

MUSEUM DEFINITION BRIEF

Paris, December 2019

Background and Objective

At the Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA) during the 25th General Conference in September 2019, the ICOM Executive Board (EB) presented to the ICOM membership the proposal for a new museum definition. After considerable discussion, the decision of the EGA was to postpone a vote on the proposed definition until the membership had sufficient time to discuss it. The journey to a new museum definition was based on the work of the ICOM Standing Committee on Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials (MDPP) (2017-2019) which provided a platform on which we now hope to build a next stage.

The ICOM Executive Board (EB) has taken into consideration the discussions at the EGA, the feedback from membership and the proposed roadmap sent to the ICOM Executive Board (EB) by the Chair of MDPP, Jette Sandahl, on the 22nd September 2019. At its meeting on the 9th December 2019, the EB decided:

- To endorse the continuation of the MDPP to address the next stage of the museum definition process;
- To suggest that this Standing Committee be called MDPP2 to distinguish it from the first stage of its work;
- To augment the membership of the MDPP2 to include more representatives from the membership;
- To set a term of three years from 2020 to 2022 to carry forward this important work into the next stage;
- To establish some parameters to guide the MDPP2 in the development of the next stage of its work.

The brief

The ICOM President and the EB ask the MDPP2 to revisit the roadmap sent to the EB in September 2019 and to develop an open, transparent and consultative process to work with the National and International Committees over the next two years.

This process needs to take into consideration the following milestones which are intended to provide the membership with sufficient time to develop, discuss and debate new ideas for definitions:

- By 31 January 2020	Convene MDPP2 (2020-2022) based on the replies to ICOM President's invitation letters
- By 15 March 2020	MDPP2 to submit a process and methods for consultation with ICOM National Committees (NCs) and International Committees (ICs)
- 1 April 2020	MDPP2 to present process and methods to the EB at their Meeting in Foggia, Italy (30 March- 2 April 2020)
- 9 June 2020	MDPP2 to present process and methods to ICOM Advisory Council at its meeting in Paris, France (11 June 2020)

- 1 August 2020	All definition suggestions from NCs and ICs sent to MDPP2
- 9 December 2020	MDPP2 to present a preliminary report to EB Meeting which includes: - The collation and distillation of the contributions of the NCs and ICs - Review of the next steps until June 2021
- 1 January 2021	MDPP2 report sent to NCs and ICs for comments
- 1 March 2021	MDPP2 review of comments by NCs and ICs
- 5 June 2021 (tbc)	Presentation of a proposed new definition to be voted during an Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA) to be held in June 2021 in Paris, France.
<i>If the new definition is approved by the EGA:</i>	
July 2021- April 2022	MDPP2 to monitor implementation of the new definition
August 2022	MDPP2 to present a report to the EB on the implementation of the new definition at ICOM General Conference 2022 in Prague, Czech Republic

The outcome

ICOM President and ICOM Executive Board believe that the membership, the EB and the MDPP2 seek a common museum definition that reflects the purpose and position of museums in the 21st century. From the first stage of its work, the MDPP (2017-2019) distilled eight (8) criteria within which a new museum definition should be considered. The ICOM President and the EB believe that these valuable criteria should continue to provide a basis for developing definitions. However, to these criteria, other considerations need to be added. These include:

- Legislative aspects (with reference to the ICOM Statutes)
- Ethical aspects (with reference to the ICOM Code of Ethics)

The intended result is a museum definition which will address normative, legislative and ethical criteria, will be generic and whose final version will begin with the phrase “a museum is...”. The definition needs to be defensible against these criteria.

Process

The EB requests that the MDPP2 develop a process that will:

- Meet the proposed milestones
- Engage in consultation with the NCs and the ICs through a transparent and participatory process
- Collate and assess proposed museum definitions generated from the NCs and the ICs according to the criteria (legislative, normative and ethical) stated above.