

Warsaw, March 15, 2022

Dear Colleagues, Dear Friends,

One year since the war started, ICOM Poland would like to report on the grant activities undertaken by our National Committee to help museum professionals from Ukraine who happened to find themselves in Poland as refugees as result of the Russian Federation aggression on their country.

The attack on Ukraine took place on February 24, 2022. Ukraine is Poland's neighbor and we share the longest border in our country, over 535 km long. Thus it was not surprising that Poland welcomed millions of refugees fleeing from the war zones bombarded by Russian rockets and bombs. Civilians and city infrastructure were - and still are - one of the main targets of this onslaught.

The board of ICOM Poland decided immediately on that February to extend as much help to our Ukrainian colleagues as we could. However, although our National Committee has been active since 1948, it became a registered NGO only two years ago; we did not have necessary finances nor our own office support to carry out what we planned. At the same time a group of Polish museums launched a campaign of material assistance to Ukrainian cultural institutions, to be subsequently joined by the alliance of Heritage Departments in Polish cities and the National Institute of Heritage. ICOM Poland, not having the necessary logistic infrastructure decided to focus on direct help to Ukrainian museum personnel that found refuge in Poland. Most if not all of them were women, often with their children. We wanted to provide them with three-month grants of ca. 1 000 EURO p/m and some support from the Polish museum milieu.

Our task was to identify the needy, create a trilingual micro-office and gather necessary funds. The main asset we had was the international network; Polish citizens were providing monumental, spontaneous help throughout the first months, thus we decided to launch a fund-raising campaign mainly abroad. Our ICOM Secretariat infallibly and quickly offered a launch grant of 6 000 EURO that helped us to establish the temporary office (one person and equipment) – already by March 11. Director General Peter Keller, Head of Heritage Protection, Sophie Delepierre with the blessing from ICOM President Alberto Garlandini were extremely supportive during these first weeks.

A mini-site “#helpukraine” has been established (<https://icom-poland.mini.icom.museum/stypendia-informacje/>) and the necessary organizational and legal framework has been set up. The call to apply for grants and the fund-raising calls were launched. With the help of our growing network in Ukraine and Poland first applications started to come in by April – May. The grant committee members were: Anastasiia Cherednychenko (ICOM Ukraine vice-chair), Piotr Cywiński (Auschwitz – Birkenau Museum director), Agnieszka Morawińska (former Warsaw National Museum director), Tetyana Filevska (Ukrainian Institute creative director) - and Robert Kotowski (ICOM Poland vice-chair) as the head of grant committee.

Our fund-raising campaign focused on the ICOM network and the museum world. We sent out letters, communiqués and participated in numerous online events, invited by our colleagues from Europe, USA, Asia and Australia. Considerable finances were collected throughout the seven months of the campaign; precise figures are listed below. Our activity was generously supported both by institutions, associations as well as individuals. A list of institutional donors is to be found below; we were not authorized by individual donors to disclose their names. Same goes for the grantees – altogether we were able to distribute grants to 15 persons (see below), of whom some are still living in Poland today.

List of institutions that supported the grant program:

We have to name firstly the initial support provided by ICOM Secretariat (Emergency Grant) that helped us to set up the whole action. Our gratitude goes to the British Museums Association which donated a substantial amount of grants and awarded our grantees honorary membership. Very generous help was provided also by Musée d'art Moderne, d'art Contemporain et d'art Brut (Lille), The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Museum Des Landes Glarus (Näfels), Museo di storia dell'agricoltura (Milano), Sindikat Vzgoje, Izobraževanja, Znanosti In Kulture Slovenije (Ljubljana), DANTEX (Warszawa) and our friends from ICOM Latvia and ICOM Estonia. Funding came also from individual museum professionals from France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Latvia, Slovenia, Switzerland, USA and Poland.

Finances collected:

Collected	Amount	Total in PLN
PLN	8 000,00	8 000,00 zł
USD	5 707,22	25 265,62 zł
EUR	35 644,19	162 023,95 zł
		195 289,57 zł (as of February 2023)

Number of awarded grants:

We have spent 181.000 PLN in the form of humanitarian help (over 38.500 EURO as of 15.03.2023).

Help, usually in the form of 3-month grants were awarded to 15 persons, all women. All but one received 12.000 PLN – and all resided in Poland until November 2022. Most of the grantees were employed in one or another in museums or other cultural institutions. Some of the grantees are still residents in Poland while others returned to Ukraine.

The grantees of ICOM Poland/#helpukraine grants resided in various Polish towns and townships: Warszawa, Kraków, Słupsk, Gdańsk, Ząbki, Wołomin, Konin, Nowe Iganie, Korytow, Płock, Niałek Wielki, Kostrzyzna nad Odrą, Lublin, Radom.

We want to thank everyone on behalf of the grantees and our team, for your help and your trust in this spontaneous, perhaps not most professionally led program. Not only we have encountered warmth, empathy and real desire to help, but also made new friends and formed strong bonds within the museum network. Some of our donors, such as the British Museums Association provided help for numerous grantees. Altogether this has been one of the most important experiences for our ICOM community in Poland and it proved the human, ethical value of the ICOM network to be one of its key assets.

The unjust war waged by the Russian Federation on Ukraine continues; whole cities with their cultural infrastructure are being razed to ruins. Although the grant campaign is over and our resources dried up, ICOM Poland will continue to provide assistance to our Ukrainian friends, neighbors and the Ukrainian institutions of culture.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Piotr Rypson', with a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

Piotr Rypson, Chair

For the Board of ICOM Poland

Jolanta Gumula

Piotr Górajec

Robert Kotowski

Jarosław Suchan

Joanna Wasilewska

Hanna Wróblewska