Synthesis of the presentations of the "Committees Day", Paris on March 10th, 2020

The following synthesis summarizes similar comments and proposals with more abstract formulations and concentrated under summary theses. Everything is organized by the frequency with which an aspect is mentioned by the committees represented.

A figure followed by a "c" indicates the number of committees that contributed to that aspect. Several contributions from a single committee below a summary thesis count only once. Summary theses are formed without evidence that each contributing committee accepts all aspects of the thesis. The names of the committees under each sentence / paraphrase indicate the committees with a contribution to this statement.

To summarize the whole Committee Day, the expert interventions and the contributions of the two round tables are analysed anyway and the results are added to the statements of the committees (without changing the figures indicated with a "c").

22c	The wording of a definition necessarily has to be short / concise /						
	laconic / unambiguous.						
	It has to avoid redundancy and too detailed terms, focussed on						
	essential elements differentiating museums and non-museums.						
12 <i>c</i>	Positive aspect: being short and clear						
	A definition should be short and precise / smart and laconic / concise and						
	concrete / short and focussed / as short as possible, emphasizing nothing but						
	the most essential features which clearly distinguish the museum from other						
	entities.						
	ICOM Georgia – ICOM Germany – ICOM Greece – ICOM Poland – ICOM Spain – ICOM						
	Turkey – AVICOM – CECA – CIDOC – ICMAH						
	Provide clarity and openness.						
	ICOM Ireland						
	A definition must necessarily be clear, essential, synthetic.						
	ICOM Italy						
	Additional opinions of an intervening expert:						
	Any museum definition must be short and clear. Its language must be simple						
	and easily translated without over-interpretation or misinterpretation.						
	Marie-Clarté O'Neill						

10c Essential aspect: only terms which differentiate museums and non-museums

A definition should be free from descriptions without a clear differentiating meaning. / It is important that the definition differentiates museums and similar cultural institutions, e. g. cultural centres, private galleries, event centres / heritage industry, fake touristic products etc. / community centres, libraries, archives, education centres etc. / It is important that any updated museum definition clearly differentiates museums and other institutions as so-called museums without correspondence to the museum definition and the ICOM Code of Ethics.

ICOM Austria – ICOM Croatia – ICOM Greece –ICOM Latvia – ICOM Luxemburg – ICOM Slovakia – ICOM Spain – ICOM Turkey – ICOM Ukraine – CIDOC

Several elements of the MDPP proposal (especially "contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing") seems rather as characteristics of social institutions or as welfare institutions. ICOM Latvia

A definition should consist of objective criteria. ICOM Luxemburg

Additional opinions of intervening experts:

A lexicological analysis has to look at derived terms (e. g. museology, museography, museification), synonyms (e.g. gallery, collection, heritage), and connoted equivalents (e. g. forum, temple). The most important aspect is given by the specific difference of the defined term (museum) and other phenomena (e. g. cultural centre, artistic meeting). The specific difference has to be a central and necessary aspect of the phenomenon. Jean-Louis Chiss

ICOM as the international museums organisation has to be able to clearly define what a museum is, setting museums apart from other organisations. If we fail to do that, we lose our defining ability in the worldwide museum community.

Elke Kellner

The most we want to include, the most we exclude; the best definitions are the simplest ones, especially if wide social uses are expected. Luís Raposo

A term is an essential part of a definition if it neither paraphrases another part of the definition nor follows from such a part. Different perspectives outside the core of the group are the best test if a term is useful as part of a definition. A definition has not only to fit for well-financed institutions with a respectable number of professional staff; it must include small, weak, or highly specialised phenomena of the same category.

Each element of a definition means more exclusion; the longer a definition is

the smaller is the number of the defined elements. The actual ICOM museum definition (English version) has 45 words; the MDPP proposal has 100 words. Markus Walz

11c Negative aspects: redundancy, ambiguity, vagueness, being too detailed

The wording should avoid false interpretations or misunderstood translations by the use of simple terms / avoid fluid terms with diverging political or ideological interpretations / avoid terms with different approaches of the museum staff and the audience like "conflicts and challenges of the present" or "guarantee" / avoid a specific political background instead of a professional approach / avoid unclear, ambiguous, debatable terms.

ICOM France - ICOM Luxemburg - ICOM Poland - CECA - MPR

The definition should avoid vague terms / clichés / semi-philosophical explanations.

ICOM Italy - ICOM Slovakia - AVICOM

Superfluous words provoke misunderstandings and they might open unintended gaps because they are not precise, e.g. "equal rights and equal access" instead of "accessibility" / by writing too detailed "the pasts and the futures" the contemporary topics are missing now.

ICOM Georgia - MPR

The MDPP proposal can be characterised by verbosity.

ICOM Bangladesh

Musicians and musicologists have absolutely diverging connotations to "polyphonic spaces".

CIMCIM

Additional opinions of an intervening expert:

I really doubt that an artist-curator loves to cooperate with "diverse communities" for creating a "polyphonic space".

Markus Walz

21c | The wording of the museum definition is a complex challenge:

- It has to avoid any political tendency but promote independence of museum work, although it is closely interconnected with official wording in opposed political systems and as well with postcolonial sensibility.
- 2 It has to overarch different positions inside the museum system, in museology, and of museum professionals.
- **1** It has to support long-time research concerning museums.
- Nevertheless, it was and will be used for public

understanding of what museums are and do. All this has to be done on the language level of general readers and translatable in a high variety of languages.

The museum definition has to solve the crucial problem of avoiding any political tendency but promoting independency / autonomy of museum work. Nevertheless, the museum definition is closely interconnected with legislative, administrative, and juridical wording in different states and opposed political systems.

The museum definition must be free from expressions with a definite political tendency taking into account the sensitivity of some countries. / The integration of political values in the museum definition hardly serves well the interests of museums in other political systems / would lead to excluding whole national committees so far, they do not share these political values / would be a contradiction to "inclusiveness". / The wording for museum work should be more topical than political. / To be seen from the opposite: Is it at all possible to develop one definition for museums all across the world ("democratising" – dictatorships)?

ICOM Ireland – ICOM Luxemburg – ICOM Poland – ICOM Turkey – ICMAH – MPR

Museums should be politically independent / autonomous and independent. / Additionally, to functional characteristics, a museum definition should express the essential landmarks for not being transformed into an instrument of propaganda: A museum should serve in a free and democratic society.

ICOM Slovakia - ICOM Spain - ICOM Ukraine

The wording must fit legal and regulating use of the definition. ICOM Greece – ICOM Italy

The ICOM museum definition is the basis for museum registration and is closely linked with governmental funding structures.

ICOM Austria

There is a need for measuring the impact of any new definition to different regions and institutions. We demand an impact study of any proposal before deciding it.

ICOM Belgium

15c

A complete change of the museum definition would destroy the confidence of the government in ICOM ("laugh out loud" of lawyers looking at the MDPP proposal as a new element of museum legislation). ICOM Croatia

We have to be aware of the legal impact of any change of the museum

definition—differing from country to country.

INTERCOM

Additional opinions of intervening experts:

Any museum definition must be able to serve the environment outside the museum by:

- positioning the museum among many other cultural institutions,
- including museums in international policies,
- enables museums to be integrated into regional policies.

Marie-Clarté O'Neill

Other museum organisations use the ICOM museum definition for their selection of members. Museum registration schemes use it as their basic text. Authorities for museum consulting and for deciding museum subsidies use the ICOM museum definition for describing their clients. Some private corporations do the same for their funding of museums.

If these independent secondary users of the ICOM museum definition do not follow the renovation of the definition, a unique landmark in the worldwide variety of the museum system will get lost.

Markus Walz

museums.

The museum definition must overarch the different points of view inside the museum system and the different positions of museum professionals: "classical", "new" and "critical museology" / "collection-centred" and "audience-centred" museum work / "object-focused" and "narrative"

The museum definition should be a bridge between "traditional" and "new" museum terminology. / A museum definition has to be universalistic; this also means to be neutral to the polarisation of the "collection-centred" and "audience-centred" approach.

ICOM France – ICMAH

'As many opinions concerning the museum definition as we have members?' Overarching aspects are: the type of museum (object-focused, museums with storylines), the professional role of the person with that specific meaning.

ICOM Netherlands

Narrative museums do not hold any collection, but this is for us no reason for excluding collecting and preserving collections as essential elements of the museum definition.

ICOM Poland

The museum definition should valorise and promote museum functions and museum professions.

ICMAH

The museum definition is strongly linked with the profiles of museum professions and the specific competencies of museum professionals. ICOM Italy

It is a danger for ICOM as an organisation if a new definition factually would exclude actual members being accepted by the current definition.

CIMCIM

Additional opinions of an intervening expert:

"Traditional functions" of the museums are still the common ground for all ways of "being museum"; if we aim to keep the relevance of ICOM and the adhesion of professionals, we are obligatory forced to concentrate in what unifies all of us—not in what divides and in what changes from region to region, from "school" to "school", from the political system to political system.

Luís Raposo

5c Basically, the definition internationally serves to public understanding what museums are and do.

The basic purpose of the museum definition is to ensure public understanding of what museums are and what they do. / The definition should also be clear for someone who has no working experience in museums.

ICOM Poland - ICMAH - ICR

The museum definition should address all people for sure, but also all authorities dealing with museums. / In some countries and contexts, the definition has to obey a set of formal characteristics and to some degree of formal precision (without engaging in political statements).

CIDOC - ICMAH

The museum definition must fit its use in all member states of ICOM. ICOM France

Additional opinions of intervening experts:

The trial of testing a definition depends on the review of the diversity of denotations and connotations by analysing the circulating discourses. There is a principal difference between a generalist definition by a lexicographer and a scientific definition (in this case for museologists). The opinion of an "average Joe" unavoidably differs from the opinion of concerned scientists. A crucial aspect of a definition is its diachrony. If the reality or its perception changes the denominations and their definitions might change as well. Although if a definition is not able to contain any aspect it must keep open and should not keep out existing phenomena.

Iean-Louis Chiss

There is a fundamental difference between a definition with an ethical orientation and a definition with a juridical orientation.

The ethically oriented definition tends to inclusion: It tries to mirror the whole museum system in its complex reality. The interest in acceptance of ethical principles leads to a definition that does not exclude some elements, for instance, those which seem to be out-dated in comparison to the mainstream.

The definition with a juridical orientation tends to selectivity: It prefers not reducible and absolutely necessary characteristics—aspects describing the phenomenon in a way that any phenomenon which does not fulfil this aspect is not accepted as an expression of the defined phenomenon. Therefore, the juridical definition is prescriptive and distinctive.

Marie Cornu

3c The content of the definition depends on its addressees.

The content of the museum definition depends on its addressees (policymakers, museum professionals, the general public) / Further consideration is needed on who uses the definition and how it is used.

ICOM Belgium - ICOM Netherlands - ICR

2c The text elements of the museum definition are related to museum statistics and the interest for the long-time analysis of identical phenomena.

A rupture of the museum definition means a counteraction to any harmonisation of museum statistics.

ICOM Italy - CIDOC

Additional opinions of an intervening expert:

If the museums of today have nothing in common with the museums of 2007, the museum definition of 2007 must be replaced by a new one. If distinguishing marks of 2007 still separate museums and non-museums, it makes no sense to replace these marks today.

The fundamental terms of a definition connect the past with the contemporary. The French art historian Bénédicte Savoy explained that German princely galleries of the 18th century fulfilled the main aspects of the current museum definition.

Markus Walz

2c The museum definition must be comprehensible for general readers in different languages.

A museum definition must necessarily be comprehensible and translatable into different languages.

ICOM Italy

The level of language needs to be meaningful to general readers.

	ICR				
1c	The wording has to respect postcolonial sensitivity.				
	There is a double sense of "safeguarding diverse memories for future				
	generations" as a legitimation of European museum collections with a				
	colonial context.				
	ICOM Burkina Faso				

18c	Absolutely necessary elements of any museum definition are the						
	core elements of the museum definition developed by ICOM						
	within the last decades.						
	"(Permanent) institution", "education" (as a function, not as a						
	means), and "collections / evidence" are explicitly stressed as						
	highly important elements.						
11c	An essential element of any museum definition is the description of the						
	museum as a (permanent) institution.						
	The museum definition should above all declare that the museum is a						
	permanent institution. / It is important for us to say that a museum must be a						
	permanent, professionally managed institution.						
	ICOM Germany – ICOM Greece – ICOM Israel – ICOM Italy – ICOM Latvia – ICOM Portugal – ICOM Slovakia – AVICOM						
	- ICOIVI SIOVARIA - A VICOIVI						
	The essential character of museums as institutions should explicitly be						
	indicated. / The museum definition has to confirm the character of the						
	museum as an institution, which guarantees the permanence of the collection,						
	the organisational structure, and specialised professional staff.						
	ICOM Burkina Faso – ICOM Italy – ICOM Poland – CECA						
	Additional opinions of intervening experts:						
	There is no doubt that a museum is an institution; ICOM should prioritise this						
	character between other elements of the museum definition. It seems to be						
	necessary to have an intense discussion if "institution" and "institute" should						
	be used both as characteristics of museums.						
	The "permanence" of the institution is fundamental for the long-lasting						
	existence of the collection and the impossibility of any alienation.						
	Daniel Jalla						
	The quality as permanent institutions belongs to the essential characteristics						
	that differentiate museums from other heritage facilities.						
	Kore Escobar Zamora						
	An essential element of any museum definition is education (as a function,						

9c	not a means).					
	Education is a necessary term in any museum definition.					
	ICOM Ecuador – ICOM Georgia – ICOM Greece – ICOM Israel – ICOM Latvia – ICOM					
	Portugal – ICOM Turkey – MPR					
	Education has to be stressed as the central function of museums. In parallel,					
	polemic misunderstandings have to be avoided (education as a purpose not a					
	mean like mediation or interpretation).					
	CECA					
	Additional opinions of an intervening expert:					
	In my eyes, the last open question within the core functions is the wording					
	between "communicates" and "transmet". Further on, I recognise a					
	comparable question concerning "education", "knowledge", or "learning".					
	Daniel Jalla					
8c	An essential element of any museum definition is (tangible and intangible)					
	heritage / collections / evidence / collections and their preservation.					
	The museum definition should emphasize the relation of museums to					
	tangible and intangible heritage (as the distinction between museums and					
	other cultural institutions).					
	ICOM Italy – ICOM Portugal – ICOM Turkey					
	The professional collections (of museum objects) are a central aspect within a					
	museum definition. / The museum definition should not reduce the relevance					
	of the museum collection, its conservation and use by stressing actual					
	intellectual tendencies.					
	ICOM Greece – ICOM Israel – ICOM Spain					
	The specific aspect of museums is the existence of evidence—original objects					
	and the proof of immaterial heritage by interpretation.					
	CECA					
	The museum definition must refer to collections and preservation of museum					
	objects.					
	ICOM Poland					
	Additional opinions of an intervening expert:					
	The heritage collections belong to the essential characteristics that					
	differentiate museums from other heritage facilities.					
	Kore Escobar Zamora					
6c	Any museum definition has to continue the core elements identifying					
	museums as these were developed by ICOM and its long-time work on the					
	museum definition / on the ICOM Code of Ethics.					
	It is unacceptable to present a museum definition without the worldwide					

accepted fundamental terms (as these are consensus by the development of the ICOM museum definition). / The basic terms of the current definition (non-profit, permanent institution, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates, and exhibits the heritage of humanity and its environment) have to be protected, must be part of the future museum definition.

ICOM France – ICOM Greece – ICOM Italy – ICOM Ukraine

Core elements of the museum definition must be: education, training, intangible heritage, restoration, and conservation.

ICOM Turkey

The core elements of a definition should be the independent, democratic, serious, and apolitical research, exhibition and interpretation, supported by adequate conditions for collecting, preserving, researching, interpreting and exhibiting heritage.

ICOM Slovakia

Additional opinions of intervening experts:

Ask DEMHIST if they accept the term "acquiring"; ask CIDOC why "researching" is part of the definition, why "documenting" is not.

Markus Walz

In a changing, pluralistic, ever-evolving world, it is unavoidable to concentrate the museum definition on the "universal" notions that unite and define all museums. Under the headings of the ICOM Code of Ethics, we find all (?) of them.

If we do not feel capable to maintain the defence of elementary principles, we would perhaps no longer be ICOM, we would be something else.

Kore Escobar Zamora

1c Another aspect: responsibility for cultural landscapes

Any connection of the MDPP proposal to the responsibility of museums towards cultural landscapes is missing (declaration of the general assembly of Milan 2016).

ICOM Italy

So far nobody doubts that developing a general museum definition is a possible task, the participating committees recommend two concurring strategies—starting with the current definition and searching any need for actualisation, or starting with a text analysis of the MDPP proposal searching useful elements for the definition.

Recommendation of the current definition as the start of working on the museum definition

Any new definition should start from the current one, taking it as a basic conceptual and formal framework. / We would prefer to see the present ICOM museum definition to be carefully adapted. / We understand the necessity of enriching the current museum definition following changes of our actual world. / We suggest retaining the current definition with some aspects added. / We suggest working on the current definition by integrating elements concerning the role of the museum within a changing society but keeping the text concise. / The basic functions / characteristics of the museum in the current definition are a cornerstone for our museums and must be protected; other characteristics could be added so far nothing of these basic terms would be excluded.

ICOM Azerbaijan – ICOM Greece – ICOM Italy – ICOM Portugal – ICOM Ukraine – AVICOM – CIDOC – ICMEMO

There is no need for changing the museum definition: The actual definition perfectly fulfils the needs of our museums and reflects their identity. / Most of our members think that the current definition is good, sharp and focused. / The actual definition has a very professional character and seems to be a consensus. / The absolute majority of our members are satisfied with the current definition; as well as those who prefer the MDPP proposal respect the current definition as useful.

ICOM Germany - ICOM Israel - ICOM Luxemburg - DEMHIST - GLASS

It is not helpful to change the definition completely if the new text does not solve the (small) problems of the actual definition but contains more new problems.

ICOM Burkina Faso

Additional opinions of an intervening expert:

I think that we have to keep the logic and the structure of the current definition which clearly identifies the identity, the object, the functions, and the purpose of the museum.

Daniel Jalla

Recommendation of the MDPP proposal as the start of working on the museum definition

We recommend analysing which elements of the MDPP proposal are apt for a definition and continue the discussion on this base. / The workshop of our national committee discussed the MDPP proposal, discussed additions and replacements of words to reject the verbosity, and gave a new shape to the museum definition.

ICOM Bangladesh - CIMCIM

Generally, the current definition is criticised for not reflecting the nowadays museum and the lack of societal impact and the relevance to society. Mostly colleagues are neutral or positive to the definition changing idea. Many gave the feedback that going back to the old definition will show the absence of self-critique in museums and the ignorance of contemporary societal tendencies. ICOM Estonia

1c The impression that a universal museum definition is an unrealistic task

Some of our members said that it is impossible to define nowadays museum in different continents or regions and that ICOM should stop trying to do it. ICOM Estonia

The MDPP proposal mixed up the text genres. It is clearly not a definition; the participants disagree about the realised text genre.

MPR propagates to follow the "volcano paradigm": a definition that covers all museums, a mission statement for the majority, and a vision for many museums.

17c A mixture of text genres does not reach the needed quality of a definition.

The MDPP proposal made a fundamental fault in-text genre: In the feedback, many said that the proposal is not a definition. / A definition is not a recommendation / a political statement / a mission statement / a vision / a strategic plan / a declaration of principles / a value statement / a manifesto, even if it might have a motivating power. / The MDPP proposal sounds like a mixture of a definition and a mission statement. / In the eyes of the majority of our members, most text elements of the MDPP proposal better fit to a mission statement than to a definition.

ICOM Austria – ICOM Croatia – ICOM Estonia – ICOM Germany – ICOM Ireland – ICOM Italy – ICOM Latvia – ICOM Luxemburg – ICOM Poland – ICOM Slovakia – ICOM Spain – ICOM Switzerland – CIDOC – CIMCIM – ICMAH – MPR

Even if the MDPP proposal would be declared as a mission statement, it is necessary to differentiate elements of a general mission statement for all museums and those not fit for all. / Not all text elements of the MDPP proposal are accepted by our members as potential elements of a mission statement.

ICOM Germany - ICOM Italy - ICOM Luxemburg

Broader aspirations for museums can be provided as a separate text additionally to the museum definition. / Fundamental values of the $21^{\rm st}$

century should be included in the Code of Ethics and reflected in mission, vision, values statements.

ICOM Latvia – ICR

Some elements of the MDPP proposal are not only characterised as mission statement but they also have a very general character being necessary for all institutions, NGO's, governments, and groups serving to society. ICMAH

The MDPP proposal misunderstands itself: describing desires as facts ("museums are ..." instead of "museums should be ...").

MPR

Additional opinions of intervening experts:

It is clear how illusory it is to try to draft a definition that covers two requirements: a short and workable definition in terms of public policy and an internal mission statement, a universal scientific and cultural project.

Marie-Clarté O'Neill

Clearly, the MDPP proposal does not belong to the genre of lexicographic definitions. By its length, by the use of polysemic and ambiguous terms, by refusing the minimum of formal neutrality, it seems to be a kind of manifesto. Jean-Louis Chiss

1c A definition is the fundamental element of three interrelated documents.

The "volcano paradigm": a definition which all museums rely on; a mission supported by the majority; a vision that many would like to pursue.

MPR

The essential preconditions for the future development of the museum definition are the following:

- The museum definition must be closely related to the Unesco Recommendation of November 17th, 2015 and must avoid any discrepancy to the ICOM Code of Ethics.
- **2** Results of participatory processes must reach the final decisive act of ICOM transparently.
- **8** Any proposed definition should be intensely discussed by the national and international committees before any decision.
- 6c The ICOM museum definition must be closely related to the Unesco Recommendation of November 17th, 2015. / It goes without saying that we only recognise museums that comply with Unesco declarations.

ICOM Greece - ICOM Italy - AVICOM

Irritations between the museum definition and the ICOM Code of Ethics are inacceptable.

ICOM France – ICOM Italy

If a participatory methodology is applied, the participants expect that the following elaboration of the definition in detail will be based on the most frequent propositions of the participants.

ICOM France - ICMAH

We need transparency on what the contribution from NC's and IC's is to the new MDPP2 committee. We need transparency on how the gathered information is synthesized.

ICOM Belgium

Any proposed definition should be intensely discussed by NC's and IC's before any decision.

ICOM Italy

Additional opinions of an intervening expert:

The hasty proposal of a new museum definition almost brought ICOM to the brink of separation by forcing a vote in such a short time and without time for discussions.

In January, a message of President Aksoy described a "new way forward". In our view, this message left open a lot of questions as not even the members of the new committee MDPP2 were presented. Again, we shall propose ideas for the museum definition but I am not confident that our voices will be heard at this time. I rather have the feeling that the non-transparency of the process continues.

Elke Kellner

3c Observation:

For years and with a respectable distance before Kyoto, ICOFOM held several conferences concerning the museum definition and published the results. It is not transparent if and in what extension these results were analysed and respected in the elaboration process of the Kyoto proposal. ICOFOM

Observation:

In May 2019, ICOM Italy presented a museum definition as the final result of a participatory process with its members, finished by a decision of the assembly of its members. It is not transparent if and in what extension this alternative proposal was analysed and respected in the elaboration process of the Kyoto proposal.

ICOM Italy

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Based on preparations of ICOM Croatia, ICOM SEE developed comments and recommendations for the elaboration of a new definition and sent it to MDPP in April 2019.

ICOM South-East Europe (reported by ICOM Croatia)

5c Observation:

Four committees reported at Paris that they elaborated an own proposal of the museum definition after Kyoto, two based on the current definition, two based on the MDPP proposal. ICOM Netherlands organised a detailed process for elaborating an own definition proposal which is not yet finished. It is not transparent if and in what extension these proposals will be analysed and respected in the future elaboration process of the museum definition. ICOM Azerbaijan – ICOM Bangladesh – ICOM Georgia – ICOM Netherlands – AVICOM