

## Museum Registration in Austria

---

In Austria, the term “museum” is not protected by law and is not subject to any restrictions. Each institution and each employee makes a **voluntary commitment** to abide by the “ICOM – Code of Ethics” and to apply these guidelines consciously and carefully in their daily museum work.

*These guidelines define the museum as „a non-profit making permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment“.*

The competent Austrian authorities for museums have joined together to form the ARGE Bundesländerplattform (Association of the Federal Provinces for Promoting Museums) to jointly develop supra-regional and national quality assurance projects for museums.

The museum registration system was designed as a first step and stocktaking measure to distinguish between museums which meet the ICOM definition and regard themselves bound by it from other cultural or museum-like institutions and bodies<sup>1</sup>.

Members of **ARGE Bundesländerplattform** are

- Austrian Museums Association
- Jury of the Museum Seal of Quality

as well as the following organisations in alphabetical order of the federal states:

- Burgenland: Landesmuseum Burgenland (Burgenland Provincial Museum)
- Carinthia: Office of the Provincial Government of Carinthia. Centre of Competence for Education, Generations and Culture in cooperation with the Bund Kärntner Museen (Association of Carinthian Museums)
- Lower Austria: Museumsmanagement Niederösterreich (Museum Management Lower Austria)
- Salzburg: Landesverband Salzburger Museen und Sammlungen (Salzburg Provincial Association of Museums and Collections) in cooperation with the Province of Salzburg, Office of Culture, Department of Folk Culture
- Styria: MUSIS – Steirischer Museumsverband (MUSIS – Styrian Museums Association) in cooperation with the Province of Styria, Department of Folk Culture
- Tyrol: Service Department for Museums in the Culture Department of the Office of the Provincial Government of Tyrol in cooperation with the Tiroler Landesmuseen (Provincial Museums of Tyrol)
- Upper Austria: Verbund oberösterreichischer Museen (Association of Upper Austrian Museums)
- Vorarlberg: Province of Vorarlberg
- Vienna: Museumsbund Österreich (Austrian Museums Association) in cooperation with Wien Museum (Vienna Museum)

as well as

- ICOM Österreich

The museum registration system is a **sign of quality** for sustainable and deliberate museum work and should serve as a guide to help authorities and decision-makers as well as visitors recognize high-quality museum work. The Austrian Museum Seal of Quality honours particularly outstanding museum work.

---

<sup>1</sup> These include private museums without any long-term legal protection; monuments; institutions with only temporary exhibitions; science centers; visitor centers (for example, nature parks or zoos without their own collection); random groups of heterogeneous objects without a clear connection to a specific discipline; groups of similar objects without a clear connection to a specific discipline or educational purpose (for instance, beer mat collections); sales shows connected to a specific discipline but for commercial purposes; purely didactic or informative exhibitions without a collection as a clear connection to a specific discipline and without expert or scientific supervision or treatment of the objects; and purely research collections which are not accessible to the public on a regular basis.

The list of registered museums is also a valuable tool for the competent Austrian authorities for museums in their quality assurance work. It helps them to provide assistance in obtaining the Austrian Museum Seal of Quality and to adapt their range of consulting, further education and training in accordance with the needs and issues of Austrian museums.

Additionally, the list of registered museums can serve in the future as the basis of internationally comparable statistics on Austrian museums.

Those institutions that are not museums and thus pursue other objectives also play a valuable role in promoting culture in the region. As always, the competent Austrian authorities for museums also provide these institutions with services, networking, information, and general support.

For registering, 18 yes or no questions have been developed, which help to determine whether a particular museum meets the ICOM definition of a museum. This questionnaire must be repeated every three years.

These questions can be divided into three areas:

- *The museum and its collection*
- *The museum and its visitors*
- *Sound legal and financial foundation*

### **The museum and its collection**

---

At the heart of every museum is its collection, which determines the nature of the museum as an institution. Documenting, researching, expanding and presenting the collection, as well as communicating the knowledge contained within it to the public, are the main tasks of museums; safeguarding and preserving the cultural heritage for future generations their long-term goal.

Registered museums feel particularly obliged to fulfilling these tasks.

According to the ICOM definition, museums are responsible for appropriately housing the collections entrusted to them, conserving and storing them as well and as safely as possible and documenting them. Maintaining an analog or digital list of holdings is one of the essential tasks and responsibilities of museum work; comprehensive information must be kept on the entire holdings of collections, their origin and their condition. In addition, museums, according to the ICOM definition, must also strive to make as complete an inventory as possible of the exhibits found on the holdings list.

A museum inventory not only includes the basic information of the holdings list, but also detailed documentation of the item in the collection. Guidelines for the documenting of objects are available from CIDOC – International Committee for Documentation<sup>2</sup>. Without knowledge of the collection and its exhibits, scholarly research by museum employees or third parties would not be possible.

### **The museum and its visitors**

---

The public presentation of the museum's collection in the form of a permanent exhibition and, wherever possible, also as part of special exhibitions and/or events is another key task of museums. Museums preserve the cultural heritage of a region/society and are thus committed to making the collection accessible to the public. To ensure this, regular, publicly available opening hours are needed. In addition, museums, according to the ICOM definition, should aim to make the museum available to all walks of society through a broadly designed educational program.

---

<sup>2</sup> CIDOC – International Committee for Documentation: <http://network.icom.museum/cidoc>

## Sound legal and financial foundation

---

Museums safeguard and preserve the cultural heritage for future generations, which primarily means protecting the collection through legal protection against sale, clarifying the use of the collection by potential third parties, as well as ensuring as far as possible the continued operation of the museum.

The competent Austrian authorities for museums are the point of contact in each federal province for information and advice concerning museum registration, the museum seal of quality and any other issues and challenges of daily museum work.

Thanks to the financial support of  
BUNDESKANZLERAMT  ÖSTERREICH

KULTUR

as well as



For further information or if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Museumsbund Österreich  
Mag. Sabine Fauland, MBA  
Mariahilferstraße 2  
8020 Graz  
 +43 676 635 32 48  
 [info@museumsbund.at](mailto:info@museumsbund.at)  
 [www.museumsbund.at](http://www.museumsbund.at)