

REGULATION OF OPEN PHILATELY CLASS

Dr. Witold Mikołajczyk, Delegate Polish Philatelist Union Open Philately Commission of FIP, writes:

I'm glad that the meanderings of the Open Class are becoming the subject of lively discussion. Two articles were published in FEPA News No 40.[1] Mrs Birthe King then gave a presentation at the HUNFILEX 2022 exhibition on „Open Philately and the Importance of the Non-Philatelic Material” [2], and another text was published in FEPA News No 41 by Mr Chris King on “Emerging from the Dark: Postal History and Open Philately at European Exhibitions”. [3]

I would like to comment on some points that in my opinion weren't noticed or are so obvious that they have not received attention in the discussion. First, I draw attention to the idea present in the Guidelines for Open Philately [4] which state that:

“Open Philately seeks to broaden the range of exhibiting and to allow philatelists to include objects from other collecting fields in support of, and in order to develop, an understanding of the philatelic material shown. /.../ By allowing an extended range of material Open Philately has the further objective of bringing new collectors to the skill and enjoyment of exhibiting and demonstrating its attractiveness as a hobby.”

The provision of the regulations regarding the participation of philatelic material in Open Class exhibits don't raise any doubts – including:

“3.1 All types of philatelic material included in all other exhibiting categories (see SREVs).”

“3.4 The philatelic items must be described in the proper philatelic terms, as they would have been in a similar Traditional, Postal History, Thematic or any other exhibit.”

In regard to the participation of non-philatelic material in an exhibit, the provisions of the regulations concerning diversity are understandable. The Guidelines say:

“2.2 It is not a requirement that the non-philatelic material comprises half of the exhibit, but the variety of the non-philatelic material will influence the judging of ‘Treatment’ as well as ‘Material’.”

“3.2 Non-philatelic material may include all types of items, excluding dangerous or prohibited material. Non-philatelic items must be relevant to the chosen subject and serve to illustrate it.”

“3.5 The non-philatelic items must be described and be relevant and assist the development of the exhibit.”

“7.3.2 It is expected that exhibitors exploit the possibilities available with the use of non-philatelic material in the development of the topic, and that they use a variety of non-philatelic material and not just postcards and other pictorial matter.”

In the structure of the exhibit I have created on „Bojanowo Commune – my little homeland” there is 53% philatelic material and 47% varied non-philatelic material including 26 groups of objects like: documents, maps, photos, badges and coins. Is that enough variety?

I would also like to comment on Point 7 in the regulations on Condition and Rarity which states:

“7.2.1. All philatelic material must be original”,

But, in regard to non-philatelic material, it says:

“7.3.1 All non-philatelic material, including photographs, should be original where at all possible.

As Open Philately is first and foremost a philatelic class, I consider it is not legitimate to allow non-philatelic material to be posted in the form of copies, scans or other forms of reproduction. Behind the creation of Open Class Philately was an idea to interest multi-collectors in philately and to increase the attractiveness of exhibits. The wording of Para 7.3.1 allows for the inclusion of a copy in the exhibit with an indication of its source. In my opinion non-philatelic material should also be original.

The argument is heard that copies of non-philatelic material can be used when the genuine items will not fit in exhibition sheets due to size, but this raises doubts. Showing material that is not original in exhibits breaks rules and the entire tradition of philatelic exhibitions. After all, every collector has more material than it would be possible to place on only 80 sheets. The regulation allowing for the introduction of copies could lead to the devaluation of this class.

Another suggestion for changing the guidelines refers to the synopsis. Due to the limited space in the exhibit and brief descriptions, it would be reasonable to include in the Open Class regulations an obligation on the author of the exhibit to prepare a synopsis. The beginning of a new class always tests the boundaries. A synopsis attached to the exhibit would provide a form of guide for judges. Additional information can be provided about the rarity and uniqueness of the non-philatelic material shown. The extended version of the synopsis would become an additional tool allowing judges to make an objective assessment of the value of the non-philatelic material shown in the Open Class exhibit.

In conclusion. As an exhibitor in the Open Class, I am showing a selection of sheets from my exhibit "Bojanowo Commune – my little homeland" with only original non-philatelic material.



References:

[1] B. King, OPEN PHILATELY – The Past and the Future

W. Mikołajczyk, Can we appreciate Non-Philatelic material properly in Open Philately exhibits?

FEPA News Nr.40, January 2022, Pages 43-49 – <https://fepanews.com/fepanews-40-jan-2022/>

[2] Presentation B. King, Open Philately and the Importance of the Non-Philatelic Material

(2 April 2022 - HUNFILEX 2022) <https://www.dropbox.com/s/mogf33i5kttqccj/FEPA%20Seminar%20HUNFILEX2022%20Open%20Philately.pdf?dl=0>

[3] Ch. King, Emerging from the Dark: Postal History and Open Philately at European Exhibitions

FEPA News Nr.41, July 2022, Pages 45–49 - https://fepanews.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FEPA%20News%20Magazine_Issue41.pdf

[4] <https://www.f-i-p.ch/wp-content/uploads/OPEN-PHILATELY-Guidelines-2018-Sofia.pdf> – witold.mikolajczyk@gmail.com