PRESS RELEASE

Madrid, 6th October 2016

A MUSEUM OPEN FOR ALL

The ARCHES project will develop new strategies and tools to facilitate access to cultural resources by people with differences and difficulties associated with perception, memory, cognition and communication.

This project is partially funded by the European Union under the Horizon 2020 programme. Thirteen institutions from four European countries are involved, including six major museums in Spain, the United Kingdom and Austria.

The kick-off meeting will be held on 6th and 7th October in Madrid, providing a good opportunity for the partners to start technical discussions at Lázaro Galdiano Museum and Thyssen Museum.

The main objective of ARCHES (Accessible Resources for Cultural Heritage EcoSystems) is to generate more inclusive environments at museums and cultural heritage sites, so that people with differences and difficulties associated with perception, memory, cognition and communication can easily access and understand art. To this end, ARCHES brings together three key aspects: a participative research methodology, the reuse of available digital resources and the development of innovative technologies.

The participative research methodology will allow the target group themselves to be at the core of the design and development chain. Independent research groups will be established. Over eighteen months, they will visit the participating museums in order to define, assess and validate the tools developed by the technical partners. We expect

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that the results will be able to be extended to other groups, such as children or the elderly.

The existing digital resources – taken from the Internet (e.g. Europeana, a multi-lingual online collection of millions of digitised items from European museums, libraries, archives and multi-media collections) as well as from private archives – will be one of the main inputs for this innovative approach with the purpose of exploring and encouraging novel ways of understanding art.

To make the interaction of end users easier, friendly and intuitive tools will be developed, including an online software platform, applications for smartphones and tablets and on-site multisensory activities. Image processing techniques, augmented reality, sign languages with avatars, 3D reproductions of paintings, relief printer and other cutting-edge technologies will be used.

This R&D project has been selected to be partially funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 programme. Horizon 2020 (H2020) is the biggest European Union Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 million of funding available over seven years (2014-2020).

A total budget of €3.8 million, of which almost €3.4 million is from the EU, will be devoted to designing, developing and validating the functionalities, tools and activities in ARCHES. This remarkably interdisciplinary project will be executed over three years and coordinated by the Spanish company Treelogic with the collaboration of another twelve entities from four European countries:

- University of Bath (United Kingdom)
- The Open University (United Kingdom)
- Signtime (Austria)
- ArteConTacto (Austria)
- Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias (Spain)
- Coprix Media (Serbia)
- VRVis Zentrum fur Virtual Reality und Visualisierung Forschungs (Austria)
- Kunst Historisches Museum Wien (Austria)
- The Wallace Collection (United Kingdom)
- Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (Spain)
- Museo Lázaro Galdiano (Spain)
- Victoria & Albert Museum (United Kingdom)
The experience, know-how and expertise of each institution in diverse areas, such as serious games, avatars and new strategies to encourage inclusion in cultural heritage sites, among others, will be the basis for the development of successful solutions. In addition, the ARCHES team will be supported by a committee of experts composed of:

- **Dr Christopher Abbott**, Emeritus Reader King’s College London.
- **Dr Nicola Clare Grove**, Speech and Language Therapist.
- **Dr Natalia Kucirkova**, Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University.
- **Prof Andy Minnion MBE**, Director of the RIX Research and Media, University of East London.
- **Prof John Ravenscroft**, Chair of Childhood Visual Impairment, University of Edinburgh.
- **Dr Edurne García Iriarte**, Assistant Professor and Director of the MSc in Disability Studies at the School of Social Work and Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin.