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STUDIE/ARTICLES

THE ICOM INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DEFINITION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC: THE RESULTS OF A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY AMONG REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MUSEUM COMMUNITY AND OTHER RELATED FIELDS

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<https://doi.org/10.5817/MuB2022-1-4>**ABSTRACT/ABSTRAKT:**

The significant interest of the Czech (or Czechoslovak) museum sphere in the form and continuous revision of the existing international museum definition was already evident during Jan Jelínek's tenure at the head of ICOM in the 1970s. The effort to get involved in international debates resonates with Czech museum workers, museologists, academics and students even now, especially in connection with the planned revision of the key concept at the Prague meeting of this most important professional museum organization. The attitudes towards the existing and the optimal form of the museum definition were also examined within a local Czech questionnaire survey, which was carried out by Brno museologists in the first half of 2021 in cooperation with the Czech Committee of ICOM and the Czech Association of Museums and Galleries. The paper presents the main outcomes of the research, including the key terms that the museum definition should contain according to representatives of (not only) the museum community.

Mezinárodní definice muzea ICOM z perspektivy České republiky: výsledky dotazníkového šetření mezi

zástupci muzejní obce i dalších příbuzných oborů

Výrazný zájem českého (resp. československého) muzejnictví o podobu a průběžné revize stávající mezinárodní definice muzea je zřetelný již za působení Jana Jelínka v čele ICOM v 70. letech 20. století. Snaha o zapojení do mezinárodních debat rezonuje u zdejších muzejníků, muzeologů, akademiků i studentů rovněž v současnosti, a to zvláště v souvislosti s plánovanou revizí klíčového pojmu na pražském zasedání této nejvýznamnější profesní organizace muzeí. Právě postoje ke stávající i optimální podobě muzejní definice zkoumalo také lokální dotazníkové šetření, realizované brněnskými muzeology v první polovině roku 2021 za spolupráce s Českým výborem ICOM a Asociací muzeí a galerií České republiky. Příspěvek přiblíží hlavní závěry výzkumu, včetně klíčových pojmů, které by definice muzea měla podle představitelů (nejen) muzejní obce obsahovat.

KEYWORDS/KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:

museum – museum definition – ICOM – museological research – Czech Republic – questionnaire survey
muzeum – definice muzea – ICOM – muzeologický výzkum – Česká republika – dotazníkové šetření

1. Introduction

The turbulent all-society development has long raised an intense need of the museum community to adequately and conceptually respond to current global challenges. One of the basic prerequisites for the implementation of particular follow-up steps in museum practice is the adoption of the generally accepted term 'museum', which is of key importance in many regards. This is also why the issue of museum definition has a steady place in the meetings of the representative international professional organization ICOM. In more recent history, an increased interest in the given topic can be noted especially since the beginning of the millennium, which resulted in a partial extension of former museum definition by the problem of intangible heritage (2007).¹ Another turning point was the ICOM General Conference in

¹ „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.“ See The ICOM Advisory Council selects the museum definition proposal to be voted in Prague. In ICOM [online]. May 20, 2022 [accessed 2022-06-20]. Available from www: <<https://icom.museum/en/news/the-icom-advisory-council-selects-the-museum-definition-proposal-to-be-voted-in-prague/>>.

Milan (2016), which instigated the preparation of a new wording of the museum definition. However, this proposal eventually was not accepted in Kyoto, Japan, three years later.² The plan to discuss this issue at the next ICOM General Conference in Prague in 2022 is then accompanied by the effort to continuously capture the opinions of the museum community at the national level with the aim to achieve a stronger consensus and to temper from the very beginning any disagreements during the approval process. The main part of the appeal was to find a total of 20 key terms that the definition should contain. The direct response to this request initiated by the ICOM authorities was the development of a questionnaire prepared by the staff of the Department of Archaeology and Museology and the UNESCO Chair of Museology and World Heritage at the Masaryk University (Brno, Czech Republic). At the same time, this document also included other questions related mainly to the attitudes of the respondents to the currently valid ICOM international museum definition (2007), the unaccepted proposal from the ICOM General Conference in Kyoto (2019) and the current definition given in the Czech legislation (2000). The presented article then introduces a partial analysis and interpretation of data obtained from a representative sample of persons

² „Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary well-being.“ See ICOM announces the alternative museum definition that will be subject to a vote. In *ICOM* [online]. July 25, 2019 [accessed 2022-06-20]. Available from [www: <https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-announces-the-alternative-museum-definition-that-will-be-subject-to-a-vote/>](https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-announces-the-alternative-museum-definition-that-will-be-subject-to-a-vote/).

connected with the museum sphere in the Czech Republic.

2. A brief overview of the development of opinions and perspectives on the issue of museum definition in the Czech lands

The current discussion about the museum definition is a reflection of the long-term and in many respects complicated cultural-political development in the territory of what is now the Czech Republic.³ The reflection of the museum sphere, which at the same time brought with it efforts to define the term ‘museum’, did not have a linear form here, which was influenced by changing power-political units whose representatives held different positions in determining the social role of museum institutions. Despite the partial closure, especially during the period of totalitarian regimes, foreign ideological influences, transformed in local conditions into a specific mix, took on very extensive and innovative forms with a significant impact on the museum sphere worldwide. After all, it is precisely the awareness of the specificity and the strengths and weaknesses of the past development of this field in the territory of present-day Czech Republic that can explain the (from an external point of view) relatively conservative and sensitive stands which the local museum community currently takes in the process of redefining the museum’s basic functions and mission.

The attempts to characterize the museum and its competences can be found from the very beginning

³ The borders of the Czech Republic established in 1993 more or less coincide with the territory of the so-called Czech lands, which in the period under review were part of the Habsburg Monarchy, Austria-Hungary, the Czechoslovak Republic, the Greater Germanic Reich and again the Czechoslovak (Socialist) Republic.

of the activity of these institutions in the Czech lands at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Institutions containing the term ‘museum’ can already be found in earlier times (e.g. *Museum mathematicum*, *Muzeum Královské české společnosti nauk*), however, in today’s intentions, they did not meet the necessary parameters for us to label them as such.⁴ The fundamental and at the same time the most widespread sources revealing the contemporary views on the museum phenomenon in this period are represented by the so-called statutes. Statutes were the founding and binding documents issued by the founders of individual museums (associations, societies), which contained basic information about the given institution, including its mission and activities. Even if the definitions mentioned here are clearly adapted to the specific focus and conditions of the given institution, they bring an interesting insight into general ideas about its functioning and mission. At the beginning of the 19th century, so-called proclamations had a largely similar character. Their aim was to support the newly established museum among the general public through the media of that time.⁵ However, the museum workers themselves soon began to intervene more significantly in the definition of the key concept and at the same time found opportunities for publishing their ideas in the public space

⁴ Above all, they lacked an initiative aimed at mediating the collections to the wider public. See also PETRÁŇ, Josef. *Muzea, kabinet a sbírky*. In PETRÁŇ, Josef. *Památky Univerzity Karlovy*. Praha: Karolinum, 1999, pp. 207–212.

⁵ An example can be the present-day National Museum, where this declaration stated: “*The National Museum will contain everything that belongs to national literature and national production, as well as an overview of everything that was created anywhere in the homeland by nature or by human diligence.*” Provolání Františka hraběte z Kolovrat k založení Národního muzea ze dne 15. dubna 1818 (*Kramériusovy Císařské Královské Vlastenské noviny*, appendix *List nepolitický novin Kramériusových*, April 25, 1818, sheet 17) – cited after SKLENĀŘ, Karel. *Obraz vlasti: příběh národního muzea*. Praha: Paseka, 2001, p. 408.

opened up by the developing civil society. A key position was occupied by the Czech historiographer František Palacký (1798–1976), who was closely connected to the central Prague institution (today's National Museum). His concept of the museum as an “image of the homeland”,⁶ reflecting mainly national goals, subsequently influenced the next generations of Czech museum workers until as late as 1945. However, there were also other aspects, emphasizing particularly the protective and educational roles of the museum, that have oscillated more and more significantly among these followers.⁷ The attempts to define the museum phenomenon in the form of dictionary entries remain characteristic of the second half of the 19th century. Contemporary encyclopaedias as “sums” of the then knowledge with a significant impact on the wider public generated an image that was far away from the ideas of professional museum workers of that time. Museums are described here rather as temples representing contemporary education, art and taste, where the resulting entry was created by generalizing the authors' knowledge of the well-known Western European institutions rather than domestic institutions.⁸

6 PALACKÝ, František. Vlastenecké Museum v Čechách v roku 1842. In ČECH, Leander (ed.). *Františka Palackého spisy drobné*. Díl III. – podpisy aestethické a literární. Praha: Bursík a Kohout, 1903, p. 311.

7 For example, a representative of the regional museum community, Kliment Čermák, saw the basic mission of this type of museums in the fact that they should be “... a shelter for all local monuments, which only have a special significance for the place and district” and that they are “... institutions as necessary as schools”. ČERMÁK, Kliment. *O musejích městských a okresních*. Čáslav: Fr. Starch, 1886, pp. 2 and 7.

8 “...a place dedicated to science and art” where “the system and historical development of individual branches of science, art, industry, etc., are demonstrated through their representative artefacts and products, imitative preparations, tables, diagrams, etc.” *Ottův slovník naučný: Ilustrovaná encyklopaedie obecných vědomostí*. Vol. 17, Mediana-Navarre. Praha, 1901, p. 890.

A fundamental contribution to defining the museum concept in the Czech environment was made by a long-lasting effort to establish the field in legislation. The main motivation of museum workers, at least initially, can be primarily found in increasing the social prestige of museums, but also in their more permanent financial security and provision of usual standards in the area of museum activities. The failures, which in this respect foreshadowed the following development for a long period of time, were caused by the lack of interest of the state and regional authorities in these cultural institutions showing very diverse goals and operating, with exceptions, in the private sphere. Nevertheless, these initiatives, appearing since the second half of the 19th century, eventually resulted in draft laws containing period-specific museum definitions, which, in addition to the enumeration of individual activities, also included passages about their specific social status.⁹ However, these efforts did not find their fulfilment until the period of the totalitarian Czechoslovak state after 1948. The type of political power established at that time, based on directive management and control of the life of all components of society, reached the adoption of the relevant legal regulation after more than ten years of its existence. The Act on Museums and Galleries No. 54/1959 Coll. then represented a conglomerate of traditional views on the function and mission of museums, highlighting their tasks in the field of education, which were determined by

9 The most important representatives are the proposals from the period of the so-called First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938). At that time, the issues of museums were treated not only by specific museum laws, but they should have also been legislatively anchored within more established fields which were more closely tied to the state, such as preservation of monuments and archival science. ŠPĚT, Jiří. *Přehled vývoje českého muzejnictví I. (do roku 1945)*. 2nd ed. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2003, pp. 76–78.

clear ideological intentions. The introductory preamble, explaining the motivation for the creation of the law, thus includes, for example, requests to document “the high cultural level of our people, their struggles for national independence” or “class and political struggles and achievements of the socialist development”.¹⁰ However, the definition itself is a more or less standard and ideologically unencumbered text, according to which museums are “... institutes which, on the basis of investigation or scientific research, systematically collect, professionally administer and scientifically research the collections of tangible evidence – materials on the development of nature and society, on artistic creation or another kind of human activity, and use these collections for cultural and educational activities.”¹¹

Legislative efforts after 1948 were often supplemented by representatives of museology, who saw it as a discipline based on scientific foundations. Their definitions reflected many years of experience in museum practice and therefore showed more sophisticated insights into the museum phenomenon. This was also the case with the Prague museologist Jiří Neustupný (1905–1981), whose publication *Muzeum a věda* (Museum and Science), in its English version, was also known to foreign experts. The museum appeared to him as “... an institution that, within a scientific discipline or groups of disciplines, purposefully collects and preserves transferred tangible (materials, objects), or dead sources of knowledge of nature and society. In its scientific and scientific-educational work, especially in exhibition making, the museum also uses other sources

10 Zákon č. 54/1959 Sb. o muzeích a galeriích. In *Zákony pro lidi* [online]. par. 1 [accessed 2022-06-26]. Available from www: <<https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1959-54>>.

11 *Ibid.*, par. 2.

from the same scientific field, which are kept by related institutions.”¹²

The representatives of the Brno museology school under the leadership of Zbyňek Zbyslav Stránský (1926–2016) came up with an original solution, in which they did not classify the museum using the traditional scheme, i.e. by gradually enumerating its characteristic features. They decided to connect the given phenomenon with its very essence based on the relationship of man to reality, on the basis of which humans select, preserve and mediate the representatives of the surrounding reality according to their memory and cultural values. Museums were then considered one of the historically emerged forms for the implementation and realisation of this relationship.¹³ After all, Czech (Czechoslovak) museology also played a fundamental role in this period when the ICOM definition was established in 1974. In this international professional organization, at that time under the leadership of the Brno museologist Jan Jelínek, the need to establish a new museum definition with regard to the rapidly changing social situation was generally accepted. Even though during the approval process itself, the tension between the socialist countries and the democratic camp was evident, still intensifying in the discussion

12 NEUSTUPNÝ, Jiří. *Muzeum a věda*. Praha: Kabinet muzejní a vlastivědné práce při Národním muzeu v Praze, 1968, p. 150. In addition to Neustupný, we can also recall the definition by another influential representative of the Prague museology, Josef Beneš, who saw the museum as the designation of “a public cultural institution that, within the framework of the division of labour with other institutions, constantly creates and preserves collections of material evidence of the development of nature and society in a predefined area, or in some field of human activity, and uses them for the development of socialist science, culture and education, primarily by exhibiting them to the general public.” BENEŠ, Josef. *Muzeologický slovník*. Praha: Národní muzeum – Ústřední muzeologický kabinet, 1978, p. 36.

13 STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyňek Z. *Úvod do studia muzeologie*. Brno: Univerzita J. E. Purkyně, 1979, pp. 48–50.

about the non-profitability of museums and the formulation that the museum stands “at the service of society”, these formulations were incorporated into the final form of the definition.¹⁴

New trends appeared with 1989, when museums underwent a process of wide-reaching and long-lasting transformation. The then society initially did not show major interest in the development of museums and culture in general and focused its attention mainly on the economic (fundamental transformation of the economic model) and political (transition to a pluralistic system, division of the country into the Czech Republic and Slovakia) areas. However, the needs of museum workers in often hectically changing conditions tended all the more to anchor the position of museums in the cultural life of an emerging democratic state. The initiators of a number of impulses towards the state authorities and the public were mainly the interest-based professional organization called the Association of Museums and Galleries and the Czech Committee of ICOM, in close cooperation with academic centres (Brno, Opava). It was only at the turn of the millennium that a new and still valid museum law was prepared,¹⁵ but its implementation into Czech law was primarily related to the

14 In this regard, it is certainly interesting to follow Jelínek’s thoughts at the time, concerning the new concept of the museum. The Chairman of ICOM contemplated on the need for participation between the museum and the visitor, or on the need for a sociological and ecological concept (a dialogue between man and nature) in museum work. Moravské zemské muzeum, Knihovna Ústavu Anthropos. *Osobní deníky Jana Jelínka*, 1974, vol. XVII, unpagued. On the issues of development in ICOM at that time, see BAGHLI, Sid Ahmed, Patrick BOYLAN and Yanni HERREMAN. *History of ICOM (1946–1996)*. Paris 1998, pp. 24–29; 76.

15 Zákon č. 122/2000 Sb.: zákon o ochraně sbírek muzejní povahy a o změně některých dalších zákonů (Aktuální znění 01. 02. 2022 – verze 11). In *Zákony pro lidi* [online]. par. 1 [accessed 2022-03-07]. Available from www: <<https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2000-122>>.

planned accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union. The term ‘museum’ was defined here as follows: “an institution, which acquires and collects natural and human products for the purposes of science and study, explores the environment from which the natural and human products are acquired, creates collections of selected natural and human products, conserves, records and researches them, enables their usage and makes them equally accessible to all without difference by providing selected public services, which usually are not intended to make profit”.¹⁶ Its wording, along with the expanded ICOM definition of 2007, retains a fundamental importance in the reflection of the museum phenomenon among the majority of Czech museum workers and museologists, who currently mostly do not attempt to generate their own form of definition.¹⁷

3. The design of research on the museum definition in the Czech Republic and its respondents

On the basis of a direct approach by the Czech Committee of ICOM with the assignment of a questionnaire survey among Czech museum workers, which would bring the first relevant results that could be communicated to ICOM Define as early as spring 2021, the Department of Archaeology and Museology at the Masaryk University in Brno – specifically its sub-Department of Museology and the UNESCO Chair of Museology and World Heritage – was invited to take charge of the survey in the Czech Republic at the end of

16 Ibid., par. 1.

17 The ICOM museum definition is most extensively analysed by František Šebek. ŠEBEK, František. *Definice muzea a podstata jeho činnosti*. In BURIÁNKOVÁ, Michaela, Anna KOMÁRKOVÁ and František ŠEBEK (eds.). *Úvod do muzejní praxe: učební texty základního kurzu Školy muzejní propedeutiky Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky*. Praha: Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky, 2010, pp. 9–20.

2020.¹⁸ The mentioned department, in cooperation with other partners (Czech Committee of ICOM, Czech Association of Museums and Galleries), conceived it as a starting step, the conclusions of which need to be debated personally among local experts in the format of a professional seminar.

The research decided to aim at finding out the opinions and attitudes of the Czech museum community towards an optimal form of the ICOM international museum definition. Based on the analysis of available sources on the development of the relationship of Czech museum workers to the museum definition and with regard to the reflection of practice, the research team established the following hypotheses for the basic processing of data from the questionnaire survey. Based on these hypotheses and their further extension, variables were determined, which were implemented through individual questions formulated for the questionnaire.

H (main hypothesis): *The attitudes of Czech museum workers towards the museum definition are rather conservative, leaning towards tradition and continuity, without major efforts for radical changes.*

The main hypothesis was further elaborated into five sub-hypotheses:

h1: Czech museum workers are inclined to preserve the existing ICOM international museum definition, with only minor modifications to its current wording.

h2: For Czech museum workers, the wording of the draft museum definition, presented at the 2019 General Conference in Kyoto, is unacceptable.

¹⁸ The research team consisted of the authors of this study.

h3: According to Czech museum workers, a fundamental change in the ICOM international museum definition could have significant effects on the sphere of museums in the Czech Republic.

h4: Among the main terms that an optimal international museum definition should contain, Czech museum workers mainly promote terms related to the professional management of collections and their mediation.

h5: The interest in communicating their own opinions through the questionnaire will be shown by respondents, the majority of whom are middle-aged, have a university education and work as regular workers in some of the professional positions in the museum sphere.

The construction of the questionnaire “*Museum definition – questionnaire survey*” and its subsequent modifications in the first months of 2021 before the actual distribution were subjected to the necessary commenting and piloting, so that the research team could elaborate the final form of the questionnaire, ready for distribution. The preliminary research thus included the verification of the working version of the questionnaire through an expert evaluation, in which eight local museologists and museum workers were involved.¹⁹ Subsequently, after having incorporated the received comments, its comprehensibility and correct functionality on the electronic platform were tested with a sample of future respondents.

¹⁹ Individual feedback was obtained from the approached representatives of professional organizations in the museum sphere, representatives from the museum practice, academic workers and collaborators representing museology and other disciplines.

As a next step, the issue of awareness and ways of distributing the questionnaire were also addressed. In cooperation with local professional associations, the link to the online questionnaire, together with other information and instructions,²⁰ was distributed via e-mail among members of local museum professional organizations and posted on the website and Facebook site of the survey implementer and his partners and other cooperating institutions in the Czech Republic. It was also addressed via e-mail to employees of major Czech museums (National Museum in Prague, Moravian Museum in Brno, Silesian Museum in Opava), employees of the state administration and local government, and academic workers. Graduates and students of museology and other fields employed in museums were also approached to fill out the questionnaire. In order to achieve the widest possible awareness of museum workers and museologists in the Czech Republic, a call for participation in the questionnaire survey together with basic related information were also published in the journal *Věstník Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky 2021/1* in February 2021 as a part of the information campaign. The journal is available online and printed copies are distributed to all member institutions. The questionnaire was presented orally at the online plenary session of the Czech Committee of ICOM in March 2021.

²⁰ Respondents were given the following information and instructions: The questionnaire consists of three thematic blocks of questions. The first block is dealing with the respondent's attitudes towards the existing museum definitions. The second block looks for impulses to an optimal form of the international museum definition. The third block detects identification data about the respondent. The questionnaire mainly contains closed questions or scaling questions, where the respondent selects one or more valid answers by ticking. It also includes some open-ended questions (optional). Filling out the questionnaire takes about 30 minutes. Anonymity of individual respondents is ensured. The data will be evaluated quantitatively.

After these preparatory steps, the first feedback on the museum definition and its optimal form was subsequently collected in the Czech Republic in the form of an anonymous online questionnaire survey. It consisted of a total of 27 questions divided into three thematic blocks. The research thus aimed at the interpretation of three main areas, where it investigated:

1. respondents' attitudes to the currently valid ICOM international museum definition (2007) and to the unaccepted proposal from the ICOM General Conference in Kyoto (2019);
2. definition of 20 key terms with the most frequent representation in the questionnaire, which, according to respondents, an optimal museum definition should contain;
3. placing the data in the context of basic identification details on the respondents (i.e. their number, current job position and membership in professional organizations).²¹

The online data collection was carried out with the help of an electronic questionnaire, accessible at www.surveymonkey.com from February 15, 2021, and the interpretation began on March 8, 2021. In the defined period, a total of 499 respondents participated in the research. This number of respondents, which is relatively high for the Czech Republic, was undoubtedly obtained not only thanks to the long-standing interest of Czech museum workers in the issue of museum definition, but also thanks to effective intradisciplinary cooperation in ensuring awareness of the ongoing research investigation. The subsequent comprehensive

²¹ The processing of the results monitored the quantified data on the frequency of phenomena in both relative (number of responses) and absolute values (%; rounded to whole numbers).

evaluation of the questionnaire by the research team took gradually place in several stages, from the spring months of 2021 to the spring of 2022. The interim results of the survey in individual stages of its processing and interpretation of the results were introduced to the local professional public in the form of an oral presentation at the Plenary Session of ICOM Czech Republic (2021) and an article published in the journal *Věstník Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky*,²² to the international professional public then at the ICOM Prague pre-conference in August 2021. The planned debate of local experts took place the following year (March 2022) as a professional seminar at the Technical Museum in Brno in cooperation with the Museological Commission at the Czech Association of Museums and Galleries, where also the last part of the processed results were published.

3.1 Questionnaire respondents, their occupations and relation to professional organizations

The accomplished questionnaire survey among the professional museum and museological community in the Czech Republic, with data collection from February to March 2021, has obtained answers from a total of 499 respondents, who created a high-quality representative sample. The questionnaire primarily addressed people working in museum institutions, but the researchers were also interested in the opinions of people working in the academic sphere and in other memory institutions closely related to museums. The classification according to job position is crucial. This topic is closely related to the duration of

²² JAGOŠOVÁ, Lucie and Otakar KIRSCH. První výsledky dotazníku k definici muzea. *Věstník AMG*, 2021, no. 2, pp. 28–29.

practice, and the involvement in museum professional organizations was also investigated. In addition to sex and age, other information about the education of individual participants was also collected for the purposes of the research. The researchers were interested not only in the education level achieved, where university-educated respondents with the title Mgr./Ing. were represented by 53 %, and other levels of education or academic qualifications were represented relatively evenly at around 11 %, with the exception of only 2% representation of people with the title doc. or prof. Also monitored was the professional focus of education, in which the humanities absolutely dominate and the other fields are significantly less represented (technical and natural sciences, artistic fields). With regard to the professional profile of researchers, it was also ascertained to what extent museology studies are represented in the monitored sample.²³

There was a slight predominance of women among the survey respondents (61 %), and in terms of age, the largest number of responses was obtained from the age group 36–50 years (43 %), followed by a balanced representation of the age groups 51–60 years (25 %) and 25–35 years (23 %).

Regarding the current job position of the respondents, it was found out that a total of 73 % (366) of them are museum employees, 5 % (23) work in another cultural or memory institution, 6 % (28) are active in the academic sphere, 2 % (12) are university students and 4 % (20) of the respondents are

²³ The finding of only 15 % of respondents without any museum or museology-oriented education or training can be perceived as satisfactory. This fact is undoubtedly reflected in the professional orientation of the respondents and thus also in the overall qualitative level of the responses obtained.

working in state administration or local government. Other variants of the respondents' activity showed a very low representation (work outside the field of culture, independent worker, volunteer, homemakers or retired persons). Among the museum workers, the survey was mostly attended by curators and professional museum collection administrators, who make up 30 % (148) of the total number of respondents, 23 % (115) of the respondents are museum management workers and 17 % (84) represent other professional job positions in museums, such as museum pedagogue, documentalist, conservator, librarian, archivist.

From the point of view of professional networking, it was found out that only 20 % (100) of respondents are members of some international professional organization in the museum sphere. The membership in national professional museum organizations was reported by 61 % (304) of respondents and 22 % (108) reported membership in another professional organization of related fields. On the contrary, 21 % (104) of respondents stated that they are not members of any professional organization.

4. Interpretation of data from the questionnaire survey

The following chapter presents the key research results, which are divided into several thematic units for better clarity and also with regard to the formulated hypotheses. The first of them is dealing with the interpretation of the point of view of Czech museum workers on the relevance of solving the issue of museum definition at the present time. The following section focuses on uncovering the respondents' attitudes to several museum definitions that have been debated in international and

local conditions. In the subsequent part, the key terms are introduced, which, from the point of view of Czech museum workers, should be included in the museum definition. In addition to closed questions with one or more possible answers and scaling questions, the questionnaire also offered space for free answers by respondents. This structure made it possible to apply the methodological concept of a mixed research, using dominantly quantitative approaches for data analysis, but also with representation of certain parts corresponding to the qualitative processing of research results. The obtained hard statistical data, where possible, are supplemented in the interpretation part by the research team with selected comments of respondents from free optional questions, which are presented here in an unedited form. For the authors of the survey, a very valuable finding was the level of involvement of the respondents in these optional questions, which required a deeper reflection on their own opinions and attitudes. Due to the wide range of responses collected, the willingness to share one's own thoughts and the spectrum of statements obtained in the questionnaire, the last part of this chapter is devoted to the categorization of the respondents' attitudes towards specific modifications which, according to them, should be reflected in the currently valid ICOM international museum definition, the validity of which would thus, after certain revision, be extended into the next period.

4.1 The importance of dealing with the museum definition from the perspective of respondents

As it emerged from the research, 74 % (370) of respondents already had some **awareness of the currently ongoing debates on**

redefining the ICOM international museum definition before filling out the questionnaire (24 % of them know about the issue by hearsay, 34 % have basic information and 16 % stated to have more detailed information together with an active interest). When filling out the questionnaire, 26 % (129) of respondents reported that the information was new for them. The reason might be the involvement of students or academics who did not grasp the issue until then and do not regularly read the journal *Věstník Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky*, which is distributed to all member museums and members from academic departments with a connection to the museum sphere. A role may also be played by the forcibly changed way of communicating this information during the COVID-19 lockdown, which shifted personal interaction to the online environment during the observed period.

A full 74 % of respondents **consider it essential to debate the museum definition** – 35 % of them understand the museum definition as one of more current topics; for some respondents, it is an important (31 %) or even fundamental (8 %) topic for further development of museums. Among the respondents, however, we also find those for whom the issue is marginal (16 %) or completely unnecessary (7 %). Only 3 % of respondents do not have their own opinion on this question or they cast doubt upon the need for a museum definition as such (mere 2 respondents). From the point of view of the interpretation of the questionnaire, this is a significant finding of a wider spectrum of opinions within the represented research sample, which is therefore not limited to a black-and-white view of the issue.

60 % of respondents expressed an interest in following up on the questionnaire survey with a broader intradisciplinary discussion within the Czech museum sphere (25 % of these respondents definitely expressed yes), on the other hand, a total of 30 % gave answers rather no or no. Again, there remain 10 % of respondents who were unable to give a clear opinion. This information was perceived as a clear confirmation of the need for personal debates on the topic and also contributed to the motivation of local professional organizations to make the intention of holding a discussion meeting come true.

4.2 Attitudes of Czech museum workers towards individual museum definitions and possible impacts of the formulation of the definition on Czech museum sphere

In the Czech museum community, we can consider the museum definition a vivid topic arousing the interest of experts and a topic that is currently being debated. As can be seen from the answers, only 5 % of respondents (25 persons) consider it unimportant to deal with the museum definition, and mere 2 % (8) do not have their own opinion on this question. Another bulk of questions was aimed at finding out the attitudes of the Czech respondents towards the museum definitions, with which they may have been confronted in the present and recent past in an international and local perspective. Herewith we mean the currently valid ICOM international museum definition of 2007, then the draft of the international museum definition, which was presented but not accepted at the ICOM General Conference in Kyoto in 2019, and thirdly, the respondents were asked about the Czech legislative definition as stated in the Act No.

122/2000 Coll. on the protection of museum collections.²⁴

If we briefly summarize the data obtained from the survey and the view of the Czech respondents on the two mentioned international formulations of the museum definition, a full 72 %, which represent 360 respondents, lean towards the valid ICOM museum definition (version of 2007) as a satisfactory form of the international museum definition. Of this number, 79 persons are in favour of maintaining the existing definition in its unchanged form, 215 would suggest only minor modifications and 66 are in favour of more significant modifications of this existing definition. In contrast, the unaccepted proposal from Kyoto 2019 has the support of 12 % (58) of respondents – of whom 6 have no reservations about its wording, 26 would make minor and 26 would make significant changes to its wording. 6 % (29) of respondents consider both definitions acceptable at the same time (the currently valid ICOM version of 2007 as well as the unaccepted proposal from Kyoto 2019), while 4 % (19) regard both definitions as unsatisfactory.

The respondents were also asked to express how accurate and satisfactory these definitions are. The aptness of the **valid ICOM international museum definition (from 2007)** is positively assessed by 89 % of respondents (of whom 34 % consider it completely apposite and 55 % rather apposite). Only 9 % expressed a negative opinion (i.e. the answer is rather no, no) and mere 2 % of respondents cannot judge the issue. How satisfactory is this definition according to the respondents? Its

²⁴ In the questionnaire, the respondents were presented with the international museum definition translated into the Czech language, in the wording of the official version of the translation, approved by the Czech Committee of ICOM and commonly used in the Czech museum environment

suitability was indicated by 77 % of respondents (of whom 30 % found it completely suitable and 47 % rather suitable). According to 19 % of respondents, this definition is not suitable (2 % of them consider it completely unsuitable and 17 % rather unsuitable). The remaining 4 % of respondents cannot assess it.

When interested, the respondents could add their verbal comments to the chosen answer in a separate optional question.²⁵ The open-ended answers show that the respondents are talking more about the desirability of updating the existing definition, revising some parts or terms used – not about the need to formulate a completely new definition from the ground up. Critical comments addressed to the existing definition included a lack of overlap with the current role of museums in society, the absence of some topical terms and a reflection of the changes that have taken place since its formulation. From the large number of answers, we chose three examples of respondents' attitudes:

- *“I think it contains everything essential. In theory, some reformulation is possible, but it will not change the content much.”*
- *“If something really works, such as the currently valid museum definition, then we should be very careful with any change that could not only mean the demise of the present, but would also certainly bring the risk of non-functionality of the future.”*

²⁵ With individual verbal comments, respondents could add explanations or other supplements to the general expression of their attitudes. This response was optional and the extent of the message was limited by the number of characters. We quote these personal statements of the respondents in a literal translation – they therefore copy colloquial expressions or stylistic mistakes in the Czech version.

- *“It certainly affects the essence of the definition from the point of view of the Czech Republic, it revolves around the collection, which is of key importance for us, however, I understand that there are pressures to emphasize or promote the experiential and inclusive nature of the museum.”*

If we focus attention on the “alternative” proposal presented at the international plenary session, only 25 % of Czech respondents agree with the unaccepted **draft museum definition from Kyoto (2019)** in terms of relevance (4 % of them expressed a clear yes), 68 % of respondents have a negative opinion on the relevance (of whom 41 % consider it rather unsatisfactory and 27 % unsatisfactory). 7 % of respondents cannot assess it. 18 % of respondents consider the proposal from Kyoto a suitable form of the international museum definition (4 % of them answered yes and 14 % rather yes); on the contrary, 74 % of respondents take a negative standpoint (among them an equal number of respondents say rather no and definitely no). 8 % of respondents cannot assess this question. Analogously, this question also had the possibility of an optional verbal comment. If we summarize the reactions of Czech museum workers, then according to them, the unaccepted definition from Kyoto 2019 is not even a definition by its very nature; it is too complicated and incomprehensible. They feel the lack of emphasis on collections, scientific research and presentation of knowledge (education). The version is not timeless in their eyes. Some respondents fear the possible risk of political misuse of the museum, they sense an ideological touch of political correctness in it. Some draw attention to the excessive complexity of the wording and the terms used, which make the text unable to reach and be

understood by a wider public. From a large number of diverse reactions, we again chose a few examples of respondents’ statements:

- *“This is not a definition, it does not describe the character of the institution and the professional museum activities.”*
- *“The wording is complicated, difficult to understand and glosses too much over current trends, so it is not timeless and is unusable for the average person.”*
- *“By this definition, the museum is interchangeable with other institutions.”*
- *“It is defining the framework of activities, agenda and scope of activities, I like the openness and emphasis on community, openness, understanding of the world, but it does not fully capture the essence. It completely neglects the function of education, it contains a lot of contemporary conflicts, it is not timeless.”*
- *“It is a too activist definition that does not take into account the misuse of these formulations by authoritarian regimes to discredit the museum work itself, and the misuse of collections leading to disappearance of the evidence of the past (but also of the present) that contradicts the official interpretation.”*
- *“In my opinion, this would be a too radical change, which may also have a negative legislative impact in some parts of the world and, possibly, an impact on the funding of museums.”*

The third of the definitions, on which the respondents had to take their stand for completeness of content, was the **Czech legislative museum definition stipulated**

in Act No. 122/2000 Coll. on the protection of museum collections and on the change of some other laws, as amended.²⁶ From the research data obtained, we can infer that the Czech legislative museum definition is apposite for 81 % of respondents (for 27 % yes, for 54 % rather yes); on the other hand, 18 % of respondents do not consider it apposite (in the sum of answers no and rather no). Mere 1 % cannot judge. 74 % of respondents consider this definition satisfactory (24 % clearly yes, the others rather yes) and for a total of 24 % it is rather unsatisfactory or unsatisfactory. Only 2 % of respondents cannot assess it. It is obvious that the respondents move more easily in the local environment (they know the legislation and use it in their museum practice) and also this definition resonates better with the local conditions for them. The fact that an update of these local legislative measures has been expected for some time may be reflected in the form of some negative responses to this definition.

Another aspect investigated was the determination of respondents’ opinions on the **possible effects of the wording of the valid museum definition – both international and local – on the Czech museums**. The question was: Do the currently valid museum definitions correspond to the

²⁶ In the Czech museum legislation, a museum is defined as follows: “Museum is an institution, which acquires and collects natural and human products for the purposes of science and study, explores the environment from which the natural and human products are acquired, creates collections of selected natural and human products, conserves, records and researches them, enables their usage and makes them equally accessible to all without difference by providing selected public services, which usually are not intended to make profit. Gallery is a museum specialized in art collections.” See Zákon č. 122/2000 Sb.: zákon o ochraně sbírek muzejní povahy a o změně některých dalších zákonů (Aktuální znění 01. 02. 2022 – verze 11). In *Zákony pro lidi* [online]. par. 2, point 4 [accessed 2022-03-07]. Available from www: <<https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2000-122>>.

present state and needs of museums in the Czech Republic?

When assessing the currently valid ICOM international museum definition (2007), a total of 11 % of respondents (57) cannot assess the relevance of the valid ICOM museum definition towards the current needs of the Czech museum sphere. A total of 69 % of respondents gave a positive answer – i.e. for 16 %, the valid international museum definition fully corresponds to the situation in Czech museums, and for 53 %, the answer was rather yes. 20 % of respondents gave a negative answer (of whom 18 % answered rather no and 2 % no). It is quite interesting that the Czech legislative museum definition, which is based on the international definition, but is formulated in a unique form, shows almost identical expressions of the respondents regarding its relevance – the differences in responses are a maximum of two percent for individual answers.

In order to determine the impact of the unaccepted definition from Kyoto (2019), the question was formulated in this context as follows: Do you think that a significant change to the current ICOM definition (e.g. in the form of the wording of the proposal from Kyoto 2019) could have significant impacts on the sphere of Czech museums? In response to this more general question, whether or not a fundamental change in the museum definition could have significant impacts on the sphere of Czech museums, even 49 % of respondents think not (of whom 37 % answered rather no, and 12 % no). On the contrary, 33 % are convinced that the answer is yes (of whom 13 % answered yes and 20 % rather yes). A considerable number of respondents (18 %) cannot assess this situation. In a separate open-ended question, where they could

formulate their own opinion or add a comment to their answer, the respondents reacted to the change as such and its possible impacts, and the majority of them commented directly on the impacts that a change in the definition in the form of the Kyoto 2019 proposal would bring. From the respondents' free answers follows that they perceive both positives (“a breath of fresh air”, a process of change) and negatives (threats of disruption of the fragile infrastructure in the Czech museum sphere, or in a wider cultural sphere), along with scepticism/assumption of stagnation (even if the definition changes, no change does occur in practice). In opinions on the potential impacts of the definition in the wording from Kyoto, efforts towards openness and communication appeared among the positives, while concerns, on the contrary, were aimed at determining the appropriate degree of a possible trend of loosening the definition. Other responses contained references to a political line of thinking, as well as direct concerns about ideologization in the museum sphere. From a large number of responses, we again chose a few examples:

- *“The new definition of ‘Kyoto’ would also have an effect on the redefinition of our law and would also mean changes in the possibilities of drawing public money, even on an international scale. With the new definition, I see a possible limitation of research topics and the scope of museum work in our environment.”*
- *“Reflection of existing approaches, possibly faster changes in approaches with regard to current trends in society. The use of modern approaches to interpretation...”*

- *“I am afraid that if a definition similar to that of the Kyoto 2019 General Conference would be adopted at any time in the future, then institutions that are not actually museums, or at least not in my ideas of museums, might pass themselves off as museums.”*
- *“The definition is very activist, it would give politicians the tools to eliminate professional work in museums.”*
- *“Inauspicious, there is a lack of emphasis on collections. Museums would become disreputable community centres.”*

If we summarize the key findings obtained from the results of this part of the survey, we can state that Czech museum workers understand the definition of the museum in such a way that it builds on tradition and forms a concept which is generally acceptable from an international point of view. For Czech museum workers, stability, continuity and resistance to current fads are essential; if a change will be introduced, then it should not be radical, due to concerns about the impact on legislation and everyday museum practice.

4.3 Relevance of terms for the museum definition

On the basis of the ICOM Define call through the Czech Committee of ICOM, more than 70 terms were generated for the purposes of the questionnaire, from which the respondents had to mark those that, in their opinion, should form the main axis of the new museum definition. The currently valid ICOM definition, the proposal from Kyoto and the Czech legislative museum definition were used during the selection. The terms extracted from these primary sources were supplemented with

Order	Term	Percentage	Number of respondents
1.	HERITAGE	83 %	411
2.	LEARNING	79 %	394
3.	EDUCATION	71 %	354
4.	COLLECTIONS	71 %	353
5.	RESEARCH	70 %	347
6.	PROTECTION	69 %	343
7.	EXPERTISE	68 %	338
8.	KNOWLEDGE	67 %	332
9.	CULTURE	66 %	330
10.	PUBLIC	66 %	327
11.	DOCUMENTATION	65 %	322
12.	TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE EVIDENCE	65 %	321
13.	MEMORY	64 %	320
14.	ACCESSIBILITY	62 %	307
15.	HUMAN	59 %	296
16.	PRESERVATION	59 %	294
17.	PRESENTATION	58 %	289
18.	PAST	57 %	283
19.	FUTURE	57 %	282
20.	CARE	55 %	276

Tab. 1: Twenty most represented terms

other expressions, which are widely used and customary in the present-day museological, sociological and philosophical discourse.²⁷ The respondent could

²⁷ At this point, a few explanatory words should be added to the list of key terms for the museum definition that would otherwise be lost in translation. The list of selected key terms for the Czech Republic includes several that relate to the field of education. The Czech language does not only use the international term 'education' (in Czech = *edukace*), but further specifies it into two basic components of intentional impact on individuals and the corresponding other separate terms. One is understood as the development of an individual in the field of cognitive knowledge and skills (in Czech = *vzdělávání*) – here see the term 'learning'. The deliberate influence on the behaviour of an individual and his/her attitudes and values was translated by us here as 'pedagogy' (this corresponds to a separate Czech

evaluate the relevance of individual terms with the yes/no options, where the number of positive answers was not limited in any way. If the respondents missed a corresponding expression for the museum definition in the list, they could directly enter it into a text box located below the offer. Respondents in many cases used the options offered, while they missed the terms such as: disciplinarity/specialization, environment,

term = *výchova*). We believe that this note will help to understand this wider representation of pedagogical terms among the 20 key terms, as selected by 499 museum workers, academics and museologists from the Czech Republic.

evidence, reality, communication, identity, public service, innovation, professionalism, representative, virtual reality, community, gender, restoration, art, inspiration, thinking, evolution, creativity, play, human rights, independence, profitability, inspiration.

The data obtained created a relatively wide range for individual terms, where the lower limit was 36 responses (8.2 %) and the upper limit was 411 responses (82.4 %). As can be seen from the attached table of the twenty most prominent terms (Tab. 1), the highest values were achieved with heritage (411, 82.4 %), learning (394, 79 %), education and collections (both 354, 70.9 %). The percentage over 60 % was also achieved with terms like research, protection, expertise, knowledge, public, memory, culture, documentation, tangible and intangible evidence, accessibility. Among the 20 most frequently mentioned values (over 50% occurrence) the respondents included heritage, learning, education, collections, research, protection, expertise, knowledge, culture, public, documentation, tangible and intangible evidence, memory, accessibility, human, preservation, presentation, past, future and care. There was a very thin boundary between these selected terms rounding out the top twenty and some of the other marked terms. The following significantly represented terms, which also exceeded the 50% occurrence threshold, did not make it into the representative list: study (275, 55.1 %), science (268, 53.7 %), pedagogy and collecting (265, 53.1 %), exhibition (262, 52.5 %) and society (256, 51.3 %). On the contrary, the least frequent were: democratisation (57, 11.4 %), inclusion (50, 10 %) and global equality (41, 8.2 %). The results of the research once again clearly confirm the fact that the

respondents preferred the terms included in the existing definitions (international, Czech legislation) rather than those from the Kyoto proposal. Nevertheless, the list of the most represented terms does not include ones like institution (41 %) and non-profitability (36 %).

4.4 The valid ICOM international definition of 2007 as a starting point for redefinition? Attitudes and recommendations of Czech museum workers regarding its possible revision

The attitudes of respondents in the Czech research on the museum definition revealed a strong inclination towards the currently valid ICOM international museum definition (2007), which even today is perceived by Czech museum workers as apposite (for 89 % of respondents) and meeting current needs (for 77 % of respondents). In its unchanged form, or with certain corrections, in the opinion of the vast majority of Czech museum workers, it could continue to serve as a characteristic of the museum institution on an international scale. We therefore assume that the respondents perceive it as a good starting point for further debates on whether to leave it unchanged or to update it with regard to current needs. Due to the large amount of data obtained from individual verbal comments of the respondents, in which they reacted to this question, the next part of the text will focus on the interpretation of these free answers. By identifying the main common features, we will follow up several characteristic groups of reactions that occurred most often; these are documented in the text with selected verbatim quotations from respondents' statements from the questionnaire survey. In contrast to the previous parts of the text, we do not evaluate these attitudes here quantitatively

(by expressing the number of occurrences as a percentage), but based on the interpretation of the main types of opinion expressions. The respondents expressed in them their perceived problematic areas (what is missing, redundant or not properly formulated in the definition) and in some cases even presented specific proposals for reformulation. The following typology of approaches contains again a selection of a smaller number of particular responses for a short summarizing interpretation of statements in the given category.

4.4.1 There is no need to change the valid museum definition

With this title, we can summarize the key standpoint of some of the respondents, who expressed support for the valid museum definition in their statements. They either feel no need to change the definition because it is satisfactory in its current form, or they perceive certain risks if it were to be modified. They do not fail to emphasize that the existing definition fulfils the criterion of being comprehensible to both the professional community and the non-professional public.

- *“The museum definition is quite apposite and covers all the basic functions of a museum. Everything else we can say about the museum is always derived from some of the terms mentioned in this definition. It is sufficiently professional and comprehensible as well to non-professionals.”*
- *“The current definition is, on the one hand, sufficiently comprehensive and, on the other hand, non-conflict for various socio-cultural circles.”*
- *“If something really works, such as the currently valid museum*

definition, then we should be very careful with any change that could not only mean the demise of the present, but would also certainly bring the risk of non-functionality of the future.”

- *“Museums are traditional organizations that have held their ground for centuries. Historically, we know that politicising or just pressure for social activation has always ended in failure and an immediate or gradual decrease of the museum’s credit among society.”*

4.4.2 It is sufficient to update the valid museum definition

Another group of respondents agree that the current museum definition should be preserved, but it is necessary to adapt it to current needs in a certain way, given the time that has passed since its formulation. The respondents' formulations are rather general, or slightly instructive in which direction to correct this definition, but they usually do not provide specific suggestions on how to precisely reformulate the existing definition.

- *“In my opinion, the old definition only needs to be supplemented so that it corresponds better to the present.”*
- *“It captures the essence of the museum, it is a true definition. It does not sufficiently embrace the museum as a public service.”*
- *“Missing from the definition is that museums document both the past and the present.”*
- *“The museum definition reflects the general goals of all museums, but in the 21st century it no longer meets the ideas and requirements of society, which*

expects more from a museum than only the basic activity in the form of selection, thesauration and presentation of objects in museum premises.”

- *“It is true that the expectations of society and museum founders have changed and museums are expected to apply a more activist approach, but the question is whether or not they should follow this trend. I agree that the current definition should be updated.”*
- *“The current definition is probably not entirely precise if we are talking about ‘new’ types of museums such as some open air museums or living history farms.”*

4.4.3 Weaknesses of the existing definition – what and how should be modified?

A significant part of the respondents showed their own well-considered and classified attitudes and thoughts about how and with which particular amendments it would be appropriate to change, enrich or terminologically specify the formulation of the currently valid museum definition. These respondents tried to identify problematic areas of the current definition, where a revision of its wording should be considered. We can divide the spectrum of these recommended changes and particular proposed amendments into several sub-groups, depending on which part of the definition they focused on, or which of the included terms or formulations they considered worthy of revision.

Accentuation of the importance of the museum and its irreplaceability

A certain number of respondents considered it essential in their verbal comments to draw attention

to the need to sufficiently emphasize or strengthen the museum’s significance or some aspects of its (expected) impact, which should also be reflected in the modification of the wording of the museum definition.

- *“An important and irreplaceable institution.”*
- *“It is important to incorporate the word necessary, in the sense that a museum is necessary for the development and future of society.”*
- *“The museum has far more possibilities of activity.”*
- *“The definition should also reflect something like SCR, the issue of sustainability, etc.”*
- *“It does not take into account the critical potential of functioning and challenges of the globalized world of the 21st century.”*
- *“The definition lacks the specification of a museum collection.”*

“Permanent” and “non-profitable”?

Both of these terms, included in the first part of the valid museum definition, can be perceived in the context of the Czech museum sphere as long-term debated and commented on, especially the issue of non-profitability. In this context, the respondents draw attention to certain profitable activities of museums, as well as to the existence of a number of corporate and private museums. The comments also logically allude to the complexity of searching for suitable expressions, which is, moreover, made much more difficult (not only with these terms) when translating the original wording of the definition into the Czech language.

- *“The definition is basically accurate, the only term that loses weight in the definition is the word ‘permanent’. Currently, there is really little that we can define as permanent, and even the museum itself slowly begins to move out of this category.”*
- *“I think the definition captures the basic idea, but I am sure some supplements still could be added. Problems may arise with the term ‘non-profit institution’. The term ‘institution, which is not primarily targeted at profit making’ would be more appropriate.”*
- *“I don’t think that the museum is a non-profit institution, because a) it earns from entrance fees, b) it receives payments for assessments, or for work commissioned from it, for example archaeological works, assessments of objects, etc.”*
- *“In my opinion, museums of today do not have to be 100% non-profitable. What about private museum institutions, for example? If they did not make money, they would cease to exist...”*

The museum’s role in society, its relationship with the public, education and popularisation

The word formulations included in this group have a common effort to respond to another part of the valid museum definition, which deals with the museum service of society. A number of respondents draw attention to the fact that the role of the museum in contemporary society has undergone a transformation and the museum-visitor relationship is also changing, which should be reflected in the revision of the current definition. At the same time, they draw attention to the importance of museum

education, which guards the adequate and meaningful mediation of the museum's message in a way that would not misappropriate the museum's mission and degrade it. In this context, both didactic and technical means are used. The use of the latter ones has become increasingly important in museums in recent years.

- “Better define ‘serves the society’ ...?”
- “Today, museums fulfil far more social roles than before, it could be supplemented.”
- “The definition could take into account recent educational trends, but it is also necessary to realize that the collections-building museums cannot substitute the scientific amusement parks. The basis of our activity is the care of cultural heritage and its presentation.”
- “I think [...] museums are at the same time more interactive and evoke emotions, so they are not just about exhibitions.”
- “Reservations: 1. mediation of exhibits does not necessarily refer to ‘man and their environment’ as an object (e.g. a permanent exhibition of products of nature), but man is the organizer and the audience of exhibitions; 2. the museum offers space for more activities and can more actively shape the society.”

Social involvement of museums, values in society, dialogue and relationship with communities

A group of several statements is thematically directly connected to the previous group of reactions, but rather than the question of public relations and education, it deals more specifically with interaction with the audience

and the involvement of museums in current all society debates. A related theme that repeatedly resonates is also the emphasis on the museum's connection to the communities and the wide openness and equal approach of museums to the public. There were also voices that proclaimed the need for incorporating the issues of gender, environment, inclusion and existence in the online space into the definition.

- “The existing definition does not at all take into account the role of the museum as an instigator of dialogue and a host of social debate. It is a question whether the museum definition must be so anthropocentric.”
- “The current definition lacks that the museum is also a place of dialogue.”
- “I believe that the current definition fully captures the basic characteristics and activity of most museums, however, it lacks other new concepts and definitions that arose in the modern history of museums by expanding their activities and actions within communities and society.”
- “The current definition is brief and yet apposite, as a definition should be. Perhaps it should be supplemented with: Through their activities, museums also contribute to the resolution of current conflicts and challenges and to mutual understanding.”
- “The museum seems to me a much more dynamic institution today, it cultivates, educates throughout life, as a regional cultural centre.”
- “The active role of museums in community building is missing from the definition. Many

museums (not really in our country, but rather in Europe and beyond) open discussions about current problems with their exhibitions, try to convince the visitor to take a position on topical problems.”

- “Does not embrace the online space and inclusion.”

Relationship to place, identity and regional development

Among the last opinion groups, we rather find a partial point of view or a reminder of certain other links and perspectives, which are of key importance for some respondents, regarding the scope of museums or their activities at the present time. Among these topics, it is repeatedly recalled that museums are also defined by where they are located and where they operate. They are part of a certain region, its cultural and natural environment and participate in local cultural events and the development of tourism, which, according to some respondents, should not be left out of the museum definition.

- “From my point of view, there is a lack of greater emphasis on the preservation of cultural heritage and values, which are a determining factor of our identity (be it at the national or regional level).”
- “I would clarify the wording ‘man and his cultural and natural environment’, or in a similar sense – because the present-day museums emphasize only the cultural environment.”
- “In my opinion, the definition does little to express the documentation of nature.”
- “I believe that the definition is missing a part which would also present the museum as an

institution that contributes to the cultural uplifting of a town or region. It may follow from one part of the definition. But I lack a specific focus. However, it depends on the museum's quality."

The desirability of reflecting new technologies and "digital born"

A not negligible area for the museum definition, which some of the respondents drew attention to in their statements, are the individual aspects connected with the digital environment, the use of information and communication technologies, the existence of intangible cultural heritage and "digital born" collection objects. These are topics that current museum practice deals with, and which, in the opinion of some respondents, should also be reflected in the current understanding of the museum.

- *"I think that the definition still covers the essence of museum work, the only area where the discussion needs to be expanded is the area of intangible cultural heritage, especially in relation to the definitions of collection objects that are digital born."*
- *"The definition should probably be extended to the digital environment, as digital born collections do not fully describe the definition of intangible cultural heritage."*

Imbalance in the effect of the definition on the diverse typology of existing museums

The last identified group of verbal comments are reactions to the (excessive) generality of the formulated museum definition. Some of the respondents pose themselves a question whether the museum definition can be

"universal", generally formulated in such a way that it can be applied to any of the very wide spectrum and typology of existing museums. From their point of view, the valid museum definition may not fully reflect, for example, the situation of small or private museums. Also revealed is here the very basic question of the balance of the entire range of professional museum activities, and the question to what extent of professional activities and overall scope should we actually perceive the museum at present.

- *"I see the definition of present-day museum on a broader level and, moreover, not bound in a mandatory state or non-profit environment."*
- *"It is focused on large state and city museums, neglecting small and private museums."*
- *"The definition does not take into account the existence of private, corporate museums, mixed institutions with 'only' a museum component, does not solve the question of time (predominance of the past over the present?), functional question – services outside the framework of a particular museum – conservation, promotion, etc."*

5. Research outcomes

The questionnaire survey among the professional museum and museological community in the Czech Republic was attended by 499 respondents, of whom 73 % are museum employees, mainly curators and professional collection administrators, management staff and other professional museum jobs. A full 72 % of respondents are inclined to the current ICOM museum definition (2007) as a satisfactory form of the definition, subject to certain modifications. The unaccepted proposal from

Kyoto 2019 is supported by 12 % of respondents, 6 % consider both definitions acceptable at the same time, and for 4 % both definitions are unsatisfactory. Among the 20 preferred terms/values for the museum definition with the most frequent occurrences, which were also submitted to ICOM Define in 2021 in the name of the Czech museums, the respondents selected the following: heritage, learning, education, collections, research, protection, expertise, knowledge, culture, public, documentation, tangible and intangible evidence, memory, accessibility, human, preservation, presentation, past, future, care.

The research shows that Czech museum workers prefer to base their museum definition on tradition. Stability, continuity and resistance to current fads are key for them. If any change is to occur, then it should not be radical, which is justified by their concerns about possible adverse effects on legislation and museum practice. This confirms the main research hypothesis "The attitudes of Czech museum workers towards the museum definition are rather conservative, inclined to tradition and continuity, without major efforts for radical changes" and the sub-hypotheses h1 (inclination to the current ICOM international museum definition), h2 (unacceptability of the draft definition from Kyoto in 2019) and h4 (in the selection of terms suitable for the museum definition, the top 20 terms include those related to the professional management of collections and their mediation). From the point of view of quantitative data evaluation, hypothesis h3 "According to Czech museum workers, a fundamental change in the ICOM international museum definition could have significant effects on the sphere of museums in

the Czech Republic” can be neither confirmed nor denied. Although these reactions are strongly echoed in the responses of Czech museum workers in the form of free answers, it is not a dominant preponderance of answers. At the same time, it was an optional question, which was not answered by a full 100 % of respondents (although the number of responses was significantly more than half). Moreover, potential impacts are not perceived by the respondents in a unified context – some regard them as a threat (expected negative impacts), while some others understand them as an impulse to favourable changes (a vision of positive changes and possible impacts resulting from them). The last of the sub-hypotheses h5 “The interest in communicating their own opinions through the questionnaire will be shown by respondents, the majority of whom are middle-aged, have a university education and work as regular workers in some of the professional positions in the museum sphere” was only partially confirmed. More than half of the respondents were indeed museum workers in professional positions, and their educational attainment was mostly university (53 % graduates of a master’s/ engineer’s degree, followed by 4 % of a bachelor’s degree and 12 % of a doctoral degree). However, the age spectrum in individual categories proved wider than assumed, where 43 % of respondents fell within the group of 36–50 years, followed by the percentage-balanced age groups of 51–60 years (25 %) and 25–35 years (23 %).

A similarly broad-ranged plenum and diverse spectrum of opinions, compared to the presented research conclusions summarized above, then in a more limited number participated in a thematic conference discussion meeting on the museum definition at the

Technical Museum in Brno in the spring of 2022. Individual standpoints of the participants and lines of opinion were published bilingually, in the form of a collected volume „*Nová definice muzea aneb její klady a zápory*“/ “*New Definition of the Museum: Its Pros and Cons*”, with the ambition of introducing the international professional public to this form of local debates among Czech museum workers and museologists over the international museum definition.

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