

## Reflections from ICOM Estonia members to new proposed definition

### **1/ Briefly introduce your committee: number of members, variety of members**

ICOM Estonia, 250 members, incl. 30 retired members, 20 student members, 11 institutional members.

### **2/ What feedback and what approaches have been sparked by the MDPP vision of museums, namely through this definition? For instance: Spontaneous feedbacks from members / Creation of working groups / Articles written by professionals, and/or press articles. If documents have been edited, can you send them us before this meeting?**

Spontaneous feedback to ICOM Estonia board members; reviews from Kyoto museum definition roundtables; questionnaire of ICOM museum definition proposal (ongoing). In April will be series of roundtables where the discussion topic is how to define the museum.

### **3 / Can you identify, in 5 points max., the observations and questions raised by this vision and this proposed definition? Method of elaboration, vision of the museum, terms or concepts**

#### **1. The need for new definition**

From the questionnaire (the results are very preliminary) the support for ICOM to have new definition is very general. In Estonian context the ICOMs definition is not affecting how the museum are defined in practice and does not influence legislation or financing of the museums.

Generally the current definition is criticised that it does not reflect the nowadays museum and by the lack of societal impact and the relevance to society.

#### **2. Overall attitude to new definition proposal**

Mostly people are neutral or positive of the definition changing idea.

But there are few who have answered that its “too political” and “too unprofessional” and “not neutral”. And few who are writing that “this is what nowadays museums should be” or “its very actual, its what the museums are doing and it will support museum activities”.

#### **3. The most conflicting terms**

Mostly the answered found the different terms in definitions are necessary. The only ones who have got also few remarks as “unnecessary” were the terms: democratising; polyphonic spaces; critical dialogue; acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present; contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing. But in the same time these terms have marked also in numerous cases as “necessary”.

For example: “The role of museum and museum worker in society would be obscure and politicized. The objectivity and neutrality of museum work would disappear and the competence of museum workers would be replaced by political and biased opinions.”

But in the same time there have been comments, that museum should be dealing with current questions in society, but also the role of heritage preservation could not be diminish in the definition.

#### **4. Definition or not?**

In the feedback many said that the proposed new definition is not a definition. But at the other point of view there has been comments, that it's not possible to define nowadays museum in different continents or regions and ICOM could stop trying to define the museum in the way that it would suit to very varied institutions. And: “I want the new definition to be a good tool for understanding the position of museums in society and to help keep museums and the work we do from the potential negative impact - including financial pressures, the arrogance of museums to their audiences and the helping hand the museums should give to society in the times when culture is losing its importance's are people in all countries are less and less addressed by the cultural relevance”

#### **4 / Which message would you like to convey today at this international meeting? Particularly in terms of method, and involvement of national and international committees in the prospective approach of ICOM?**

The opinions can be different and they are rising because of the fruitful discussion that new museum definition has brought to museum field. In Estonian context it's a positive discussion, that museum professionals are having – what is the role of the museum today and what should be museum field goal's.

But if the tendency is to find one definition that should be suitable for “everyone and everywhere” the task seems too impossible. In Estonia many gave also feedback, that going back to old definition will show the absence of self-critique in museums and the ignorance of contemporary societal tendencies.