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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Conference Review: Mission á ICOM Paris: The ICOM June Meetings 2018

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The International Council of Museums or ICOM has 41,000 members worldwide, all of which are museum professionals. In a span of six years, ICOM grew from 31,000 to 41,000 members; Europe makes up 84% of members, whilst individual members total to 93%. As a member you are entitled to an ICOM Membership Card, which gives you free entrance to thousands of museums worldwide. Meetings are held annually for the ICOM managers, consisting of board members of the national and international committees. In 2010, EXARC

became an affiliated member of ICOM, and was invited to join the group of almost 250 people. Only 40% of ICOM members are member of one of the international committees. ICOM international handles 3.4 million Euro from member's dues. The largest challenges for 2018 are launching the new website, costing some 126,000 Euro, as well as modifying / repairing the underlying database of members.

> "These workshops were excellent events to allow for networking with other museum specialists, due to the smaller size and the less formal character. ICOM deliberately divided us by continent. We defined needs, problems and challenges for museums, including the quest for new audiences, the need to remain relevant and the obvious lack of human resources and funding.

EXARC joined the meeting of the international committees on the first day of the event, partly because their future is under discussion. EXARC resembles an international committee in the way it handles a theme, rather than a region or country. This meeting was a chance for the ICOM Secretariat to inform the international committees, in detail, with regards to managing their affairs. The international committees are no separate legal entities but part of ICOM-International, while the National Committees are each their own legal entity. The discussion on the future of the international committees continued as part of a workshop, where 50 people joined. The workgroup will collect information from the ICOM archives, send out a questionnaire and carry out interviews. One drawback was clear: how to get in touch with ICOM members themselves, rather than managers of committees.

There were discussions about the problems, obstacles and issues of international committees as well as affiliate organisations. Topics ranged from: how to achieve more efficiency and relevance? How can ICOM better support its international committees? Not all international committees are active, accessible or communicating well with the ICOM community. Participants wished for more flexibility; if a member is interested in reconstructing Egyptian glass, what committee should be addressed? The Glass groups? The Egyptology Committee? Or the affiliated organisation EXARC? Maybe it is more about what a committee does than who they are: we could use an up to date website where a good search engine makes all activities accessible and all international committees approachable. In that case, a committee does not work anymore for its own committee board and members, but for all ICOM members worldwide. Does an international committee really need members at all? The 36 International Committees have 500,000 Euro in reserve. ICOM International urged the committees to make good use of this money and not have it as keep safe. This reserve could be well spent on setting up an efficient communication floor.

EXARC joined another workshop on capacity building through the ICOM network. These workshops were excellent events to allow for networking with other museum specialists, due to the smaller size and the less formal character. ICOM deliberately divided us by continent.

We defined needs, problems and challenges for museums, including the quest for new audiences, the need to remain relevant and the obvious lack of human resources and funding. The discussion in our European group resumed on the subject of visitor orientation: how do you reach non-visitors? Is our exhibition interesting enough? Is our communication clear? Who should we train? What skills do people need to acquire? The second European group discussed how to pass on knowledge between generations within a museum context. The Asian group tackled capacity building in collection management, whilst the Latin America/Africa/Asia group touched upon the problem whereby museums are often perceived as elitist/European, and proposed that museums should become role models instead. ICOM intends to make an action plan to develop training programmes in each part of the world.

The discussion then veered onto which city will host the 2022 triannual ICOM convention, which will attract 2 – 3,000 museum professionals. Three cities presented themselves, each giving an important reason to vote for them:

- Alexandria, Egypt: “the ICOM General Conference has never been in Africa yet”
- Oslo, Norway: “we are the new cultural hub in Northern Europe”
- Prague, Czech Republic: “we are accessible, available, safe & friendly”

Of the 131 votes, Alexandria won with 67 votes, Prague received 52 votes, whilst the remaining 12 votes were given to Oslo. With Egypt obtaining a majority, many issues were pointed out: there are not enough hotel rooms yet; the conference venue is still too small; the budget unclear; the airport is not ready. However, a lot can happen in four years.

Special mention goes to the Dutch initiative “ICOM Family”. In a way it is similar to EXARCs member site, whereby, if you visit another city or country and would like to meet colleagues, you simply register at www.icomfamily.nl and find other ICOM members who will gladly invite you for coffee and a chat about museums. It can be that simple!

Next year, we will attend the triannual ICOM convention in Kyoto, Japan. The theme will be “museums as cultural hubs: the future of tradition”. This will be an excellent opportunity to meet many Asian colleagues. More information can be found at http://icom-kyoto-2019.org

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FIG 1. ICOM NETHERLANDS CHAIR LUC EEKHOUT. COPYRIGHT: ROELAND PAARDEKOOPER

FIG 2. A GROUP DISCUSSING DURING THE WORKSHOP. COPYRIGHT: ROELAND PAARDEKOOPER

FIG 3. THE TABLES AT THE UNESCO MEETING CENTRE. COPYRIGHT: ROELAND PAARDEKOOPER

FIG 4. EIFELTOWER, PARIS. COPYRIGHT: ROELAND PAARDEKOOPER