

NEWS FROM THE NETHERLANDS, EHHF Bern May 2016

Dear colleagues,

Last year (May 2015) in Dublin I told you about the decentralized character of the Dutch heritage management system. Now I would like to elaborate on another aspect of this system.

On the first of July 2016 a new Heritage Act will be implemented. The former Monuments Act 1988 is reframed and combined in a new coat of arms. I am quite happy with it. This new Bill is more simple and stimulates an *integrated* approach on heritage. For the first time, f.e. a certification for archaeological excavations will be introduced and the significance of interior ensembles well acknowledged. And, as presented in the short film, our new 'Heritage Monitor' is also part of the new Heritage Act.

Nevertheless, the road to acceptance of this Act was bumpy. Its implementation was delayed one year because of a fundamental discussion in the House of Parliament. The Members of Parliament debated on a detail in the Heritage Act: the ad random selling of national culture goods on the free market. Why? Because of two incidents.

The first incident happened in 2011. The Museum Gouda sold the painting 'The Schoolboys' by the Dutch painter Marlène Dumas on the art market in London. This piece of art did not fit into their collection anymore and the museum needed some cash in order to restore a leaking roof... A British buyer took the bait and bought it for 1,3 million euro.

The second incident concerned the WereldMuseum Rotterdam. The director tried to sell their striking African collection after a management decision to steer a different course. Fortunately, this unthoughtful move was stopped by the local municipality. And as a result the museum focusses now on the Asian collection.

Both museums are registered and affiliated to the Dutch Museum Association, but unfortunately they did not follow the museum guideline, emphasizing that you have to consult other museums before selling or deaccessing an important collection item.

After a strong museum lobby - especially from the Rembrandt Association - and a careful consideration the MP's unanimously said: *these kinds of incidents may not happen again*. Consequently, they urged an extra directive in the new Heritage Act in order to restrict the selling of national important goods. This triggered some legal guarantees and several extra amendments, causing a delay of almost one year.

Starting in July, we have to do our utmost to put the new rules in practice without letting them work against us. Deaccession should be done properly, as before. Good collection management is crucial and at the same time we should not be overloaded by extra administration. Next year I will tell you how it went.

Maybe some of you recognize these issues. I am happy to hear your experiences and views.

Thank you for your attention.

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General director of the Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency