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The project "Delphi – House of Questions"

Article summarises the first reactions to the initiative "Delphi – House of Questions".

■ Gunter SCHÖBEL
Pfahlbaumuseum
Unteruhldingen, Germany



■ **Fig. 1** Jack Veltman splits the first log in Archeon (NL) (EXARC).



■ **Fig. 2** Lake Arais Fortress (LT). Janis Apals explains the construction of the Bronze Age Houses.



■ **Fig. 3** House of Questions Unteruhldingen (D).



■ **Fig. 4** Unteruhldingen (D). The Time Trail and web site are opened by the Latvian Ambassador and Netherlands' Consul (Pfahlbauten/fsF).

Museum visitors have questions and museums are challenged to answer them. This consideration led us to the concept of "Delphi – house of questions" that has been accepted and sponsored by the EU within the framework of "Culture 2000" (General Directory of Education and Culture, Agreement 2004-1313/001-001 CLT CA12). The open-air museums of Archaeological Park Archeon (Netherlands), Arais Lake Fortress (Latvia), and Pfahlbaumuseum Unteruhldingen (Germany) have each created a "house of questions" with answers as well as "time trails" that inform about the local history. Additionally, more than 25 European partner museums (www.delphi.exarc.net) from a European-wide network of archaeological open-air museums gave answers to further questions via the Internet in more than a dozen languages.

Our three museums joined the EXARC network in an attempt to improve the accessibility of information for people interested in history. Because we have a large percentage of families and school groups in our range of visitors, we searched for new presentation methods. As initial evaluations show, the "house of questions" has been very well received and gratefully accepted by our visitors.

From May 2005 through to the end of December 2005, about 200,000 people have visited the new installation in Unteruhldingen. The numbers for Archeon and Arais are 140,000 and 30,000, respectively. Therefore more than 370,000 visitors have seen the results of our common project. The idea to create a European exhibition (by first asking the visitors to provide questions, then pursuing their scientific answers through research at archaeological open-air museums, and finally presenting the

answers in collaboration with graphic artists and illustrators) worked out very well.

In the Netherlands (Archeon) (fig. 1) early-medieval houses with explanatory boards were constructed in the museum. Information devices were presented in the town centre of Alphen a. d. Rijn. In Latvia (Arais Lake Fortress) (fig. 2) new defence facilities complement the existing open-air museum and a Bronze Age house was reconstructed for the first time in that country, on the basis of archaeological finds. Additionally, information tables were installed along the paths and brochures were published – not only in the local language, but also in English, German and Russian.

In Germany (Unteruhldingen) a 70 m² Bronze Age house was equipped with the 50 questions most important to the visitors and their answers (fig. 3). Furthermore, an information trail of 2 km in length now leads through the surrounding village, filling in the gaps of the museum work on the Lake Constance (fig. 4). Brochures printed in several languages (German, English, and French), the website (www.delphi.exarc.net) that has been composed by all three museums, and the European network of open-air museums (EXARC) offer multimedia-based information for nearly every target group at open-air museums.

Initial interrogations and evaluations show an overwhelming echo of the visitors. "Finally we're learning about what really interests us. Here we receive answers to our questions!" Also the museum scientists learned a lot by this. We hope this kind of visitor-orientated installations will be followed by others. It will be especially important to make such opportunities known to the ministries of education

and culture, the authorities of education, and to science broadcasts in the media of as many countries as possible. The international Internet homepage will carry on under the patronage of the European open-air museums (EXARC) and will be an indicator for the success of "Delphi – House of Questions". It will have to deal with finding comprehensible answers to questions of those interested in European history. We hope the project will be carried on elsewhere.

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Summary

Das Projekt "Delphi – Haus der Fragen"

Das Konzept des Projektes "Delphi – Haus der Fragen" basiert auf der Vorstellung, dass die Besucher von Museen Fragen stellen und dass die Museen dazu verpflichtet sind, diese zu beantworten. Die erste Reaktion auf diese Initiative zeigte eine positive Einstellung der Besucher, die darüber erfreut waren, dass sie etwas zu den Themen erfuhren, die sie auf den "Zeitwegen" und in den "Häusern der Fragen" der drei am Projekt beteiligten Freilichtmuseen wie auch im Internet auf der Seite www.delphi.exarc.net besonders interessierten.

Projet "Delphes - maison de questions"

L'idée de "Delphes - maison de questions" se fonde sur des questions posées par les visiteurs des musées auxquelles les derniers répondent. Les premières réactions à cette initiative sont toutes positives. Les visiteurs sont contents de pouvoir s'instruire sur "les pistes temporelles" et dans "les maisons de questions" des trois musées fondateurs de plein air et sur l'internet www.delphi.exarc.net.