



NEWSLETTER 2019

27th IACM Annual Conference and General Assembly Luxembourg



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1. FOREWORD

In 2019, the international museum community, united in the International Council Of Museums (ICOM), held a heated discussion about a new definition of what a museum is or should be. During the conference in Kyoto several proposals were put forward to redefine the essence of what a museum is and how they should develop in the near future. ICOM explains the need for a new definition as follows:

Over recent decades museums have radically transformed, adjusted and re-invented their principles, policies and practices, to the point where the ICOM museum definition no longer seems to reflect the challenges and manifold visions and responsibilities.

Two definitions were proposed to meet this need, but various members felt that the new, socially oriented definition, was a politicization. During the discussion, many sensitive issues came up, such as traditional European and 'white' dominance, the self-censorship of countries with authoritarian governments, dominance of the English language, but also the fear of losing subsidies, pressure of collection-oriented museums etc. No definition was agreed upon, but a new ICOM committee will work on a new museum definition that will be acceptable to the international museum community.

Since the International Association of Customs and Tax Museums is an affiliated member of the ICOM and since we all operate in the international museum community, this discussion is relevant for us. Since 2007 the ICOM museum definition has been and still is:

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.

This definition may be limited in its reach, but for a small association of customs & tax museums such as ours, this 'old' museum definition still offers many challenges, so we don't have to wait until there is a new definition to get to work. However, when a 'new' definition will be formulated, we will of course discuss this within the IACM.

Last year was a year of reflection for the members of the International Association of Customs and Tax Museums. At the annual IACM conference in Luxembourg in September, the members present discussed the benefits and shortcomings of our association. This was done on the basis of a questionnaire that was sent to the IACM members beforehand. I was grateful that 50% of the members responded to the questionnaire. The results of this feedback were extensively discussed and elaborated upon in a workshop during the conference in Luxembourg.

2019 was also a special year for many customs administrations in Europe, with the perpetual threat of a Brexit: the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. Undoubtedly Brexit will have a big impact on many customs administrations in the UK as well as on the continent. For instance, because of the pending Brexit, over 900 new customs officers were hired and trained during the last two years in the Netherlands. These new officers are necessary to be prepared for the intensification of customs work on the Dutch borders, mainly in harbours and airports. All these new colleagues have recently visited the Dutch Tax & Customs Museum to learn about the history of Customs as a part of their traineeship. Although these colleagues are new in the world of Customs, they will all work in a century-long tradition of Customs officers. And the most obvious place to get to know the world and work of their predecessors, is of course a Customs museum!



Mr Wim Van Es
President IACM



2. AGENDA

Tuesday 17 September 2019		
14.00	Check-in Hotel	Alvisse Parc-Hotel
16.00	Staff Welcome	Hotel Reception Area
17.00	Departure	Transfer to the Customs Museum
17.30	Welcome Speeches	Customs Museum
18.00	Presentation: Sniffer Dogs, Cargo Scanner and Motorcycle Brigade	
18.30	Presentation and Visit of Customs Museum	
20.15	Walking Dinner	
22.00	Return to the Hotel	Transfer to Alvisse Parc-Hotel
Wednesday 18 September 2019		
09:00	IACM General Assembly Reports by President, Secretary, Treasurer and Auditors	Alvisse Parc-Hotel
10:15	Coffee Break	Room Fischbach
10:30	Presentations Conference Theme: “ Past, Present and Future of IACM ”	
11.30	Update on Museum activities by members present	<i>(max 3 min. per country)</i>
12.45	Lunch	Restaurant Hotel
14.00	Departure, Visit Luxembourg-City	By Bus
16.00	Visit of Museum in Schengen, Welcoming by Mayor	Schengen
18.30	Departure, Visit Winery	Winery Greiveldange
19.30	Dinner offered by the Luxembourg Customs and Excise Agency	Restaurant at Winery, Greiveldange
22.00	Return to the Hotel	Transfer to Alvisse Parc-Hotel
Thursday 19 September 2019		
09.00	Introduction of the Workshop	<i>Why did you give those answers?</i> <i>The workshop will be moderated by Mrs Joëlle LETSCH (ADT-Center Luxembourg)</i> <i>(German Museum Hamburg)</i>
09.15	Discussion of the answers to the questionnaire on “IACM - Past, Present and Future”	
10.00	Presentation Questionnaire Results	
10.15	Coffee Break	
10.30	Group discussion about the future of IACM	
11.15	Presentation by Workshop group leaders	
11.30	Final Conclusions by the President	
12.15	Presentation Hosting 2020 IACM Conference	
12.30	Miscellaneous	
13.00	Lunch	
14.30	End of Conference	
Friday 20 September 2019 - Patron St Matthew Event (Optional Participation)		
09.00	Departure Hotel → Luxembourg-City	Celebrations to Honour the Patron Saint
11.00	Return to Alvisse Parc-Hotel	Reception + Lunch offered by the Luxembourg Customs and Excise Agency



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3. VISIT LUXEMBOURG CUSTOMS MUSEUM

After their safe arrival and pick-up from the hotel, the participants were brought to the Headquarter of the Luxembourgish Customs and Excise Administration.



They first assisted to a presentation of the sniffer dogs, then were shown the “scanner” lorry and visited the customs museum.





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The first day ended with welcome words from the Directorate and an enjoyable dinner buffet.





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4. BACKGROUND

During the conference in Vilnius, Ms Susanne Mehrkühler proposed to choose 'IACM in the past, present and future' as the theme for this conference.

All members agreed. It seemed a good idea to reflect on the existence of IACM as an organisation. Unfortunately, Ms Mehrkühler was not able to chair this working group.



For the preparations for this conference, two meetings were held in Luxembourg and Rotterdam.

The president thanked the members of this working group for their help and input. Special thanks went to the Luxembourg colleagues.

They had to do 'double' work besides the organisation of the conference: preparing presentations for tomorrow, organising the workshop and helping the board out with the questionnaire.

The President also expressed his gratitude to all the members who replied to the questionnaire. It shows their involvement with IACM and their willingness to continue working on the future of IACM.



Mr Alain Bellot, Director of the Luxembourg Customs and Excise Agency officially opens the 27th session of the IACM General Assembly.



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5. THE PAST – THE FOUNDING YEARS OF IACM 1993 - 1999

Presentation by Ferdinand HAMPL

Ferdinand Hampl, retired Austrian customs official and founder of the Austrian customs museum, recalled the beginnings of the International Association of Customs and Taxation Museums.

He received in the summer of 1993 a letter from the Danish customs administration with an invitation to a “European Customs museums conference” held in September in Copenhagen. He was very impressed by the meeting, which allowed him to meet other customs museums experts. He returned with new ideas for his museum in Austria and the feeling to be able to count on support from new international friends and colleagues in order to solve difficulties related to the customs museum.



Ferdinand recalled that after the meeting in 1993, the decision was taken that such conferences should take place once a year. This “virtual” decision marked the birth hour of IACM. From this moment onwards, the conferences followed in a yearly rhythm and IACM gained more and more members: 1994 the conference took place in Bordeaux, 1995 in Helsinki, 1996 in Rotterdam, 1997 in Liverpool, 1998 in Budapest and 1999 in Stockholm.

During these founding years, the structure of IACM was also officialised: Statutes and rules were written, the first board was established in 1996 and an honorary medal was created.

Before ending his presentation, Ferdinand emphasized that the most important feature of IACM is the exchange with likeminded colleagues.





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6. THE PRESENT 2008 – 2018

Presentation by Jean-Pierre REUTER

Jean-Pierre Reuter evoked the annual conferences since 2000. They took place in Antwerp, Baku, Bordeaux, Dublin, Hamburg (2x), Liverpool, Luxembourg (2x), Lugano, Oslo, Porto (2x), Prague, Rome, Rotterdam (2x), Vienna, Vilnius. An average of 15 countries participated in them.

They covered various topics reaching from sniffer dogs to safety and security in customs museums. A highlight was in 2000 when the IACM web page was born under the presidency of Loes Peperkorn. Luxembourg was responsible for its conception.



While reviewing the last 18 years of IACM, Jean-Pierre highlighted positive facts as the following points: new friends, visits of many customs museums, new inspirations and ideas, facilities in renting material from other customs museums, common exhibitions, notably at the WCO.

As difficulties, he underlined the lack of interest and non-attendance of conferences from certain countries as well as the lack of enthusiasm and budget to organize conferences.





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7. Successes and Challenges of IACM 1993 - 2019

Presentation by Janne NOKKI



In a short presentation, Jane Nokki highlighted the successes and challenges of IACM from 1993 till 2019.

- He started with the Danish initiative, dating back to 1993. This initiative, which aimed at bringing together all museums with a special interest in customs and taxation history in Copenhagen, underlined the value of cooperation between relevant museums and resulted in the founding of IACM. 3 years later, in Rotterdam, this willingness to cooperate was confirmed and IACM's statutes adopted. Those were purposely kept simple so that the access to membership remains easy and could be achieved on a global level. Currently, IACM counts 23 members around the globe, out of which half are active.
- Concerning the funding of IACM, an annual fee was agreed upon in 1998 in Budapest. This fee is currently set at 100 Euros. At times, members have encountered difficulties in paying it. Moreover, high conference costs have caused problems in the past and might continue to do so.
- The main aim for the outreach to the public, was to attract larger audiences (officers, media, decision-makers and general public), this goal exists since 1993. Hence, from 1996, a regular newsletter was produced and made public. In 1999, a website was developed, thanks to the help of the Luxembourgish Customs and Excise Administration. As a consequence, information about IACM and its activities are available online.. In order to reach an even larger public, a social media channel was created in 2014.



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- From the beginnings of IACM, much emphasis was put on joint exhibitions. Unfortunately, discussions were time-consuming and no agreement on common themes could be reached. Joint IACM exhibitions so far only took place in the framework of the WCO (2002: *A week in the Life of a Customs Officer*, 2012: *A common Heritage, a Common Destiny*). In this context, Jane Nokki however stressed that IACM provides and keeps providing an important network to get information and/or loan items for national exhibitions.
- Since 1996, the statutes mention that one of the aims of IACM is the improvement of standards. Over the years, many ideas were explored (e.g. cataloguing, establishing a Treaties Database, running an active discussion forum...) but their implementation proved so far to be too challenging.

Some Conclusions

- Firm and well-working institutional basis
- Some leave, some stay, others join in
- Website is easily accessible to maximum audience
- Joint Exhibitions too consuming?
- Developing technical standards too ambitious?
- Maintain a more general level, educational side?



IACM Conference, Luxembourg 17-19 September 2019

19.2.2020



Jane Nokki concluded that all in all, IACM has a firm and well-working institutional basis as well as an easily accessible website and can count on its members. He wondered if the ideas of joint exhibitions and of developing common technical standards should be dropped as they are too consuming and too ambitious. He argued in favor of further development of the educational side of IACM.



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8. THE FUTURE

Presentation by Marco PRETEMER

Marco Pretemer from the Luxembourgish customs museum, successor of Jean-Pierre Reuter, underlined how his interest in IACM was triggered when he was informed about Luxembourg hosting the annual conference. He quickly realized that IACM is built on the committed work of only a handful of individuals and he wanted to be part of it.

In his presentation, Marco stressed that while IACM members come from different countries and regions with different museums structures, they all share the same care and deep affection for their respective museums.



These values unite IACM members and create a strong bond among them. This bond is not only professional: strong friendship have indeed formed between members over the last 27 years.

Marco also emphasized that, after more than two decades, IACM needs to seek new ways to further strengthen the cooperation between its members.

The cooperation among members and the exchange of knowledge and expertise between them need to be upheld and reinforced over the coming decades.

The topic of this year's conference "Past, Present and Future of IACM" was therefore not chosen by coincidence.





9. OUTCOME OF THE WORKSHOP

This session dealt with the presentation of the answers to the survey on “IACM: Past, Present and Future”. 15 countries (Austria, Belgium, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland and the USA) participated.



- On the topic of the advantages/benefits obtained through the IACM membership, participants of the questionnaire stressed that IACM is an important platform to share knowledge, exchange expertise as well as ideas and establish contacts. It allows for great networking and establishing links between museum's collections. As concrete beneficial examples, participants mentioned the exchange of material and information, the joint projects and events, notably at the World Customs Organization, as well as the visits of each other's museum. IACM offers advantages in terms of promoting their museum and its image.
- On the communication and contacts between IACM members, participants underlined that IACM's website, the annual conference as well as the newsletter are useful. They considered the Facebook account less beneficial and emphasized that it was neither useless nor useful. To improve communication – both within IACM and with the public, participants suggested to modernize the website, use further digital communication tools (such as Instagram) and create more online content as well as display in every Customs Museum information about IACM.
- On joint cooperation and projects such as common events and exhibitions, 8 participants of the questionnaire showed interest, 4 were not interested. As possible projects, they mentioned, among others, joint publications, online/virtual exhibitions, monthly e-news as well as a permanent information stand at the WCO.



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- On the future IACM activities, participants stated that IACM could become more active and organize a common forum and/or exhibition as well as publish an essay handbook. They also wished for more communication, notably turning IACM's website into a center of resources. IACM membership should also be enlarged, including extending global membership. In the future, the IACM conference should also continue taking place (8 participants in favor). 3 respectively 2 participants also favored continuing the newsletter as well as the website.
- On the future goals of IACM, participants expressed, among others, the following statements:
 - "More personal contacts on every level (not only on the management level)"
 - "Continuing the information on the activities of the various museums"
 - "Raising awareness for common heritage in and outside of customs administrations"
 - "Attracting new members; supporting current members"
 - "Enhancing the international publicity and cooperation of IACM"
 - "Being more present and visible"
 - "Cooperation on a more structural basis – new life for working groups"
 - "More visibility of the history of the customs institutions"
 - "Reinforce the international representation of IACM"





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10. CULTURAL PROGRAM

The social program on Wednesday 18th of September included a visit to Luxembourg-City as well as to the “Moselle” valley, and more particularly to the village of Schengen.

The social program started with a city tour of Luxembourg-City. The tour was accompanied by a local guide. It gave participants the opportunity to discover the city from a personal angle. They set foot in the old town, its fortress as well as the Bock promontory. During their visit, they also passed the impressive Grand-Ducal Palace.



The city-tour ended with a visit of the futuristic district of Kirchberg: Participants admired Kirchberg’s audacious buildings as well as the European Court of Justice and several other European institutions.





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The social program then continued with a trip to the “Moselle” valley. Participants visited the village of Schengen at the border triangle of Luxembourg, Germany and France.

This village, synonym of a Europe without borders, hosts a museum dedicated to the history and significance of the different Schengen agreements.



Participants seized the opportunity and toured the museum with a guide.





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After the visit of the museum, participants went to the wine cellar “Stronck-Pinnel” in Greiveldange.

While walking through the domaine, they had the opportunity to take a brief insight into the production area and to taste several local wines.



The evening then finished with a typical dinner in the winery offered by the Luxembourg Customs and Excise Administration.



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For those participants who had the opportunity to stay until Friday the 20th of September, the social program included a participation at the Patron Saint Matthew event.



Saint Matthew is the patron of the Luxembourgish Customs and Excise agency. Participants witnessed the placing of a wreath at the Golden Lady statue at the Constitution Square as well as a solemn mass held at the cathedral Notre-Dame of Luxembourg to honor Saint Matthew.



After the mass, participants enjoyed a reception as well as a lunch.



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11. IACM Conference 2020 Hamburg



- ❖ The 28th IACM Conference is taking place in Hamburg from the 23rd until 25th of September 2020
- ❖ The final theme has not yet been set; provisionally envisaged is “Living History”
- ❖ Further organisational details will be communicated at a later stage
- ❖ For any queries, Mr. Christopher Howarth from the German Customs Museum can be contacted under the following address: Christopher.Howarth@zoll.bund.de