representatives of one of the most progressive types of museum institutions, gradually moved from solving its own specific problems to a more general reflection of the then museums. The essential factor in its work was an extensive exchange of information, which was often based on personal experience gained in practice, but also included foreign impulses applied to local conditions. In addition to this, the activities of the association also included joint events (organizing travelling exhibitions), efforts to influence the public space (proposals for legislative measures), cooperation with related institutions (education) and support for artistic circles (commissioning works of art for the purpose of awarding important personalities). The internal structure based on the principles of democracy in decision-making processes contributed

significantly to the successful development, but the aspect of voluntariness in the implementation of adopted resolutions by the members proved to be problematic. Although it appealed to strong personalities within the association, it also weakened the impact of the organization's influence on museums and the public sphere.

In the overall assessment of the investigated phenomenon, the poor awareness of the activities of the Association in the contemporary museum community may be surprising. Its exclusive status in the past did not help, nor did the fact that it became a de facto prototype of later professional organizations founded in Central Europe. The process of oblivion that began just after 1918 was related to the growing crisis of the Arts and Crafts movement, but mainly to the often-ostentatious antagonism to the cultural institutions and organizations of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy in some successor states (Czechoslovakia, Poland). In German-speaking countries (Austria, the border areas of the Czech lands), the continuity was disrupted by the gradual departure of the association's prominent figures from the scene and was completely cut off by the onset of the Nazi regime. Nevertheless, the almost twenty-year activity of the Association represents for its time an extraordinarily successful projection of museum workers into the field of culture, when, despite various difficulties, it developed into the supreme body of Cisleithanian museums, which became not only a centre of museum thinking, but also a natural partner for other political, economic and memory institutions. Therefore, it deserves to become part of the narrative about the history of the museum phenomenon in Central Europe and can be an inspiration for current events in many ways.

LIST OF SOURCES:

- Archiv Moravské galerie v Brně, fund
Moravské uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum.
- BRYANT, Julius. *Creating the V&A: Victoria and Albert's Museum (1851–1861).* London: Lund Humphries and the V&A, 2019. ISBN 978-1-84822-618-0.
- BRYANT, Julius. *Designing the V&A: The Museum as a Work of Art (1857–1909).* London: Lund Humphries and the V&A, 2017. ISBN 978-1-84822-233-5.
- BRYANT, Julius. *Enriching the V&A: A Collection of Collections (1862–1914).* London: Lund Humphries and the V&A, 2022. ISBN 978-1-84822-618-0.
- HARTUNG, Olaf. *Kleine deutsche Museumsgeschichte: von der Aufklärung bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert.* Köln: Böhlau, 2010. ISBN 978-3-412-20536-2. <https://doi.org/10.7788/boehlau.9783412212490>
- HUSTY, Peter. Julius Leisching ... „ein durchaus moderner Museumsgestalter“. In: *Das Wesen Oesterreichs ist nicht Zentrum, sondern Peripherie. Gedenkschrift Hugo Rokyta (1912–1999).* Praha: Vitalis, 2002, pp. 131–142. ISBN 80-7253-039-9.
- JOACHIMIDES, Alexis. *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880–1940.* Dresden: Verl. der Kunst, 2001. ISBN 90-5705-171-0.
- KIRSCH, Otakar. Association of museum workers in defence against counterfeiting and unfair trade practices: comments on the origins of organised meetings of museum workers on an international basis. Online. *Museologica Brunensia.* 2015, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 48–55. Available from: <https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/sites/default/files/pdf/134748.pdf>. ISSN 2464-5362. [accessed 2024-12-20].
- KIRSCH, Otakar. Moravské uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum jako integrující prvek vlastivědného muzejnictví na Moravě. *Bulletin Moravské galerie v Brně.* 2024, no. 90, pp. 68–81.
- KIRSCH, Otakar. *(Po)zapomenutí nositelé paměti: německé muzejnictví na Moravě.* Brno: Paido, 2014. ISBN 978-80-7315-249-9.
- KLAUSEWITZ, Wolfgang. *66 Jahre Deutscher Museumsbund.* Köln: Rheinland-Verlag, 1984. ISBN 978-3-7927-0789-0.

⁶⁶ MURAWSKA, Agnieszka. Związek Muzeów w Polsce w latach 1914–1939. *Muzealnictwo.* 2015, vol. 56, p. 116.

- KŘÍŽOVÁ, Alena (ed.). *Moravské uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum v Brně*. [Brno]: Metoda, [2013]. ISBN 978-80-905028-4-0.
- LEISCHING, Eduard. Geschichtlicher Überblick. In: *Das k.k. österreichische Museum für Kunst und Industrie 1864 bis 1914*. Wien: Oesterr. Museum, 1914, pp. 11–50.
- LEISCHING, Julius. Museumskurse. *Museumskunde*. 1905, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 91–96.
- LEISCHING, Julius. Zweck und Grenzen der Museen. Zum dreissigjährigen Bestande des Verbandes österr. Museen. *Salzburger Museumsblätter*. 1930, vol. 9, no. 4/5, pp. 1–6.
- MEYER, Andrea. *Kämpfe um die Professionalisierung des Museums. Karl Koetschau, die Museumskunde und der Deutsche Museumsbund*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2021. ISBN 978-3-8376-5833-0. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783837658334>
- Mittheilungen (Mitteilungen) des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn / Mittheilungen des Erzherzog Rainer-Museums in Brünn* (1899–1918).
- MUNDT, Barbara. *Die deutschen Kunstgewerbemuseen im 19. Jahrhundert*. München: Prestel, 1974. ISBN 978-3-7913-0035-1.
- MURAWSKA, Agnieszka. *Związek Muzeów w Polsce w latach 1914–1939. Muzealnictwo*. 2015, vol. 56, pp. 115–125. ISSN 0464-1086. <https://doi.org/10.5604/04641086.1160348>
- Our commitment. Online. In: *ICOM's Strategic Plan 2022–2028*. Available from: <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/ICOM-SP-Booklet-EN.pdf>. [accessed 2024-12-29].
- PALÁRIK, Miroslav. *Zváz slovenských múzeí v období slovenského štátu 1939–1945*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 2011. ISBN 978-80-8094-993-8.
- PAZAUREK, Gustav E. Feuersgefahr in Museen. *Museumskunde*. 1905, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 97–104.
- PUBAL, Václav. Zakládání uměleckoprůmyslových muzeí a jejich výchovná a vzdělávací činnost. In: *Acta regionalia*. Praha, 1965, pp. 56–67.
- RAMPLEY, Matthew; PROKOPOVYCH, Markian and VESZPRÉMI, Nóra. *Liberalism, Nationalism and Design Reform in the Habsburg Empire: Museums of Design, Industry and the Applied Arts*. New York: Routledge, 2020. ISBN 978-0-367-43489-2. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003003625>
- ŠEBEK, František. Cesta českých muzejních institucí ke vzniku Svazu československých muzeí. Online. *Museologica Brunensia*. 2020, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 21–27. Available from: <https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/sites/default/files/pdf/143048.pdf>. ISSN 2464-5362. [accessed 2024-12-20]. <https://doi.org/10.5817/MuB2020-1-3>
- ŠOPÁK, Pavel. *Prostor pro umění: výtvarné umění na Moravě a v českém Slezsku do roku 1918 jako téma historické muzeologie*. Opava: Slezské zemské museum v Opavě, 2016. ISBN 978-80-87789-38-4.
- VISKOLZ, Noémi. Collected Privately, Presented Publicly: The Collections of the Esterházy Princes and the Public in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century. *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*. 2024, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 5–22. ISSN 2453-9759. <https://doi.org/10.46284/mkd.2024.12.4.1>

OTAKAR KIRSCH

Masaryk university, Faculty of Arts, Department of Archaeology and Museology, Brno, Czech Republic

kirsch@phil.muni.cz

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9626-4139>

He works as associate professor at the Department of Archaeology and Museology of the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University in Brno, where he currently supervises the MA graduates programme. He focuses on the issues of historical museology, museum documentation and the theory of collection procurement. Apart from being a member in editorial boards of peer-reviewed journals and the scientific boards of numerous museums, he is also editor-in-chief of the *Museologica Brunensia* journal and member of the Committee for Museology of the Czech Association of Museums and Galleries.

Působí jako docent na Ústavu archeologie a muzeologie Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, kde je v současné době garantem magisterského navazujícího programu. Jeho odborný zájem je zaměřen na problematiku historické muzeologie, muzejní dokumentace a teorie sbírkotvorné činnosti. Kromě členství v redakčních radách odborných časopisů a vědeckých radách muzeí je šéfredaktorem časopisu *Museologica Brunensia* a členem výboru Muzeologické komise Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky.



This work can be used in accordance with the Creative Commons BY-SA 4.0 International license terms and conditions (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>). This does not apply to works or elements (such as images or photographs) that are used in the work under a contractual license or exception or limitation to relevant rights.