Please select your language*
English

![ICOM international council of museums logo]

ETHCOM - Preliminary Review on the Revision of the ICOM Code of Ethics For Museums
Please read the following message before answering the survey:
Committing to an open and transparent process of the Revision of the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums ETHCOM is initiating a **preliminary review of the first draft of the Revised Code**, that will extend from **mid-September to the end of October.** During this period we warmly welcome all ICOM Committees—National and International, Regional Alliances and Affiliated Organisations along with their membership to provide their valuable feedback. This response will help shape the final draft of the Code, which will be the subject of the formal 4th and final Consultation at the beginning of January 2025.
Each Committee should complete an online form **(one per NC, IC, RA, AO)**. The form is divided into three sections. In the first section, all Committees, Regional Alliances and Affiliated organisations are being called to submit short answers **(max 250 words)** on the **five Principles of the Code and their Statements**. In the second section, International Committees and Affiliated Organisations exclusively are asked to give an expert opinion, commenting on one core Principle of their choice. They should select the Principle that falls within the area of their specialisation and give a more in-depth perspective on the **Descriptions** of each **Statement** of the Code **(max. 750 words)**. The last section of the form consists of a general question on the first draft of the revised Code of Ethics for Museums, addressed to all ICOM Committees, Alliances and Organisation's members.
Please note that we highly recommend that members consult the **draft document of the revised Code of Ethics,** attached to each section, before formulating their answers. We would appreciate your comments on the substance of the material presented rather than on editorial matters.
Committees' responses can be submitted in any of the three official languages of ICOM (English, French or Spanish). **Deadline for submissions is Thursday 31 October 2024.**
This is a participatory process, and we hope that it will be conducted in consultation with the membership in each committee.
We thank you in advance for the great effort required. Please do not hesitate to reach out to ETHCOM at any point during the entire process at the following email: ethics@icom.museum
Identification

Name of the National or International Committee
ICOM Netherlands

Name of the National or International Committee, Regional Alliance, or Affiliated Organization to which the answers to this form correspond
National Committee

Name of the ICOM Body (National Committee / International Committee / Regional Alliance / Affiliated Organisation)*
ICOM Netherlands

Name of the person answering the form on behalf of the NC,IC,RA and AO*
Arja van Veldhuizen

Email address*
secretariaat@icom.nl

1. Does principle "Social Responsibility" meet your expectations?*
Yes
No

Max 250 words (174):
Is 'all' in 'include all social groups' and 'guarantee accessibility for all' achievable for (all) museums? Or even preferable? In our feedback in consultation 3 we wrote:
"… Nor should it be about 'as many communities as possible', because that might reduce the quality and the outcomes of the cooperation per sub-community. Above all it should be about conscious choices."
We pointed out that smaller museums in particular have to make choices. If you spend the available time on working with certain communities, you cannot simultaneously focus on others.
So in our opinion it is not about 'all' and we prefer a choice of words emphasising that museums should be aware of the communities they serve. The focus is that museums should become more accessible to all strata of society.

There is an overlap in meaning between different terms ('social groups' and 'communities', for example). At the same time, the wording is very global and general. A good description in the glossary is needed.

Ad 3: what is meant by "….and compensating them properly."?

2. Does principle "Professional Practice" meet your expectations?*
Yes
No

Max 250 words (135):
We absolutely do miss a sentence on how to deal with complaints and conflicts, both coming from outside and inside the museum (preferably including the role and safety of whistleblowers).
Of course, the reality in museums varies according to the cultural and political context, but still this is a topic that should be part of the Code in our opinion. So we propose to add that each museum has a certain duty of care in this area, by implementing a complaints procedure or providing other means to file complaints.
Would it be possible to include a sentence about professional practice in times of conflict between countries? How do you deal with professional ethics in such a situations? Are you loyal to your profession or to the regime and what if you don't have that choice?

3. Does principle " Education, Programs and Exhibitions" meet your expectations?*
Yes
No
Max 250 words (69):
This principle is focused on social issues, but especially (temporary) exhibitions are highly environmental unsustainable – particularly in the global north (produce loads of trash, couriers fly with a painting to the other end of the world, etc.).
Sustainability is mentioned in the first principle, but is also applicable to this principle. We suggest to add a few words to enhance thinking about a way of making exhibitions more sustainable.

4. Does principle " Collections and Research" meet your expectations?*
4. Does principle " Collections and Research" meet your expectations?
Yes
No

Max 250 words (250):
Ad 3: "… and requests for return or removal…" compared to 7: "....prompt and respectful … material": is there a distinction intended between 'return' in point 3 vs. 'repatriation and restitution' vs. 'return of illicitly acquired material' in 7? Or textual inaccuracy?

Ad 7: Requests for repatriation and restitution are a category of their own. Definition from Collections Trust: Restitution=process by which cultural objects are returned to an individual/community. Repatriation=process by which cultural objects are returned to a nation/state at the request of a government > transfer to another entity.
Deaccessioning and disposal is a different category > initiated by choices made by institution itself.
Illicitly acquired material is its own category too and seems to be subsumed here. Better as part of 8?

Ad 7: Human remains - and that returning them is actually uncontroversial - may need its own article.
The Code serves here as a starting point for things you should think about.

Ad 7: "Money realized from…"
Past experience calls for more specific and unambiguous wording. The words 'for the benefit of' and 'usually' provide room to manoeuvre.
Advice Dutch advisory committee (2020): "Impending bankruptcy of the museum endangers the whole collection. If such a situation is otherwise unavoidable, it can therefore be justification for sale of collection items, provided this safeguards continuation of the public accessibility of the remaining collection."

Ad 8: Suggestion, based on recent experiences in Ukraine: add the importance of digital inventory catalogues, in order to make them shareable with e.g. Interpol.

5. Does principle "Governance and Leadership" meet your expectations? *
Yes
No

A question to ETHCOM: How to cope with grassroots museums, for example in Latin America, but also in other parts of the world? We know that the adopted museum definition was criticized by several members because it excludes these types of museums. The Code of Ethics derives from the new definition, but how does it cope with this issue?

General Question for all Respondents
Do you feel that the Revised Code of Ethics covers the full breadth of ethical issues that museums are facing in the first part of the 21st century?

Max. 250words (230)*
In general, we think it does. But we have some reflections on the draft as a whole:
1) The planned glossary will help understanding the meaning of several concepts used in the draft, like 'communities' and 'social groups'. Also 'governing bodies' needs elaboration, because that notion can take many forms.

2) The autonomy of museums is mentioned under 'Governance and leadership', but also should be reflected in the other principles (e.g. in collection policy), also mentioning the position and influence of stakeholders.

3) We miss a topic about ethical issues regarding digital technologies (including AI). We received this text proposal from one of our members who is an expert in this area:
Museums ought to consider the implications of the technologies they adopt:
- Understanding that museums are important banks of authentic, unique, and human made information;
- Considering that (digital) technology mediates knowledge documentation, analysis, and transfer;
- Having the example of the influence information databases have in the conceptualisation of knowledge and value of information, as well as the inclusion and exclusion of information;
- Knowing that information is greatly valued in our information economy;
- Anticipating the role of new technologies in the generating, managing, disseminating, and reconstructing of information about collections.
She also elaborated a few sentences on ethical issues to consider for AI, stressing the importance of being fully aware of the limitations and vulnerabilities.

I acknowledge that:*
I have consulted the membership of my NC, IC, RA or AO before submitting this form
Yes
I acknowledge that: *
I have been authorized by the Board of my NC, IC, RA or AO to submit this form
Yes