

## Establishment of the national association Artisans at work Économusée Norway



### 1. Summary

The network of Économusée companies in Norway has not had its own organization from 2008-2018. Throughout the two previous EU projects, Hordaland County has been leading the network of 10 companies, while The Norwegian Society of Development has been leading the 3rd EU project, Craft Reach. It was a goal to establish a separate national association with the member Économusée to formalize a network organization.

This goal was achieved on February 13, 2018, when the companies established Artisans at work Économusée Norway as their own organization.

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## 2. Background

Developing different cultural industries is important and necessary to preserve and develop jobs throughout the country while maintaining and further developing our cultural heritage. In Stortingsmelding nr. 19 (2016-2017) "Experience Norway - unique and adventurous", cultural tourists are referred to as having a higher total consumption than other tourists, and that a large part of the cultural tourists come from countries other than Norway. This is a market where the culture industry can and should participate to become more diverse and thus prosper and, in many cases, survival as an industry. As noted in the report, cooperation between cultural players and tourism players should be strengthened to develop more, and better cultural tourism products and the Government will even draw on this for their own strategy.

Collaboration between actors and quality of experiences offered are important key words to success. The field of culture must be involved and contribute to this development. Nevertheless, cultural industries such as craft companies and artists are often small and vulnerable with heavy pressure from cheaper products from abroad. Good cooperative solutions between actors and support to develop good tourism products, are therefore necessary both for survival and for developing the businesses as well as the surrounding community.

The Norwegian Society took over as Lead Partner in Craft Reach in 2015, responsible for the operation and development of the Économusée concept in Norway, which is an innovation for business development of craft enterprises, the preservation of cultural heritage and the creation of tourism experiences in the private sector. An Économusée is a living craft company that will provide an authentic experience of active craftsmen at work, where the history of the craft, the development up to the present and new innovative solutions are linked through dissemination, exhibitions and demonstrations. The term «Artisans at Work» is descriptive of the experience visitors often get and used to explain the term "Économusée".

The concept has evolved from Canada and the network currently has about 100 companies across Canada and Northern Europe. There are many examples of companies that through the transformation to a Économusée, including becoming a tourist destination, can show increased turnover and growing number of employees.

The Norwegian Society, together with the Norwegian Économusée and regional stakeholders, worked to develop the companies as cultural tourist destinations. These initiatives are based on the following conditions:

- Competition from low-cost countries on traditional Norwegian craft products has never been greater. Many companies move production to low-cost countries. The expertise and dissemination of valuable cultural traditions often disappears under these conditions. Recruitment to these professions, also disappears together with the knowledge of the original craftsmanship.
- The souvenir market is big with high profits. It is bad that a Chinese tourist will come to Norway and be deceived to buy a "Norwegian craft product", maybe labelled «Norwegian design». The fact is that the product has been produced in China.

- The Norwegian flag is often used to label products produced abroad. The label give the impression of being Norwegian, but they sail under false colors. This is the case with the ongoing debate about "Norwegian" wool. The customers are lured into believing the product is Norwegian with labels like "Norsk design" along with the Norwegian flag.

We consider the establishment and further development of Économusée in Norway as a targeted measure for preserving and strengthening Norwegian craft production. Authentic experiences and cultural tourism are a great growing market. Creating experiences for visitors through the dissemination and experience of Norwegian craft production while, at the same time craftsmen improve their financial situation through sales and hosting is the core of the Économusée concept. The gradual and thorough transformation of an Economusee is for companies a process that ensures quality in production, dissemination and experience.

### 3. Planning and execution

The companies had a joint meeting on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 to discuss further organizing. The conclusion of the meeting was that they wanted to establish an organization. At this planning meeting, they discussed the main objectives for what the organization was going to work with.

The main objective of the association should be products and services for cultural tourism where the companies will emphasize what is genuine, craftsmanship and good design.

They also want a common branding around the quality stamp "Artisans at work".

They will work towards the target groups they desire - not mass tourism - rather those who have the interest for the culture and authentic experiences.

They also want to collaborate with digital solutions for web sites, digital marketing with pointed demographics. They also want a shared competence pool.

Until the founding meeting, The Norwegian Society and an interim board worked to prepare statutes for the association.

### 4. Founding meeting for the association Artisans at work Economusee Norway

The founding meeting were held on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The persons present:

Flåm AS avd Aurlandskoen org nr 982897424 by Mette Bakketun  
Stine Hoff Kunstglass org nr. 985596395 by Stine Hoff  
Fjordønna org nr 981439171 by Johannes M Tysse  
Oleana org nr 963151632 by Torbjørg Grøttveit Gjerstad  
Tønnegarden org nr 969478943 by Jostein Gangstø  
Oselvarverkstaden org nr 979676220 by Vidar Langeland  
Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk AS org nr 812675192 by Øyvind Myhr  
Ciderhuset org nr 971178264 by Eli Grete Høyvik  
Syse Gard org nr 971204877 by Gro Uglenes

Bunad Verksted (Romsdalsmuseet) org nr 970196544 by Hilde Stenmark Kvennes  
Asbjørn Stavland, The Norwegian Society for Development  
Terje Inderhaug, The Norwegian Society for Development  
Kåre Spissøy, The Craft Reach project

The association's **vision** is that Artisans at work Économusée Norway is to promote cultural tourism, and the association must emphasize what is genuine, craft and design.

The **purpose** of Artisans at work Économusée Norway is:

- Common branding around the quality stamp “Artisans at work”
- Work towards the target groups that match the purpose of the association
- Digital collaboration including marketing with pointed demographics
- A common competence pool
- Strengthen the association

The **Objectives** for the organization until 2020 are:

#### *1: Development of the network*

Network development will be through network arenas, joint meetings, gatherings and communication measures, including social media. During joint gatherings and meetings in working groups identify and map opportunities and basis for the development of adventure packages along with tourism industry based on coastal culture, crafts, and authentic Économusée experiences. We also want to link Economusée companies to experiences along The Coastal Pilgrimage Route. This work is led by NCE Tourism / FjordNorge, and The Norwegian Society will try to link with the craftsmen along the route. The cooperation in The Pilgrimage Route and with The Historic Hotels and Restaurants provides the basis for a comprehensive product for cultural tourists with good food and accommodation, hiking trails and associated experiences.

#### *2: Recruitment of new Économusée companies*

Potentially new eco-businesses will be identified, evaluated and reviewed. We realize that the potential is great and in the first place, want to develop new Économusée companies in Western Norway. The organization will contribute to transformation and establishment of new Économusée through mapping the foundation for establishment, developing plans for transformation, and then, together with local / regional level, provide coordination and professional efforts from historians, designers and architects, and more, i.e., services that small craft companies cannot run themselves. During the project period, we will identify and map 3-5 new candidates for the start of the transformation of new Économusée in Western Norway.

#### *3: Further operation*

The association will explore the potential for developing the Économusée concept, the association and the network on a regional level in Western Norway, and gradually to a national level. We want to develop a sustainable organization that can safeguard the objectives of organizing and managing an economic organization with the necessary financial framework to further develop the existing network to become sustainable.

The Économusée network in Norway is part of the international network and it is important for our craft companies to maintain and develop this network. We will also work to coordinate the Économusée concept with content, organization and administration of a new branding scheme for Norwegian-produced crafts.

The association will hold the annual meeting in September 2018 in connection with the first meeting to realize the goals until 2020.

## 5. Results and outputs

The result of the establishment of the Artisans at work Économusée Norway is a continuation of the Économusée concept development in Norway and a continued commitment to the International Économusée network.

With this we look forward to the fact that for many years, we will have an active network that builds bridges between the local community, traditional crafts, culture and history and the growing tourism industry.

## 6. Documents



Stiftingsdokument  
Artisana at work 201

