

*“Our children learn about their new country at school; adults can understand its history and culture by visiting museums” Roxana Tizu, Romania*

## **The Royal Palace of Venaria: Life in motion**

Built in mid 17th century for Duke Carlo Emanuele II di Savoia, the Reggia of Venaria Reale was restored to its magnificence after two centuries of neglect and decay. Its outstanding baroque architecture, gardens and installations recreating life at court by Peter Greenaway all provide an ideal frame for the *Theatre of History and Magnificence*, a comprehensive exhibition about the Savoy family.

In the first year since it opened to the public (October 2007), Venaria Reale has welcomed approximately 950,000 visitors. By taking part in MAP for ID through the *Life in motion* pilot project, its aim was to increase access and experiment with new ways of engaging a diverse audience.

### **Objectives and phases**

The main goal of the project was to involve participants in the planning of activities and services aimed at increasing migrant communities' participation, by creating consultation groups and opportunities for exchange between museum operators, representatives of migrant associations, cultural mediators and individual visitors. For this to happen, it was important for the project team to conceive Venaria Reale not only as a cultural space for interaction (hence the choice of an overarching “intercultural” theme to reach across different audiences), but also as an institution encouraging participatory and cooperative planning.

*Life in motion* was structured in two main phases. The first one comprised:

- Interviews with museum colleagues, visitors and cultural mediators of immigrant background to investigate cultural consumption patterns of migrant communities;
- Call for participation advertised in local job centres;
- Visits to the Reggia and its gardens, focusing on the several transformations the palace underwent throughout the centuries.

The theme of *transformation* was chosen as a transversal issue not only in order to help visitors explore the palace, but also to connect the experience of individuals of different ages, education, social and cultural background, and therefore to promote group cohesion.

The second phase of the project consisted in group meetings between participants, museum operators, cultural and linguistic mediators of immigrant background from the Association “Noi Multietnici” (which roughly translates as “We are multi-ethnic”) and teachers from local Centres for Adult Education and Training, in order to promote an exchange of views on the significance of the visit. The most motivated visitors, a group of 10 women from different parts of the world, were then invited to take part in a further meeting to develop proposals aimed at increasing the participation of migrant communities.

## **Results**

The outcome of these meetings was a draft action plan for 2010, whose feasibility is currently being evaluated by the museum director. This document – based on the conviction that the Royal Palace of Venaria should be perceived as the common heritage of mankind (as stated by UNESCO in 1997) rather than a place of specific interest for one cultural group only – outlines two main proposals for the coming year:

- To start a “special” cultural mediation service in Arabic and Romanian, located at the museum entrance and aimed at providing information on the visit, events and services; this option would build on the existing partnership with local associations, mediators, and CTP teachers;
- To train the museum staff in order for it to be able to interact with visitors of immigrant background – a public with specific needs, but also with expectations and requirements common to other audiences – at least as far as basic services are concerned (including welcome desk, ticket office and guided tours); this option would build on the competencies of the museum staff of non-Italian origin.

### **Institution**

“La Venaria Reale”

[www.lavenariareale.it](http://www.lavenariareale.it)

### **Project coordinator**

Silvia Varetto, coordinator Education Services

[silvia.varetto@lavenariareale.it](mailto:silvia.varetto@lavenariareale.it)

### **Target groups**

Adults of immigrant background. 142 people took part, 90% of them belonging to or connected with local associations. The final group involved in the drafting of an intercultural action plan for 2010 was formed by 10 women of different nationalities