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**Euromed Heritage**  
التراث الأوروبي المتوسطي

## **Cultural tourism, education, exhibition trails, museums, and itineraries: MWNF is all that and much more...**

*Museum With No Frontiers (MWNF) is an attitude based on the understanding of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership as an opportunity of sharing knowledge, of integrating potentials and of building together the World of MWNF. The programme provides the frame for the realisation of joint projects in the fields of culture, tourism and education.*

Eva Schubert, founder, chairperson and CEO of the International Organisation Museum With No Frontiers (MWNF), introduce us to this fascinating programme.

(material collected by Giuliano Salis)

### **What Museum With No Frontiers (MWNF) is about?**

The programme is organised in two main areas: the “**MWNF Virtual Museum**” presents artefacts in museums, monuments and archaeological sites from different countries in relation with each other. The pilot project was set up under the Euromed Heritage III programme. Partners from 14 countries and about 350 experts have contributed to create the largest Museum on Islamic Art on the Internet: [www.discoverislamicart.org](http://www.discoverislamicart.org) presents 850 artefacts from 14 museums and 385 monuments and archaeological sites; descriptions are available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish; a cycle of 18 Virtual Exhibitions is dedicated to the great Islamic dynasties of the Mediterranean with descriptions also in German, Italian, Portuguese, Swedish and Turkish. The Virtual Museum furthermore includes a “Schools & Projects” section that will be further developed into a **School platform** to promote the use of the Virtual Museum as an educational tool.

The “**MWNF Exhibition Trails**” are the new exhibition format launched by MWNF: instead of moving the works of art it is the visitor who moves around to discover museums, monuments and archaeological sites within their natural environment. The handy exhibition catalogues are designed to be used as thematic guides during the visit. The cycle *Islamic Art in the Mediterranean* includes eleven Exhibition Trails, each dedicated to a specific aspect of the overall theme; it was implemented under the phases I and III of the Euromed Heritage programme. The eleven Exhibition Trails offer a total of 95 thematic itineraries reaching 300 locations and facilitating access to 868 museums, monuments and archaeological sites related to the history of the Islamic Mediterranean between the Umayyad Caliphate (661) and the end of the Ottoman Empire (1922).

In connection with the Exhibition Trails **MWNF Travel – the Travel platform of MWNF** – was launched last year to allow local travel agents to advertise tours based on the *Islamic Art in the Mediterranean* Exhibition Trails: [www.mwnftravels.net](http://www.mwnftravels.net)

**Who are the members of the MWNF network, its actors and target groups?**

Members of our network embrace museums, universities and organisations in charge of the preservation and documentation of cultural heritage. In addition to the members, main actors are the partners from the private sector and mainly our partner publishers and partner travel agents. Increasingly MWNF is also cooperating with actors from the educational sector such as schools, youth centres, etc. The target groups are people all around the world who are interested in history, art and culture. For the programme on Islamic art specific target groups are schools (Virtual Museum) as well as potential tourist (Exhibition Trails) with interest in the Islamic world.

**In which context MWNF has been conceived?**

The MWNF programme is based on a pilot project that was implemented between 1994 and 1996 in Austria: the Tyrolean Exhibition Trails. The aim was to use museums and monuments to increase visibility and to promote tourism. On the basis of this very successful pilot experience a Euro-Mediterranean network was set up by MWNF in 1996 to implement similar projects in different countries around the Mediterranean basin. Several preparatory meetings as well as the training of young experts who would then be in charge of the coordination in the different countries could be carried out thanks to the support of Austrian and Spanish institutions. The project was also presented in the different expert meetings that were organised around the Barcelona Declaration and that preceded the Bologna Declaration in 1996, which led then to the selection of projects for the first phase of the Euromed Heritage programme.

**Which are the financial resources?**

Since the end of the EH III project MWNF can count on bilateral contributions from different member states, on the annual fees paid by the partner museums as well as on investments of the private sector to make the outputs and products of the work carried out until now accessible to the final beneficiaries (target groups). Furthermore MWNF produces services based on its know-how and experience.

**How would you describe the results achieved until now?**

Since the beginning it was clear to us – with *us* I refer to the small group of people who in 1995 had initiated the MWNF programme – that the only possibility for MWNF as a completely independent organisation to survive would be to come up with concrete results and to produce tangible products that are of real interest for people and that can compete on the market. In this sense I believe that we are on the right way to achieve our goal.

**Which are your ongoing projects and perspectives?**

A second Virtual Museum *Discover Baroque Art* will be launched in autumn 2009. Partners from nine countries participate in this project and self-finance its implementation. In connection with the *Discover Islamic Art* Virtual Museum educational workshops are organised in different Mediterranean countries to promote awareness about the Virtual Museum. Guided visits to the Virtual Exhibitions constitute the basis for cooperation projects with museums in European and Arab countries. The coordination of the elaboration of the tours for 2009-2010 constitutes a further activity. Finally we are working on the

completion of the Arabic edition of the *Islamic Art in the Mediterranean* Exhibition Trail catalogues and preparing a second English edition.

For the next years our priority is to make sure that the outputs and products set up since the foundation of MWNF and namely those realised with the support of the European Union are known to the mentioned target groups and used by their final beneficiaries. Finally it should be mentioned that MWNF is currently undertaking a major logistic reorganisation including the move of its legal seat and operational office.

For more information:

[www.discoverislamicart.org](http://www.discoverislamicart.org)

[www.mwnftravels.net](http://www.mwnftravels.net)

The books published by MWNF can be viewed and ordered at the **Book platform** of the MWNF website:

[www.museumwnf.org](http://www.museumwnf.org)