



SYMBOLS
Stories of cultural life

SYMBOLS

Culture of Death & Cultural Life

Good practices to attract the hearing impaired people target audience and people with other disabilities to the built heritage



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union



Good Practices case studies with Deaf

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INTRODUCTION

SYMBOLS “Culture of Death & Cultural Life: New Audiences and Creations around European Cemeteries” is a international cultural cooperation project co-financed by the program “Creative Europe” of the European Commission. The project, led by the Avilés City Council through its Municipal Foundation for Culture, also gathers partners such as a Slovenian public company responsible for the management of the cemeteries in the village of Maribor, the Culture Department of the City of Genoa in Italy, the Dundee and Angus College in Scotland, the municipal association of Nebbiu in Corsica, and the Limerick Institute of Technology in Ireland, a public education centre dedicated to the teaching of art and design.

The project tries to foster exchange and artistic creativity, as well as access to culture, utilising funerary symbology as a source of inspiration and common theme.

Among its objectives, we could highlight:

- The transnational exchange of cultural and creative works (mobility in artists and products)
- The work with new audiences, using cemeteries as “open air museums”
- The promotion in the use of new technologies

For this purpose, within SYMBOLS, the following main activities have been carried out:

- Creation of inventories and definition of common artistic elements (symbols), and creation of guides and activities with and for the new generations, in particular through an app for augmented reality called “ARTOUR”.
- Work on access to heritage with and for audiences with hearing or visual disabilities, and the adaptation of ARTOUR for their needs.
- Organisation of the current touring and multidisciplinary exhibition that presents the created works by more than 40 European artists through 2 artistic residencies
- Exchange and transference of the experience through workshops and the creation of best practice guides, in particular those directed to the members of the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE).

INTRODUCTION

Within this framework, this current publication summarises the activities and best practices created to bring the constructed and artistic heritage to people with disabilities, mainly hearing disabilities, through a selection of applicable examples in European cemeteries. This guide is aimed at educational staff and also at the management staff of cemeteries, members of ASCE, with a view to share resources and experiences about cemeteries as artistic resources.



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Spain. Cementerio La Carriona. Avilés

Audiencia

50 people aged over 20 years old, and with intellectual and hearing disabilities

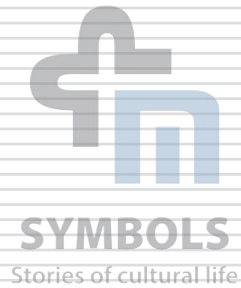
This activity has been developed in collaboration with the Centre for Integration Support (CAI) of the Vinjoy Foundation, a public entity, whose objectives include the full integration of people with deafness, as well as the socio-educational integration of those groups with intellectual and social disabilities.

Place visited

La Carriona Cemetery, Avilés

What was done?

- The first of the activities was a short introduction to explain to all participants the activities of the Symbols project, the symbologies in cemeteries, in particular at La Carriona Cemetery in Avilés, as well as the overall objective of the project, which tries to foster exchange and artistic creativity, and access to culture utilising funerary symbology as a source for inspiration and common themes.
- The next information session took place at the Factoría Cultural, or Cultural Factory, followed by a visit to the Interpretative Centre of La Carriona Cemetery, where its director Mr. Manuel Ángel Hidalgo explained the history of the cemetery to all participants, its journey and relationship with the city and the most relevant sculptures. Furthermore, a mobile phone app called ARTour was introduced: this app was developed by students of the Cuenca del Nalón Institute from 4th E.S.O. and 1st and 2nd year courses. This app allows for the geolocation of tombs and most relevant individualities within the cemetery.



Spain

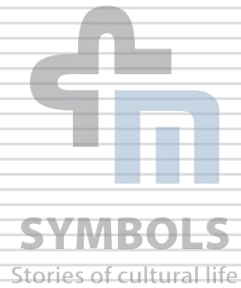
- After this, a visit to the cemetery followed, during which participants collected both graphical and photographic documentation.
- Finally, interpretation work with pictorial and clay techniques was carried out during the pottery workshop in relation to the symbols that were analysed during the documentation process.
- These works were included in the exhibition entitled “Symbols: Stories of Cultural Life”, at the CMAE, Municipal Centre for Arts and Exhibitions of Avilés.

Main results

- The participation in this project has allowed participants to obtain a different outlook on the concept of death through funerary art, exchanging their preconceived ideas of frustration, sorrow and pain for a more artistic view, and as a result provide a new point of view about cemeteries as places for inspiration and artistic creativity.
- Participants’ creative and expressive capabilities were improved through the workshops and the activities organised by the Cultural Factory in Avilés.
- The participation in the exhibition at the CMAE, Municipal Centre for Arts and Exhibitions also provided an growth in self-esteem and self-belief, since their works were to be seen and appreciated, allowing them to leave their safe environment.

Evaluation

The evaluation of this project by the organisers is completely positive. The participation in Symbols has allowed people with intellectual and hearing disabilities to get closer to an open space museum which is related to funerary art, hence facilitating their inclusion in daily life and allowing them to view funerary monuments that are part of our society.



Spain

The most valued aspects of the project participation have been:

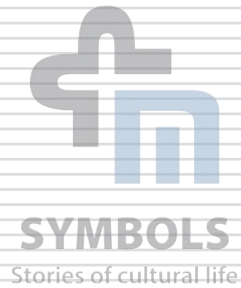
- The study visit at La Carriona Cemetery which has allowed participant to touch and feel the sculptures and the symbols,
- Through the explanations and guided visits they were able to understand the meaning of these,
- Finally, they were able to experiment and understand the advantages offered to the world of art by new technologies.

These proposed activities have contributed to emancipate those people that have some sort of disability, breaking down barriers that allow them to participate in their communities. Through their participation, they have received an education, in this case related to funerary art, that allows them not only to understand this type of art, but also to find a source of inspiration that facilitates their expression through different artistic techniques.

This project has contributed to eliminate the obstacles and disadvantages that people with disabilities suffer on a daily basis, by facilitating their integration and knowledge of the world of art.

The evaluation of participants was positive for a number of reasons:

- The positive impact from the learning and the appreciation of the works of art and symbology of the cemeteries has allowed participants to understand more deeply the funerary symbology and its meanings.
- The possibility of getting to know the different textures and materials that are used in these works of art.
- Working in groups around a common theme, in collaboration with other groups, and learning to develop and participate with their community in a normalised work environment.
- The positive reaction by the rest of artists who captured the expression, creativity and vision of the common theme that participants portrayed in their work.



Spain

Among the main difficulties encountered in the project we could highlight:

- The speed of talking during the explanations made it difficult for participants to follow and understand all the meanings of the explanations,
- Programme issues, and in particular recesses due to the holiday period, which meant activities could not be maximised, since continuity in these types of projects is essential with these type of groups.

Recommendations

It is recommended to add a pilot project which allows for an activity of coexistence and joint artistic creation among those artists that participated in the project. This initiative could prove to be very rewarding in order to improve communication with other associations or groups that do not suffer from intellectual or hearing disabilities.



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Ireland. St. Mary's Cathedral cemetery. Limerick

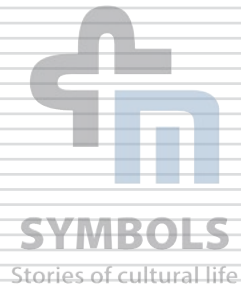
Audience

The participants were aged between 40 and 55. They are part of a group called Brothers of Charity in Limerick city, who work and assist people with special needs and learning disabilities. The group were told about the SYMBOLS project and had the option of joining the activity.

Place visited

On Thursday 24th November 2016, the group visited St. Mary's Cathedral cemetery in Limerick city. The Cathedral of Saint Mary Blessed Virgin has had a long and eventful history. It was founded in 1168 on the site of a palace donated by Donal Mor O'Brien King of Munster. Experts believe that parts of the palace are incorporated into the present structure of the Cathedral.

The Cathedral has seen many changes as the city expanded around it and it remains today the oldest and most historic building in Limerick. The cemetery features many elaborate graves featuring both above ground and below ground burials; these are rich in symbolism, featuring angels, anchors, urns, shamrocks, a pelican and even a monstrous Hydra.



Ireland

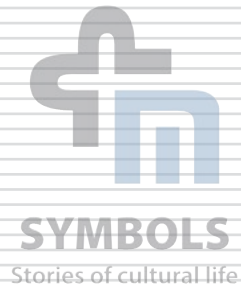
Activities carried out

The group were asked to bring cameras to record any of their findings at the cemetery. Upon arrival the group met with Dr. Tracy Fahey, Head of Department in the Limerick School of Art and Design. The group were given information packs, which consisted of images and meanings of the symbols in the graveyard. Dr. Fahey then gave the group a tour of the cemetery and encouraged the participants to use the information packs as a 'seek and discovery' resource. Dr. Fahey explained the different symbols on the graves and gave a history of their individual meaning. She also encouraged the group to give their thoughts and opinions on the symbols.

The group then walked from the cemetery to the LSAD campus, approx. 10 minutes' walk. They met with artist and previous SYMBOLS residency participant in Aviles, Gemma Dardis. She talked to the group about the workshop they would be doing, a process of ceramics called 'Paper Clay'. They looked at photos they had taken and did some drawings of the symbols they had seen. They were then given a slab of plaster to engrave the image into using a variety of tools. Once completed they used pulped porcelain clay to apply to the carving. When dry the clay is pulled back to reveal an impression of the image. This process was repeated several times. The clay was then put in the kiln and fired at a high temperature. The finished piece is a porcelain plate.

Outcomes

The outcomes for the group was a deeper knowledge of symbols and their meanings. Also, learning a new technique they had never used before to visually describe symbols. We plan on having a small exhibition of their work in their learning facility in the near future.



Ireland

Evaluation

The group thoroughly enjoyed the experience. One participant was overwhelmed by the cemetery and found it a very sad place, but enjoyed the activity of making the paper clay pieces. The overall sentiment was very satisfied by the experience as a whole. Rich in engagement and learning outcomes.

The key difficulty was finding a group. A lot of the Limerick deaf and blind groups are under resourced and have little or no budget for administration. We found Brothers of Charity through the Social Sciences department in the Limerick Institute of Technology. It worked out very well for us but it was very late in the project when we found a group to work with.

The key success of the workshop was the meaningful engagement of the participants. How they understood the different elements of the symbols and the new technique of the paper clay was exciting for them to discover. Also, working with artist Gemma Dardis who had attended the residency in Aviles really helped the group understand what and why they were doing the project.

Recommendations

The only recommendation would be to bring other elements of the project into the part of the project so they are more connected. We used an artist that we sent on a residency to lead the workshop on this part of the project and it really encouraged and excited the participants in the group to have her expertise and learn a technique that was used in her own work.



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USA. Children's Museum. Boston

Resource

Children's Museum, Boston

Audiencia

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Contact

www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org

Saki Iwamoto, Educador en Salud y Bienestar
Iwamoto@BostonChildrensMuseum.org

Description

Boston Children's Museum is the second oldest, and one of the most influential children's museums in the world. It was founded in 1913 by the Science Teachers' Bureau, a group of visionary educators dedicated to providing new resources for both teachers and students, as a center for the exchange of materials and ideas to advance the teaching of science.



USA

The Museum has an extensive educational and activity programme called ASL (American Sign Language) interpreted KidStage shows for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. Some examples are:

- Magic show by Deaf magician, Steve Weiner.
- Dance workshops by Kerry Thompson Deafblind dancer and Director for Silent Rhythms Dance,
- Recycled Art with Sabrina Dennison, deaf artist presents bright colors, contrasts, and multi dimensions to explore, and “think outside of box”

The key aspect of the activities is the fact that involve kids and families and are developed by deaf artists.





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Italy. Egyptian Antiquities Museum. Torino

Resource

Egyptian Antiquities Museum, Torino

Audiencie

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Contact

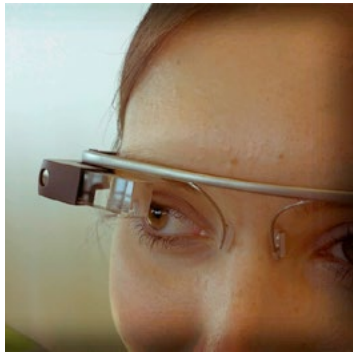
info@museitorino.it
www.museoegizio.it

Description

The Egyptian Museum has recently launched (2015) a cutting edge tool, called GOOGLEGLASS4LIS, for the deaf that provides adequate accessibility of collections through a last-generation wearable “device” able to translate into Sign language (LIS) contents that other visitors read in the captions.



Italy



Developed by Rokivo Inc. and Vidiemme Consulting, in collaboration with research groups (Politecnico di Torino, University of Turin) and local institutions, the GOOGLEGLASS4LIS project allows to convert written texts into Italian Sign Language. This tool has been developed thanks to the results of the ATLAS Project of the Polytechnic of Turin: a technology platform that is based on complex algorithms of translation from Italian to sign language.

Written texts (E.g. the Ramses II statue description) have been converted through the use of a virtual actor – an avatar, in the next future – in Sign Language and the video is directly displayed on Google Glass, in order to have a full museum fruition.





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United Kingdom. National Gallery

Resource

National Gallery

Audiencie

Deaf

Contact

www.nationalgallery.org.uk
information@ng-london.org.uk.

Description

The National Gallery offers a range of facilities to help deaf or hard-of-hearing visitors to explore the paintings, visit exhibitions and events. They also offer a programme of British Sign Language (BSL) interpreted discussions on the paintings. Deaf lecturers also regularly deliver talks in BSL.



United Kingdom

Exhibitions

Facilities to assist include:

- Audio guides available for the paintings with volume enhancement
- Exhibition videos and films have subtitles and transcripts
- Transcripts of audio guides
- Water for assistance dogs

British Sign Language tour

This multimedia tour features 23 key highlights from the collection. The tour includes video clips with British Sign Language (BSL) commentary and visual elements, including details of paintings and zoom functions. There are also visual support guides to help locate the paintings in the tour, and a zoomable map to enable clear navigation.

Events

To enable access to events the Gallery provides:

- Induction loops for talks and films in the Sainsbury Wing Theatre, Sainsbury Wing Exhibition cinema and Sunley Room cinema
- BSL-interpreted talks and talks in BSL
- Live speech-to-text captioning provided by STAGETEXT. This service converts the spoken word into visible text, providing visitors who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing access to live events.

Vatican City. Vatican City Museums

Resource

Vatican City Museum

Audiencie

Deaf

Contact

www.museivaticani.va
visitedidattiche.musei@scv.va



Description

The Vatican Museums offer to 2 types of tours, free of charge, to deaf or hard of hearing:

- On Wednesdays and Saturdays guided Tours for the Deaf in Italian Sign Language (LIS) are available. Visits are conducted by deaf didactic guides who have received specialised training in the Vatican Museums.
- The video-guide in American Sign Language (ASL). This innovative tool, provided by the “Pope’s Museums” for their varied public, may facilitate the interpretation of cultural heritage and help overcome every type of obstacle to the appreciation of the museums’ treasures

Vatican City

Produced by Antenna International, the video-guide in ASL accompanies the visitor on an evocative tour of the principal masterpieces of the Vatican collection in several itinerary:

- From the splendid statue of Apoxyomenos to the Laocoön Group,
- From Apollo to the Torso of the Cortile del Belvedere,
- From the Gallery of Tapestries to the Gallery of Geographical Maps,
- And the Apartments of St. Pius V to the Sobieski Hall.

The Raphael Rooms and the Sistine Chapel are also included in the guided tour.

The interface of this multimedia production includes three icons on the lower part of the screen, corresponding to three different functions of the application: Menu, Keyboard and Map. By touching the Menu icon, the visitor is able to access a list of the sections of the Vatican Museums included in the tour. The content of each section may be accessed simply by touching the corresponding image and title. Each section has, at the top, a map which guides users through the section, and a list of comments. By touching the image of the work and the corresponding title, it is possible to access the content (videos in American Sign Language). The second icon, Keyboard, allows visitors to follow the tour through a numerical selection of comments (the numbers to press are indicated in the index of works, next to the audio symbols).

It is possible to activate or deactivate the subtitles of the video at any point by touching an icon at the top right corner of the screen. The third icon, Map, enables the visitor to access the “zoomable” maps of the Museums, showing the ground floor, the upper floors and the Sistine Chapel.

United Kingdom. Historic Royal Palaces. London

Resource

Historic Royal Palaces, London

Audiencie

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Contact

Sue Whittaker, Group Customer
Services Director at Royal London
VisitorServices.TOL@hrp.org.uk
www.hrp.org.uk



Description

Historic Royal Palaces is an independent charity that looks after the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, the Banqueting House, Kensington Palace, Kew Palace and Hillsborough Castle.

The museums provide services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. British Sign Language interpreters are in a set schedule published on the website. The interpreter will meet guests at the Welcome Centre at the arranged time wearing a bright blue high visibility vest, with 'BSL interpreter' on the back. They also wear a grey badge with the BSL symbol. Itineraries can be tailored to individual or group needs.

United Kingdom

Videos for Visitor information in British Sign Language, along with pdf files are available at the Museums sites. Actually, in 2010, this institution received the All Jodi Award for their website information videos in British Sign Language. The Palaces received the Digital Access Online award for their video clip skills, which have produced 25 video clips around the Royal sites voiced by deaf actor John Wilson, whose winning combination of “expressive qualities” and period costumes resulted in a “really engaging” experience for audiences.

In 2011, Historic Royal Palaces was invited to join a Grundtvig partnership project to produce a ‘White Book’ of guidelines and best practice on accessibility for Deaf people and the use of ICT in museums. The aim was to help develop best practices among staff in European museums and visitor attractions.

The main tips identified during the project implementation are:

At the arrival

Museum entrance:

- Ensure information on site is easy to spot and is clearly identified,
- Don’t rely on your website alone. Some people like to travel independently and either fail to use the technology successfully because the information is inappropriate and/or find out about,
- Make sure your equipment works and train your staff to use it t too late into their visit.



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United Kingdom

During the visit

Interpreters:

- Allow time and money for the interpreter's preparation. He/she will need to immerse themselves in your topics and do research about appropriate signs to use.
- Have the guide trained along with your staff.
- Have the guide and the interpreter meet beforehand.

After the visit

- If you have Visitors Books or comment cards, encourage deaf visitors to fill them in. You want their positive feedback as well as any ideas for improvement!
- If you do annual or periodic visitor surveys ask deaf visitors to participate, even if you are only able to canvass them on one day when a sign language interpreter is present
- If you can, chat to them at the end of their visit or over a cup of coffee during an afternoon refreshment break in your cafe - not just to find out what could be improved but how the offer could be developed and to get ideas for the future



More information and document on the Best Practices identified within the above mentioned Grundtvig can be found at:

<http://www.hrp.org.uk/accessibility/museums-accessibility-and-ict-for-deaf-people/#gs.fcRi2vM>



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United Kingdom. Science Museum. London

Resource

London Science Museum

Audience

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Contact

www.sciencemuseum.org.uk
info@sciencemuseum.ac.uk



Description

The Science Museum website has been designed to provide information to deaf and hard of hearing audiences. Web hard of hearing project contacted via the West London Hard of Hearing Group, to help the Museum, tell the stories of those who have experienced first-hand the museum site accessibility. Over the course of a few months, seven sessions took place with the group, each exploring why the Web has made such a significant impact on the hard of hearing community specifically. The group shared their experiences, and also discussed how best to present these stories to the Museum's visitors. A decision was made to produce a series of short films with the participants, to be displayed as part of a digital screen exhibit in the gallery explaining some of the exhibits in the museum. Together, the group co-curated and developed the concepts for the films, and starred in the films too. The main outputs of the project are the fascinating videos about historical medical implements and a series of videos about climate change where you can click the button to show the British Sign Language (BSL) translation

United Kingdom

SIGNtific is a series of Deaf-led family events with voiceover interpreters that take place on the first Saturday of every month and during the holidays. Suitable for Deaf and hearing audiences. These events aimed at children are presented in BSL by a talented and enthusiastic team of deaf presenters. They are all voiceover interpreted, making them appropriate for both deaf and hearing audiences. A varied programme of workshops, shows and story tellings run throughout the year.

On the last Wednesday of each month, adults are welcome into the museum for an evening of BSL events. This programme varies from month to month and includes deaf-led tours, workshops help in BSL, talks in BSL by deaf presenters and BSL interpreted talks.



CONCLUSIONS

Museums, cultural resources and heritage sites should strive to be leaders in promoting the highest standards for access and inclusion, without settling for meeting minimum legal requirements.

Cultural institutions, especially museums, are increasingly participatory and interactive, with a major shift towards facilitated experiences and away from static displays. This focus on audience engagement and education through public programs, guided tours, hands-on activities, and so forth, neglects to take into account the communication needs of visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Without alternative methods of communication, these visitors are not afforded the opportunity to benefit from participation in socially enriching activities because so much information is delivered verbally and requires that visitors can hear. Cultural institutions must critically assess the effectiveness of best practices within the context of dynamic informal learning environments, and also incorporate user ability and desired outcomes into the process of evaluating accessibility.

Customised visual materials should be provided, so that could be read by the visitors in advance and taken with them, enabling to re-experience their visit to the museum. Animations illustrating the development and changes of an object or space through time would also be very useful.

New insights and virtual methods are also increasingly important for the deaf people, who depend on visual communication. Namely, apps and the latest ICT solutions have dramatically changed the way to access to cultural heritage to this audience.

CONCLUSIONS

At present, the main museums and cultural heritage management entities are opening new forms of access to art, including:

- Web hard of hearing project to tell the stories of those who have experienced first-hand the museum site accessibility. It includes a series of short films with the participants were produced to be available at the museum site, based on the shared experiences with the hard of hearing community during the testing.
- Cutting edge tools, that provides adequate accessibility of collections through a last-generation wearable “device” able to translate into Sign language contents that other visitors read in the captions.
- Live speech-to-text captioning. This service converts the spoken word into visible text, providing visitors who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing access to live events.
- Involving deaf or hard of hearing artist to develop educational activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the arrival

Museum (or cemetery) entrance:

- Ensure information on site is easy to spot and is clearly identified,
 - Do not rely on your website alone. Some people like to travel independently and either fail to use the technology successfully because the information is inappropriate and/or find out about,
 - Make sure your equipment works and train your staff to use it
- ate into their visit.

During the visit

- Allow time and money for the interpreter's preparation. He/she will need to immerse themselves in your topics and do research about appropriate signs to use.
- Do not move around while you are talking or demonstrating
- Have the guide trained along with your staff.
- Have the guide and the interpreter meet beforehand.

After the visit

- If you have Visitors Books or comment cards, encourage deaf visitors to fill them in. You want their positive feedback as well as any ideas for improvement!
- If you do annual or periodic visitor surveys ask deaf visitors to participate, even if you are only able to canvass them on one day when a sign language interpreter is present
- If you can, chat to them at the end of their visit or over a cup of coffee during an afternoon refreshment break in your cafe - not just to find out what could be improved but how the offer could be developed and to get ideas for the future.

RECOMENDACIONES

Embracing organizational change

- Consult and involve users in project design.
- Build accessibility and inclusive design into every budget
- Directors and senior administration should demonstrate leadership and take full responsibility for progress in cultural accessibility for deaf or hard of hearing people.
- Educational programmes in partnership: signed curriculum resources jointly produced by deaf people for young deaf people, can bring collaboration for creative materials and appropriate mix of users, artists and designers with expertise in the area.

Policy making

- Social clauses: To require from tenders for public procurement of services that they demonstrate their experience and understanding of inclusive design (also known as Design for All) for people with a disability and specifically for deaf or hard of hearing people



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Centro educativo de Dundee y Angus. (Escocia - R.U.)



Mancomunidad de municipios de Nebbiu. en Córcega. (France)

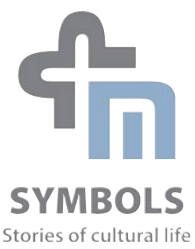


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