

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF MUSEUMS, THEIR DIVERSITY AND THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETY. COMMENTS FROM ARTS COUNCIL NORWAY

The proposed UNESCO recommendations concerning the protection and promotion of museums, their diversity and their role in society adapts well to current challenges for museums in Norway and in other countries.

We would like to point out that the text reflects both negative and positive understandings of historical change. This becomes problematic since these understandings can appear as something between fact and interpretation.

Museums and heritage imply practices where the past is collected, interpreted and represented. Through heritage processes, we engage with a manifold past and transform parts of it into 'History' or even many different 'histories'. Past and history is not the same. 'History' always contains elements of interpretation, of choosing what past we want to use in the making of history. Therefore, it is of great importance that an UNESCO document is clear about the distinction between past and history.

We would also point out that the recommendations is not always coherent with ICOMS definitions of a museum. We would stress the importance of staying true to this definition and its wording.

Generally we recommend the deletion or rewriting of formulations that are based on or refer to assumptions. This also applies for words or phrases that are perceived as emotive and for words or phrases that do not add necessary information or clarification to the recommendations.

Our proposed changes are listed in the text below. Words marked green are either proposed for deletion or changed. Sentences or phrases marked yellow are either proposed for deletion or changed.

Introduction

1. We live in a time of unprecedented climate, demographic and technological change, with repercussions on culture and the environment.

Comment: We suggest deleting this point. These types of changes have always existed and they are valid for all times. If this statement is to be retained it must be reformulated and refer to these changes as a constant part of society.

2. Our relationship to culture and nature and, in particular, to heritage and the development of knowledge, is being singularly affected. The rapid changes occurring throughout the world pose a constant challenge to societies, including their relationship to history and the preservation of their environment and its tangible and intangible testimonies.

Comment: We suggest deleting this point. How the described changes affect society including the relationship between culture and nature are valid for all times. If this statement is to be retained it should be reformulated and refer to this type of challenges as a constant part of society.

3. The protection and promotion of cultural and natural diversity **has emerged** as a major challenge **of** the twenty-first century. In this respect, museums constitute primary

institutions, where tangible and intangible testimonies of nature and human cultures are protected and promoted. From time immemorial, humanity has maintained a specific relationship to reality, by selecting a certain number of objects, and by studying and presenting them to current and future generations. This relationship has been exemplified by the establishment of museums open to the public and dedicated to preservation, study, education and enjoyment.

Comment: We suggest changing the word testimony to heritage, since heritage is the word that is used in the following text. This is also in accordance with the ICOM definition of museum as listed in part II. We also suggest deleting words or phrases that are perceived as emotive or based on assumptions (from time immemorial, has emerged...).

Suggestions for new text:

The protection and promotion of cultural and natural diversity is a major challenge in the twenty-first century. In this respect, museums constitute primary institutions, where tangible and intangible heritage of nature and human cultures are protected and promoted. Humanity has always maintained a specific relationship to its circumstances, by selecting a certain number of objects, and by studying and presenting them to current and future generations. The establishment of museums open to the public and dedicated to preservation, study, education and enjoyment exemplifies such relationships.

4. Museums have become a popular phenomenon around the world, and particularly since the second half of the twentieth century; their number has practically tripled in a half-century. As spaces for cultural transmission, learning, discussion and training, they play an important role in education, social cohesion and sustainable development. Beyond their essential role in culture and society, by opening themselves up to a wide range of audiences, they also contribute to economic development, notably through cultural and creative industries and global tourism.

Comment: We suggest deleting phrases that do not add necessary information or clarification to the recommendation.

Suggestions for new text:

Museums are widespread around the world, and particularly since the second half of the twentieth century; their number has practically tripled in a half-century. As spaces for cultural transmission, learning, discussion and training, they play an important role in education, social cohesion and sustainable development. Museums also contribute to economic development, notably through cultural and creative industries and global tourism.

5. Museums are recognized as contributing to all forms of education, formal, informal and lifelong learning, in a variety of subjects. Furthermore, museums have great potential to raise public awareness on the benefits of heritage, its value and importance for societies, and the responsibility of all citizens to contribute to its care and transmission.

Comment: The content of the first sentence is included in point 4.

Suggestions for new text:

Museums have great potential to raise public awareness on the benefits of heritage, its value and importance for societies, and the responsibility of all citizens to contribute to its care and transmission.

6. This Recommendation clarifies the role of museums and addresses the importance of their protection and promotion, so that they can fully contribute to sustainable development and intercultural dialogue, through the preservation and protection of heritage, the protection and promotion of cultural diversity, the transmission of scientific knowledge, the development of educational policy, lifelong learning and social cohesion, and the development of the creative and tourism economy.

I. Definition and diversity of museums

7. In this Recommendation, the term *museum* is defined as a “non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purpose of education, study and enjoyment”.ⁱⁱ As such, museums are institutions that seek to represent the natural and cultural diversity of humanity, playing an essential role in protection, preservation and transmission of cultural heritage.

8. **Museums conserve and present collections.** In the present Recommendation, the term *collection* is defined as “an assemblage of natural and cultural properties, tangible and intangible, past and present, whose different elements cannot be separated without damaging the coherence of the set, and whose scientific value is greater than the sum of the individual values of its components”. **A museum collection is a collection whose objects are included in the museum inventory.**

Comment: The first sentence confuses and restricts the definition of a museum made in point 7. Many museums have large backlogs relating to registration of its objects, and these backlogs should also be defined as part of the collection. We suggest deleting this phrase since the word inventory can be understood as registered and documented objects only and to avoid any misunderstanding connected to what is part of the collection

Suggestion for new text:

In the present Recommendation, the term collection is defined as “an assemblage of natural and cultural properties, tangible and intangible, past and present, whose different elements cannot be separated without damaging the coherence of the set, and whose scientific value is greater than the sum of the individual values of its components.

9. In the present Recommendation, the term *heritage* is defined as a group of tangible and intangible resources that people select and identify, independently of ownership, as a

reflection and expression of their **constantly evolving** values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions, deserving of protection, enhancement and transmission to future generations.

Comment: We suggest deleting the phrasing 'constantly evolving'. As used here it implies that 'people' see their values etc. as 'constantly evolving' and thus choose their heritage in order to reflect this constant dynamic. 'People' around the world may actually strongly believe that their values etc. are stable, static, always the same, and not at all 'constantly evolving'. Researchers and analysts may think of heritage in terms of dynamic processes, but here such presumptions are located within 'people' and their motivations for heritage production.

Suggestions for new text:

In the present Recommendation, the term heritage is defined as a group of tangible and intangible resources that people select and identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions, deserving of protection, enhancement and transmission to future generations.

II. Primary functions of museums

Comment: We propose to change the order of chapter II and III, partly due to the fact that the primary functions are closely related to the definitions made above. It is also due to the wording of the functions as primary, which implies that they should be listed first.

This part should meet the ICOM definition of a Museum, adopted during the 21st General Conference in Vienna, Austria, in 2007: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment."

We suggest that the categories included in the primary functions should be reformulated and include acquisition, conservation, research and communication. Their descriptions should also match the ICOM description in particular.

Preservation

10. The preservation of cultural and natural heritage is one of the primary functions of museums. Preservation comprises activities related to acquisition, collection management, analysis of risks and development of emergency plans, security, preventive and curative conservation, and restoration of museum objects.

11. A key component of collection management in museums is the creation and maintenance of a professional inventory and regular control of collections. An inventory is an essential tool for protecting museums, preventing and fighting illicit trafficking, and helping them fulfil their role in society. It also facilitates the sound management of collections mobility.

Research

12. Research, including the study of collections, is another primary function of museums. It is only through the understanding gleaned from such research that the full potential of museums can be realized and offered to the public.

Communication

13. Communication is another primary function of museums. Communication activities include the exhibition and interpretation of permanent collections, the organization of temporary exhibitions and public events, publication, education, and other interactions with the public, provided that they respect the integrity of collections.

14. Museums participate in formal and non-formal education and lifelong learning, through the development and transmission of knowledge, educational and pedagogical programs, in partnership with other educational institutions, notably schools. Educational programs in museums primarily contribute to educating various audiences about the subject matters of their collections, and help raise greater awareness on the importance of preserving cultural and natural heritage, and fostering creativity.

15. Communication policies take into account integration, access and social inclusion, and are conducted in collaboration with the public, including groups that do not normally visit museums. Museum actions are also strengthened by the actions of the public and communities in their favour.

III. Issues for museums in society

Due to the moving of Chapter III the numbers are changed accordingly.

16. Museums are currently confronted with considerable changes, related to those of the societies in which they have developed, which could force them to redefine their future roles, at the risk of having some of their missions called into question and their diversity restricted; these challenges are presented below.

Comment: This point refers largely to a negative outlook on historic change. This becomes problematic since these understanding appear as something between fact and interpretation. We suggest that the recommendations are formulated in such a way where they not place constraints on the value of historic change.

Suggestions for new text:

Museums are currently confronted with considerable changes, related to those of the societies in which they have developed. These challenges are presented below.

Globalization

17. Globalization has led to an unprecedented rise in the international mobility of museum professionals, visitors, collection objects and sources of funding. This mobility is leading to new practices in museum management, as well as higher expectations on the part of stakeholders and new preservation risks. This could also lead to a situation in which large museums attract millions of visitors and have access to considerable resources, while smaller museums remain under-resourced to fulfil their basic missions. Another potential effect of

globalization is the standardization of museums, their collections and their business models, all tied to a single international model, at the risk of losing their diversity.

Comment: This point refers largely to a negative outlook on historic change, with examples that illustrates a somewhat narrow presentation of a museum reality. This also becomes problematic since these understandings appear as something between fact and interpretation. We suggest that the recommendations are formulated in such a way where they not place constraints on the value of historic change. The important part is that the museums don't loose focus on their primary functions. We strongly recommend that the wording of the primary functions are in accordance with the ICOM museum definition.

Suggestions for new text:

Globalization has led to a rise in the international mobility of museum professionals, visitors, collection objects and sources of funding. This mobility is leading to new practices in museum management, as well as higher expectations on the part of stakeholders and new preservation risks. It is important for museums to focus on and maintain their primary functions acquisition, conservation research and communication.

Museum relations with the economy and quality of life

18. Museums can be major economic actors in society by contributing to income-generating activities. Moreover, they participate in the tourism economy and can contribute to the quality of life of the communities and regions in which they are located. More generally, they promote the development of the creative economy.

Comment: We suggest deleting phrases that are perceived as interpretations.

Suggestions for new text:

Museums are economic actors in society by contributing to income-generating activities. Moreover, they participate in the tourism economy and can contribute to the quality of life of the communities and regions in which they are located. More generally, they promote the development of the creative economy.

19. In contemporary market-driven economies, museums have been led to increase their income-generating activities, which could detrimentally affect their primary functions – preservation, research and communication. The benefits of such primary functions, while of utmost importance for society, cannot be mainly expressed in financial terms.

Comment: We suggest deleting words that are perceived as emotive. We strongly recommend that the primary functions are in accordance with ICOM museum definition.

Suggestions for new text:

In contemporary market-driven economies, museums have been led to increase their income-generating activities, which could affect their primary functions – acquisition, conservation, research and communication. The benefits of such primary functions, while of utmost importance for society, cannot be mainly expressed in financial terms.

Social role

20. The social role of the museum was highlighted by the 1972 Declaration of Santiago Chile. Modern museums are increasingly viewed in all countries as playing a key role in the social system and as a factor in social integration and cohesion. In this sense, they can help communities to face profound changes in society, including those leading to a rise in inequality and the breakdown of social ties.

21. Museums are vital public spaces that address all **classes** of society and can therefore play a leading role in the development of social ties and cohesion, and in reflecting on collective identities. Museums are places that are **particularly** open to all and are committed to the idea of providing access to everyone, **in particular, the most fragile and alienated populations who, due to financial reasons, physical difficulties or educational inequality, do not normally visit cultural or natural sites.** They can constitute spaces for reflection and debate **in terms of the respect of human rights and gender equality within society.** As agents for social inclusion, museums can also play a role in discussions on current **cultural** issues.

Comment: We suggest changing the word classes to groups, as the word classes can be perceived as emotive and interpretive. We suggest deleting formulations that based on or refer to assumptions and words or phrases that do not add necessary information or clarification. Museums can constitute spaces for reflection and debate in several areas and this we ask that this is not limited to human rights and gender equality within society. We also ask that their role in discussions is not restricted to cultural issues only.

Suggestions for new text:

Museums are vital public spaces that address all groups of society and can therefore play a leading role in the development of social ties and cohesion, and in reflecting on collective identities. Museums are places that are open to all and are committed to the idea of providing access to everyone. Museums can constitute spaces for reflection and debate. Museums can also play a role in discussions on current issues.

Museums and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

22. The changes brought about by the rise of Information and Communication Technologies offer extraordinary opportunities in terms of the preservation, study, creation and transmission of heritage and related knowledge. **Such changes can also create a gap between more technologically advanced institutions and those that are unable to keep up with technological developments, along with members of the public who do not have access to these tools or training in their use.**

Comment: This point refers largely to a negative outlook on historic change, with examples that illustrates a somewhat narrow presentation of a museum reality. This also becomes problematic since these understandings appear as something between fact and interpretation. We recommend that the focus is on sharing knowledge and data, not only the gap that can be created between museums and between people.

Suggestions for new text:

The changes brought about by the rise of Information and Communication Technologies offer opportunities in terms of the preservation, study, creation and transmission of heritage and related knowledge. It is important that museums share and disseminate the knowledge of and about such technologies, so that all museums can gain access to this type of technology.

IV. Policies

General policies

23. Existing international instruments recognize the importance and role of museums in the protection and promotion of natural and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and in the overall accessibility of this heritage to the public. In this regard, museum collections should benefit from the protective and promotional measures granted to cultural heritage by these instruments.

24. Museums must observe applicable national and local laws, and should adhere to the principles of international instruments for the protection and promotion of cultural and natural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and the fight against illicit traffic of cultural property. Museums must also take into account the primary ethical and professional standards established by the professional museum community. Therefore, Member States are strongly encouraged to ensure that the role of museums in society is exercised in accordance with legal and professional standards in the territories under their jurisdiction.

25. Member States should take all appropriate measures to ensure the protection and promotion of museums located in the territories under their jurisdiction, by supporting and developing those institutions in accordance with their primary functions. Therefore, the development of the necessary human, physical and financial resources needed for them to function properly should be considered a priority.

26. The diversity of museums and the heritage for which they are responsible constitutes their greatest asset. This diversity should be taken into account when museums carry out their primary functions of preservation, research, and communication. Member States are encouraged to protect and promote this diversity, while encouraging museums to draw on high-quality criteria defined and promoted by national and international museum communities.

Functional policies

27. Member States are invited to support active preservation, research and communication policies allowing museums to protect and pass down tangible and intangible heritage to future generations. In this perspective, collaborative and participative efforts between museums, communities and the public should be strongly encouraged.

28. Member States should take appropriate measures particularly to ensure that the compiling of an inventory based on international standards is a priority in the museums established in the territory under their jurisdiction. The digitization of museum collections may be of help in this regard, but should not be considered as a replacement for the conservation priorities of physical properties.

29. Good practices for the functioning, protection and promotion of museums and of their diversity and role in society have been recognized by national and international museum networks. These

good practices are continually updated to reflect innovations in the field. In this respect, the Code of Ethics for Museums adopted by the International Council of Museum (ICOM) constitutes the most widely shared reference. Member States are encouraged to promote the adoption and dissemination of these and other good practices and to use them to inform the development of standards, museum policies and national legislation.

30. Member States should ensure that museums in the territory under their jurisdiction employ qualified personnel with the expertise required to meet all responsibilities. Adequate opportunities for the continuing education and professional development of all museum personnel should be arranged to maintain an effective workforce.

31. The effective functioning of museums is directly influenced by the public and private funding mechanisms put in place for their support. Member States should strive to ensure a clear vision, adequate planning and funding for museums, and a harmonious balance among the different funding mechanisms to enable them to carry out their mission to the benefit of society with full respect for their primary function. The functions of a museum are also influenced by new technologies and their growing role in everyday life. These technologies have great potential for promoting museums throughout the world, but they also constitute potential barriers for people and museums that do not have access to them or the knowledge and skills to use them effectively. Member States should strive to provide full access to these technologies for both museums and individuals.

32. The spirit of the 1960 Recommendation concerning the Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone remains important in creating a lasting place for museums in society. The social role of museums, along with the preservation of heritage, constitutes their fundamental purpose. Member States should strive to include these principles in the laws concerning the museums established in the territories under their jurisdiction.

33. One of the most effective ways of protecting and promoting museums, their diversity and their role in society is through cooperation with other museums and institutions responsible for the protection and promotion of culture, heritage and education. Member States should therefore encourage cooperation and partnerships among museums at local, regional, national and international levels, including their participation in professional networks and associations that foster such cooperation.

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