

Newsletter

Autumn 2025



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Dear members,

It is that time of the year when natural cycles and longer evenings invite us to slow down and recover after an active outward-oriented summer time. We hope that relaxing on a couch with a cup of tea while reading stories in this edition will provide the perfect setting to contemplate our professional role and our own potential yet to be discovered.

In these pages, you'll find houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina that speak of centuries of resilience. One cannot help to think how long they will remain resilient without being given a purpose and institutional attention, so it is good to highlight their uniqueness and draw attention especially for the local community to take ownership.

When have you last had a chance to really stargaze? Dark skies are not only becoming a rare feature in our illuminated nights, but they are a carrier of our perhaps most globally shared intangible cultural heritage. All tribes and nations share a spiritual wonder about the night sky, theoretical knowledge to understand it and a practical skill to manage much of our lives by the stars. An article summarises one of the most inspiring webinars which you can find through your IE website membership profile to watch if you missed it.

If the news hasn't already reached you, all live interpretation enthusiasts will be happy to learn that IE has adopted and formalised a newly developed 2-day Module on Live Interpretation (MLI) that can be booked through one of the qualified IE trainers. Read the article to learn about its content.

Don't miss the updates on the development of the training programme on participatory heritage practices on which IE experts work within the Erasmus+ funded project. And since we are big about cocreation, you should block the date for our upcoming symposium on Learning landscapes, and our annual conference in Portugal! Lots of things on the horizon and all the relevant announcements will follow up later this autumn.

As always, a series of reports from our training events convey enthusiasm and inspiration, this time from Greece, Croatia and Kosovo. You'll also hear the voices of members who bring heritage to life in vivid and surprising ways — from almshouse residents in Bergen to Romans at Stobi.

Stories from the field from our members are priceless for our community. They help us to get inspired and learn about what others are doing, perhaps they also encourage us to see unused potential in our own work. They remind us that interpretation is, at its heart, about connection. With place, with each other, and with the values that carry us forward.

Enjoy reading! And share your own stories too in our next edition!

With warm greetings,

Helena Vičič, IE Managing Director

Kula Hasanbegovića and Semizova Kula

Edo Mesic (Bosnia & Herzegovina)

The story of two ancient houses standing as witnesses of social and cultural history, and reminding us of our place in the historical chain.

South of Ilidža in Bosnia and Herzegovina, below the famous Olympic mountain Igman, lies the suburban settlement of Hrasnica. It was first mentioned in the Ottoman census of 1455 as a village of 40 households. The area was known as home to a number of residences of prominent Sarajevo families. Among them, two notable houses have survived to this day: Hasanbegovića Kula and the Semizova Kula, locally known as kule.

Old houses are some of the last material witnesses of the social fabric that once characterised this area. Their architectural form and spatial organisation embody traditional Bosnian ways of living, while also reflecting the values and norms of past communities. From a heritological perspective, such houses are not merely physical structures; they are carriers of memory and identity. Although modest in scale, they form part of a wider cultural landscape that deserves both recognition and protection. Safeguarding them is, therefore, not only a matter of architectural preservation, but also of affirming continuity and cultural pride. These houses remind us that heritage is a continuum: others lived before us, and others will live after us. In this way, they speak not only of the past, but also of our place within a much larger historical chain.

The first house, the Kula Hasanbegovića, was most likely erected at the turn of the 18th to the 19th century. Archival records confirm its existence in 1817, when the estate of mula Abdulah Burek was inventoried after his death. Oral tradition from the Hasanbegović family recalls that the house originally belonged to the Rustembegović family before passing into Hasanbegović ownership in the late 19th century. Architecturally, it was an almost square structure, consisting of a ground floor and two upper levels. The ground floor served as a storeroom (magaza). Above it were living quarters, including a halvat (main room), a kitchen, and storage spaces. The upper floor featured spacious wooden balconies (čardaks) and a high pyramidal roof once covered with wooden shingles. Built of dressed stone bound with lime mortar and reinforced with oak beams (hatule),

the house displayed both strength and refinement. A semi-circular stone arch crowned its large wooden entrance doors, while carved inscriptions (tarih) once recorded its construction.



Kula Hasanbegovića (Image: Edo Mesic)

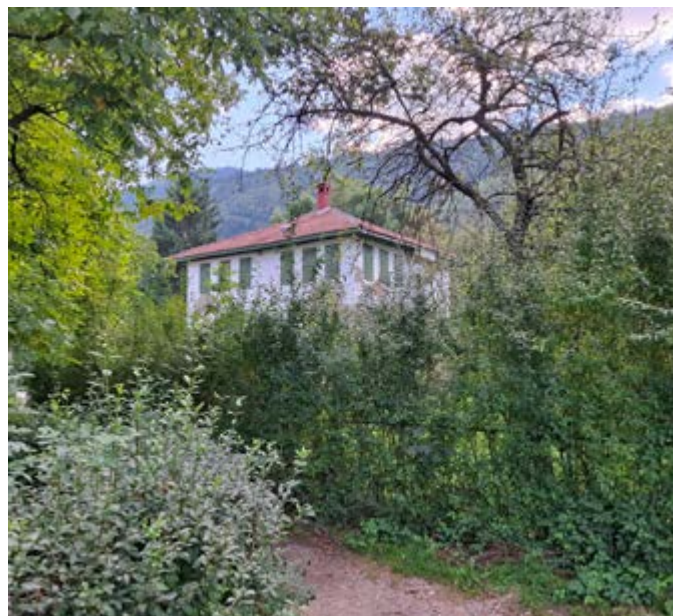
A short distance from the first house stands the Semizova Kula (formerly Turhanija House). Historical records note it in 1889 as part of the estate of hadži Mustafabeg Turhanija of Sarajevo. In 1896, the property changed hands several times before it was acquired by the Semiz family, who maintained it throughout the 20th century. This house also demonstrates a mix of residential and practical functions. Its massive ground floor of cobbled stone, open space with few windows, and stabling facilities highlights its practical role, while the upper floors contained living rooms with wooden cupboards (musandare), built-in shelves, seating platforms (minderi), and even early heating systems with clay stoves. A wooden veranda (kamerija) on the second floor, together with large windows and Austro-Hungarian style doors introduced during later renovations, reflects changing architectural influences. The Semizova Kula is recognised as a National Monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Today, these houses stand as some of the oldest surviving structures in Hrasnica. Once symbols of status, security, and adaptation to the local environment, they are now silent witnesses of social history. Weathered walls and traces of graffiti reveal the challenges of heritage preservation, while their endurance illustrates resilience. Interpreting them does not only mean recounting their architecture

or owners. It is about recognising how such houses embody the transition from feudal estates to modern communities, how they mirror the shifts in land ownership, and how they illustrate resilience within a turbulent historical context.

These houses of Hrasnica, among the oldest, if not the oldest, surviving residential buildings in the area, represent a rare and tangible link to Sarajevo's historical and social development. Their preservation is crucial not only for architectural study but also for understanding patterns of land ownership, family lineage, and daily life in the region from the Ottoman period through the 19th century. As scarce examples of this building typology, they provide invaluable insights into local craftsmanship, construction techniques, and adaptive strategies to the environment. Protecting and interpreting such structures underscores the broader significance of heritage: to maintain continuity of memory, foster identity, and inspire appreciation for cultural landscapes that are increasingly vulnerable to urban expansion and neglect.

Edo Mesic is former Country Coordinator Bosnia for Interpret Europe. Currently, he is a freelance archeologist, interested in GIS, heritage interpretation, heritology, landscape archeology and cultural landscape. Edo can be contacted at: edomesic0@gmail.com.



Semizova Kula (Images: Edo Mesic)

Empaths training programme takes shape

Alexander Colvine (France)

Empaths turns its focus on the structure and content for a pilot training programme on participatory HI for heritage professionals.

The Empaths project partners from Germany, Austria/Slovenia, Italy and Greece met in Athens on 18-19 September for the second in-person transnational project meeting, hosted by HERITAGE. Almost one year into the project, the goal of a pilot training programme to initiate heritage professionals in the principles and practice of participatory heritage interpretation (HI) is on the horizon.

Of course, participatory heritage interpretation is not new to many interpreters. Indeed, IE has been refining its approach through value-based HI over much of the last ten years but professionals in the wider heritage sector are still largely unfamiliar with it and/or suffer from a lack of capacity and resources to practice it. Empaths allows IE to further enrich its approach to participatory HI by collaborating with partners in a wide range of social, cultural and geographical settings to test a training programme involving both heritage professionals and local communities interpreting their heritage together.

The project began by gathering experiences, advice and visions of participatory practice worldwide from expert heritage interpreters and from non-heritage professionals such as, for example, community development and civic mediation specialists. Now, the challenge is to devise an inventive and inspiring combination of methods and tools that will form a pilot online and on-site training programme in principles and practice of participatory HI. Geared to local and national heritage professionals, the online training will draw on HERITAGE's extensive experience in virtual learning to prepare the trainees for on-site 'community labs' where they will work with local people to interpret together specially selected sites or places that have a significance to the local communities in Thrace, the cross-border Karavanken/Karavanke Geopark and the Campi Flegrei archaeological park in the Bay of Naples.

European projects are teeming with free training courses, so how can we make the Empaths offer attractive and worthwhile to busy heritage professionals with precious little time? That challenge was ably taken up by IE colleagues, Claudia Grünberg and Sebastian Zoepp, both skilled practitioners in value-based heritage interpretation and community building. Drawing on their experience, research conducted by Empaths and guidance from some leading personalities in the field, Claudia Grünberg presented a methodological framework and an outline for the future training curriculum and syllabus to be tested in the three pilot territories mentioned above.

The training programme is built on six basic tenets related to the 2005 Faro Convention:

- Everyone has the right and capacity to interpret
- Participatory HI fosters democratic and inclusive societies
- Community participation is central to inclusive and emancipatory HI
- Participatory HI is done with communities, not for them
- Interpreters become facilitators when practicing participatory HI
- Ethical principles must guide all participatory HI processes

The online training will comprise a short series of recorded materials supplemented by live exercises and exchange. Subjects covered include the fundamentals of participatory HI, community mapping, co-creating narratives, organisation and facilitation skills, participatory planning and sustaining engagement. The on-site 'community labs' will turn the principles learned online into practice at a carefully chosen site with significance for the local community. Here, the heritage professionals will work with local community participants to jointly interpret the qualities of the site and formulate themes and narratives, ideally for a concrete project such as a discovery trail or even an interpretive plan or strategy. To that end, it is vital that the on-site training has a tangible benefit for the local community, especially when it comes to sustaining initiatives after the pilot training ends.

The methodological framework for the Empaths training programme is being finalised and will be uploaded to the Empaths website soon while the partners will continue their work to assemble and assess the training materials from now until the New Year. The pilot training courses will begin with the online module for heritage professionals in late

spring 2026 while the on-site 'community labs' are scheduled for after the summer holiday period, again in 2026.

For further details on the Empaths project and to view the results so far, go to <https://empaths-project.eu> and click on the links to follow the latest news on social media.

Alexander (Sandy) Colvine is IE's Project Manager for the Empaths and HI-People projects. He can be contacted at: alexander.colvine@interpret-europe.net.



Empaths project team meeting in Athens (Image: Kiriakidis)

Dark skies as heritage

Vasilka Dimitrovska (North Macedonia)

A review of a recent IE webinar, highlighting its relevance to our profession and future preservation of our shared culture.

When I think of the night sky as heritage, Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night* immediately comes to mind. Its swirling heavens are more than art — they carry emotion, spirituality, and even science.

Recent studies suggest Van Gogh's brushstrokes mirror the mathematics of turbulence, discovered decades later. For me, this shows why the night sky matters: it is emotional, cultural, and scientific at once. It provokes wonder, raises questions, and connects us with something larger than ourselves. That is exactly what heritage interpretation can do with dark skies today — transform something we take for granted into meaning and value.

I recently joined the webinar *How can we preserve the natural night sky as our heritage and create meaningful connection with it?* by Etta Dannemann, founder of Visit Dark Skies, and Kirsi Hyvaerinen, a leader in sustainable tourism. Organised as part of Interpret Europe's regular webinar programme and open to members for free as well as to non-members for a fee, the webinar highlighted ways regions and tourism hosts can protect the night sky by creating and promoting guided stargazing experiences, especially in areas where darkness still prevails.

These experiences not only reconnect visitors with nature but also offer a meaningful alternative in tourism — one that raises awareness of light pollution while celebrating a vanishing treasure.

What stood out for me

The night sky is more than a natural resource. It is also intangible cultural heritage. For centuries, people created myths, calendars, and navigation systems by observing the stars. Losing access to a starry sky means losing part of this shared human story.

I see clear opportunities for heritage interpretation:

- Storytelling under the stars — linking constellations to local myths and traditions.
- Gamified experiences — quests, riddles, and cultural games inspired by the night sky.
- Educational programmes — combining science, sustainability, and cultural meaning for schools and team-building.
- Festivals and events — celebrating dark skies as both natural and cultural heritage.



Archaeoastronomical site Kokino
(Image: Robert Atanasovski)

Key strategies from the webinar

With light pollution increasing by almost 10% per year worldwide, preserving dark skies has never been more urgent. The speakers emphasised:

- Developing ready-to-use activities — stargazing that is accessible, weather-proof, and leaves lasting impressions.
- Focusing on remote areas — where light pollution is low and the night sky is an underused cultural and natural asset.
- Promoting ecotourism — using stargazing to create engaging experiences that benefit local hosts and the environment.
- Encouraging connection — helping visitors reconnect with nature, with the planet, and with themselves.

Why it matters now

On a personal level, this resonates strongly. In Macedonia lies Kokino, a Bronze Age archaeoastronomical site and proposed ancient observatory. Through its stone markers, people once observed celestial phenomena vital for agriculture and ritual life.

Kokino reminds us that looking at the sky has always been more than curiosity. It was a way to survive, to organise society, and to connect with the cosmos. Linking such sites with today's interpretive practices underlines that dark skies are not only natural heritage, but also cultural legacy.

The stars are still above us. Through interpretation, storytelling, and creative experiences, we can bring them back into our lives — ensuring they remain a source of wonder and inspiration for generations to come.

Dive in! – All IE webinars are free for members to attend and you can access all the recordings of previous webinars from the members' area of the website:

<https://members.interpret-europe.net/login/>

Vasilka Dimitrovska is an IE certified interpretive trainer. She can be contacted at: dimitrovska@haemus.org.mk.

An educational experience that motivates and unites

Vasiliki P. Lappa (Greece)

Greek mountain villages, with distinctive traditional architecture of local stone and wood, can offer much more than just a tourist attraction.

I was born and raised in the mountains of South Pindos, in Evrytania. I have been working for more than two decades in education, specialising in environmental and cultural education in primary and secondary schools. I perceive forests, rivers, and mountain communities as unified living spaces, where cultural heritage unites people, strengthens communities, and inspires actions for a shared sustainable future.

One of the most interesting and challenging aspects of my work in terms of communication is the ecological and cultural interpretation of both the university's research fields and, more broadly, the mountain ranges and the activities they support, such as livestock farming, agroforestry, and small-scale traditional activities such as logging, hunting, and gathering herbs, fruits, and mushrooms.

With this background and motivation to strengthen my communication skills, I participated in the Interpret Europe Certified Interpretive Writer (CIW) course held in Zagori from August 25-29, 2025. The course was hosted in the old Girls' School of Kato Pedina (built in 1902).

During the training, we worked in the field and in the classroom, individually and in groups, practicing the use of interpretation principles as a means of transforming visitors' experience of a place into something personally meaningful, while also cultivating their critical thinking and allowing them to make connections to universal values, such as respect and sustainability. We were given various opportunities to experiment with different types of writing (haiku, interpretive signs, audiovisual interpretation, etc.) with the ultimate goal of being able to design interpretive signs for specific elements of the natural and cultural heritage of each place we know well.

As our trainer aptly stated: "We learn how to bring words to life in order to present the nature and culture of our region through texts. In this way, Zagori becomes a link to the past and an inspiration for the future."

I congratulate and thank the organisers and the bodies that supported them, both for the excellent training we received on the interpretation of the natural and cultural environment, and for daring to do so in mountain communities that are not at the centre of tourist traffic. The communities of Kato Pedina and Koukouli Zagori supported our educational experience holistically with the authenticity and breadth of their thematic fields.

As a new member of the Interpret Europe community, I feel that I share common ideals and communication tools in the service of the natural and cultural heritage of the Mediterranean and the whole world! After graduation, we are not just colleagues, but partners and friends, continuing our creative collaboration.

Vasiliki has studied educational science, forestry and ecology. As a researcher at the Department of Forestry and Natural Environment Management at the Agricultural University of Athens in Karpenisi, she supports research projects on the resilience of forest and agroforest ecosystems, focusing on old growth forests, dendrochronology and forest soil science (<https://agroforestry.dasologia.gr/>). Vasiliki can be contacted at: vaslappa@aua.gr.



Course participants motivated to interact and inspire visitors, and remain collaborative friends
(Images: Dimitris Ioannidis)

Inspiring journey into heritage interpretation

Lana Skender & Marta Borić Cvenić (Croatia)

Through rain, sun, and teamwork, we learned to see heritage anew, crafting stories, signs, and skills for meaningful interpretation.

The Interpret Europe Certified Interpretive Writer (CIW) course held at the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek, Croatia, and organised by the Center for Cultural Heritage, brought together university teachers engaged in the field of cultural heritage. It was an intensive and demanding programme, but one that proved to be deeply rewarding and transformative.

Over the course of several days, we were challenged not only intellectually but also physically. Rain or shine, we worked tirelessly towards a shared goal: to create a single interpretive panel that would embody the principles we had been learning. The process was not always easy, but it was precisely the persistence and effort that made the experience so valuable.

What stood out most was the fresh perspective we gained on heritage phenomena. Instead of looking at heritage through a traditional academic lens, we were encouraged to step into the shoes of our future visitors and users. This shift in perspective, placing the audience at the heart of interpretation, was eye-opening. It reminded us that heritage is not only about objects, sites, or history, but about the meaningful stories we can craft to connect people with them.

Storytelling was at the centre of the course, teaching us how to weave narratives that bring cultural phenomena to life. We practiced interpreting within contexts that highlight meaning rather than just facts. Working in pairs and groups fostered a strong sense of collaboration and mutual support. Peer reviews of our work provided invaluable feedback, sparking new ideas and motivating us to refine our approaches.

At the end of the course, the interpretive panel we produced was more than just a sign, it was a testament to teamwork, resilience, and the new knowledge we had gained. For many of us, it symbolised the transition from thinking about heritage as a subject to be studied to experiencing heritage as a story.

The Osijek course not only equipped us with practical skills but also renewed our inspiration for teaching and professional practice. It reminded us that interpretation is not simply about transferring knowledge, but about creating connections that make heritage relevant, engaging, and alive.

Many heartfelt thanks to the wonderful professional IE trainers for their immense enthusiasm, dedication, passion, and love for heritage interpretation, which they successfully passed on to us during this truly intensive and commendable course. Their ability to balance rigorous expectations with encouragement and joy made a lasting impression. You succeeded in awakening our poetic soul, so much so that even today, verses about certain phenomena still linger in our minds. The memories will stay with us forever, as will the invaluable knowledge you managed to implant in us in such a short time. There was plenty of work, laughter, but also unique shared moments born from the beautiful heritage we interpreted together.

To anyone wishing to deepen their knowledge of heritage, we can wholeheartedly recommend this course, as it will open up new perspectives and perhaps even awaken a hidden talent within you, just as it did for us.

Lana Skender is an assistant professor at the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek, Croatia. You can get in touch with her at lanaskndr@gmail.com.

Marta Borić is an assistant professor at the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek, Croatia. You can get in touch with her at marta.boric5@gmail.com.



The course participants celebrate
(Image: Cultural Heritage Center Archive)

Have you heard of Ulpiana, the ancient city in Kosovo?

Gresa Kelmendi (Kosovo)

Cultural heritage professionals gathered to share their ideas and learn how to create an interpretation plan for Ulpiana Archaeological Site.

This September, the first Interpret Europe course in Kosovo was held in Gračanica, about 2km from the ancient city. Seventeen of us from all over Kosovo gathered to take part in the IE Certified Interpretive Planner (CIP) course. The first day of the course started by presenting ourselves to the group through a timeline of our lives. It made us reflect on our own lives but at the same time we started to think about the life that flourished in Ulpiana.

The roots of Ulpiana go back to prehistory, with traces of life from the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages. However, the city's true transformation came after the Roman conquest at the end of the 1st century AD when the settlement grew into a thriving Roman city. Inspired by this history we began working on the interpretation plan. Our first challenge was to identify the phenomena and create specific themes for them. Each theme needed to combine facts with meaning while still being catchy, and that became our second challenge. We had to think outside of the box and get creative with our stories and what we wanted to achieve.

Divided into three groups, we worked both individually and together. Each day, we learned something new about interpretation, discussing the universal values of each phenomenon and how to turn them into meaningful experiences. At the end of the day, we came back to our groups to share what we had learned and, piece by piece, our interpretation plans began to take shape.

On the last day of the course, each group presented their ideas for an interpretation plan for Ulpiana. We then evaluated each other's presentation and gave feedback and suggestions. Through theoretical lectures and practical activities this training became a meaningful experience where we gained knowledge and connected with each other.

Gresa Kelmendi is an architect working at CHwB Kosova (<https://chwbkosova.org/>) . In her free time she likes to crochet, drink tea and watch anime. You can contact her at: gresakelmendi38@gmail.com.



Experiencing the archaeological site of Ulpiana
(Image: Faton Hasani)



Getting creative with the Interpretive Planners' Toolbox
(Image: Mirëjeta Simitçiu Demjaha)

Dress up for interpretation

**Vasilka Dimitrovska (North Macedonia)
& Iva Silla (Croatia)**

A year of live interpretation – a new IE training module takes the stage across Europe.

2025 has been a landmark year for Interpret Europe's newest training offer: the Module on Live Interpretation (MLI). The MLI invites participants to quite literally step into character — to explore heritage through first-person, costumed storytelling grounded in the interpretive triangle and value-based methodology.

After a training course that took place in Rochester, UK, in March, and a successful spring session at Trakošćan Castle in Croatia, the momentum carried into summer with a dedicated MLI Trainer Upgrade Programme held in Vrsar, Croatia, on 29 June 2025.

The Vrsar upgrade offered a unique setting: coastal views, a 17th-century backdrop, and a circle of committed IE trainers coming together to explore, reflect, and co-create the future of live interpretation. Led by Iva Silla (Croatia), the training followed a compact one-day format, structured around the real content of the MLI course.

The programme included:

- Individual presentations
- Peer-led exercises
- Collaborative sessions
- A final round of reflection, where future trainers shared their intentions and formed a working group dedicated to further MLI development

The upgrade for trainers provided the new MLI trainers with a solid foundation to lead the programme independently. Interpret Europe now has five trainers in live interpretation: Bojana Čibej from Slovenia, Vasilka Dimitrovska from North Macedonia, Michal Medak from the Czech Republic, Iva Silla and Ivana Zrilić from Croatia. Contact them to arrange the inspiring training that will bring your heritage site to life.

What makes the MLI unique?

Over the course of two days, the MLI leads participants through a full journey: from embodying a character, to crafting interpretive scenes, to performing in costume. Rooted in Interpret Europe's values-based methodology, the programme blends play, critical thinking, empathy, and dramaturgy.

In the Vrsar session, the imagined world of the 1600s came to life. One group channelled the voices of sailors' wives waiting on the shore. The other focused on the town's enduring stonemasonry heritage. The resulting scenes were not only engaging and authentic but deeply emotional — a testament to the potential of live interpretation to reveal hidden stories and human connections

Looking ahead

The team of MLI trainers formed in Vrsar is already working together to strengthen the module and encourage its integration into heritage institutions across Europe. With more sessions planned in 2026, and a growing interest from museums and cultural sites, the MLI is poised to become one of the most experiential and transformative offers in Interpret Europe's training portfolio.

Whether you're a guide, an educator, a curator, or an actor — if you believe that heritage comes to life through human connection, the MLI might be your next professional step.

Vasilka Dimitrovska is an active Interpret Europe trainer. She is also the Creative Director of HAEMUS – Center for Scientific Research and Promotion of Culture, and the founder of the educational interpretive programmes Storytelling Skopje and Storytelling Macedonia, which bring heritage to life through innovative, experience-based approaches. Contact her at dimitrovska@haemus.org.mk.

Iva Silla is an experience designer and an interpretive performer, owner of Secret Zagreb tours and activities. She is an active Interpret Europe trainer and has been involved in the development of the MLI training. Contact her at iva@questoftales.com.



Our trainers bringing Vrsars' past to life (Image: Iva Silla)

Congratulations to our newly certified members

Certified Interpretive Guides (CIG)

António Almeida, Portugal
Alisa Amali, Slovenia
Loris Giuriatti, Italy
Marija Ježek, Croatia
Slaven Klobučar, Croatia
Nenad Koledić, Croatia
Janez Konečnik, Slovenia
Renata Kuharić, Croatia
Helena Lovrak, Croatia
Tatiana Lupașcu, Moldova
Mira Rončević, Croatia
Guglielmo Ruggiero, Italy

Certified Interpretive Writers (CIW)

Alisa Amali, Slovenia

Certified Interpretive Planners (CIP)

Renate De Backere, Netherlands
Kalliopi Stara, Greece

Upcoming courses and webinars

Would you enjoy an enriching course with like-minded people and to gain an IE certification?

See below and keep an eye on the training pages of the IE website for up to date information on the next courses and training modules available near you:

<https://interpret-europe.net/training/ie-courses/ie-training-courses/>

You can email training@interpret-europe.net for further information.

Date	Language	Location	Trainer
Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG)			
25-26/10/2025 (part 2)	Croatian	Nedešćina (Istria), Croatia	Vida Ungar
10-14/11/2025	English	Lauwersoog, Netherlands	Vanessa Vaio
15-16/11/25 (part 2)	German	Lubmin, Germany	Thorsten Ludwig
Certified Interpretive Writer (CIW)			
10-14/11/2025	English	Lauwersoog, Netherlands	Valya Stergioti
08-12/12/2025	English	Bastogne, Belgium	Thorsten Ludwig
Certified Interpretive Planner (CIP)			
None planned	Keep an eye on the website		
Certified Interpretive Trainer (CIT)			
02-06/02/2026	English	Frankfurt, Germany	Thorsten Ludwig & Valya Stergioti

IE webinars

IE webinars are free for members and are conducted in English. Keep an eye on the website for further details of upcoming webinars and how to register:

<https://interpret-europe.net/training/webinars/>

Email webinar@interpret-europe.net for more information.

Don't forget that IE members can catch up on previous webinars if you missed them – the recordings are available in the members' area of the website.

Hello, my name is Pettrike

Alexander (Sandy) Colvine (France)

Protecting women from poverty after hard working lives – an audio guide bringing to life the timbers of one of Bergen’s oldest institutions.

In the early 1600s, the Norwegian address of 28 Klostergaten, Bergen, was a highly-prized location for widowed and unmarried working-class women. It was, in fact, an almshouse, the oldest form of social housing in the world.

For over 360 years, Stranges Stiftelse, the name of this particular charitable institution, looked after the welfare of women who were anything but ordinary. They came from near and afar, from city and countryside, often alone but all determined to find work and a better life in bustling Bergen. Many found work as maids with wealthy families, seeing first-hand the rewards of money, influence and culture which they could appreciate yet never possess. Then after years of service they ended their working lives exhausted, in poor health, homeless and quickly penniless. Stranges Stiftelse restored their dignity and self-respect.

Neither frozen in time nor exclusively a museum, Stranges Stiftelse is owned by the Norwegian National Trust and the current timber building dates back to 1751 (devastating fires were commonplace in Norway’s cities). It houses the NT’s regional office and is regularly used by local community groups, so the challenge was to tell the story of this remarkable city landmark with minimum disruption and no physical alterations.

Stranges Stiftelse’s uniqueness lies in its atmosphere, as if the residents have left briefly and may re-emerge from a bedroom door or descend the steep staircases at any moment. So it was vital to retain this unique quality and use it as a source of inspiration for a pilot series of six QR-code activated interpretive audio guide vignettes using visitors’ phones.

Using interpretive writing techniques featured in IE’s Certified Interpretive Writer (CIW) course, each theme-based narrative takes visitors from bedroom and kitchen to armchair, and even the morgue, to provide a snapshot of daily life. Comparisons and questions invite visitors to consider how the almshouse relates to their lives now, connecting with their general knowledge and life experiences. In this way, Stranges Stiftelse becomes relevant to



Stranges Stiftelse common room (Image: Ida Pettersen)

the present day, allowing visitors to learn about the past, consider the present and contemplate the future, possibly their own futures in old age, as well as inter-generational attitudes and relationships or wider subjects like social care, for instance.

Tiresome lessons or unwelcome moralising are avoided. Instead, the likes of 65-year-old Pettrike, a resilient and independent woman, address visitors telling them of occasional squabbles, backbreaking tasks, emptying chamber pots, frequent laughs, comforting coffee-cup huddles in times of need and, of course, the rich and endless source of gossip that comes with the company of 30 other headstrong women facing old age together.

Subject to an end-of-season evaluation, this pilot project could be enhanced with soundscapes, characters, more in-depth consultations with the local community, additional themes and new vignettes to periodically change and refresh the visitor experience for local people and out of town audiences. It is early days but it is hoped that this pilot experience can create a modest buzz, raise footfall and introduce a new dialogical dimension to less-frequented National Trust properties in Vestland county.

Regardless of what transpires, it was a pleasure for me to dive into the history of this unique heritage site and help local partners bring to life the surprising stories contained within its walls using the power of interpretation.

Sandy Colvine is a French-based freelance consultant, certified IE trainer, and project manager for IE. He can be contacted at sandy.colvine84@gmail.com.



QR code for audio content outside the bedroom
(Image: Ida Pettersen)

Hands-on with the Romans: Re-imagining Stobi through live interpretation

Vasilka Dimitrovska (North Macedonia)

The archaeological site of Stobi (North Macedonia) came alive through a series of interpretive workshops that re-imagined Roman daily life.

Rooted in hands-on engagement and value-based storytelling, the programme that brought this site to life during the summer months invited participants not just to learn about history, but to step into it.

Over several days, participants engaged in the reconstruction and playing of Roman board games, handled replicas of ancient arms, and embodied citizens of Stobi by dressing in Roman clothing. These activities transformed archaeology from abstract knowledge into a lived, emotional experience.

The workshops were designed by archaeologist and IE Certified Interpretive Trainer Vasilka Dimitrovska, and coordinated by HAEMUS – Centre for Scientific Research and Promotion of Culture, in collaboration with Ivan Ilić, archaeologist and historical reenactor from Serbia, and Damjan Serafimovski, interpreter and ethnologist at the Museum of the City of Skopje. Together they brought academic research into dialogue with public engagement, bridging the gap between science, education, and community.

A special focus was placed on mentoring young interpreters. By guiding them to take on the roles of Roman citizens, the project not only deepened authenticity but also gave a new generation the confidence to embody heritage and connect it with contemporary audiences.

The interpretive framework combined experiential learning with live interpretation and historical reenactment. Rather than presenting archaeology as distant, the approach encouraged participants to touch, play, and interact, turning passive observation into active meaning-making.

Elements of the programme are already being woven into the wider Storytelling Macedonia platform, which promotes narrative-based, site-specific interpretation across North Macedonia. The long-term vision is to continue developing activities that reinforce the bond between archaeology, education, and the public, while highlighting heritage as a shared value.

This initiative at Stobi demonstrates how live interpretation can transform archaeological sites into participatory spaces, where the past is not only studied, but felt, embodied, and re-imagined in ways that matter today.

Vasilka Dimitrovska is an IE certified interpretive trainer. She is director of HAEMUS – Center for Scientific Research and Promotion of Culture, and founder of Storytelling Skopje and Storytelling Macedonia. She can be contacted at: dimitrovska@haemus.org.mk.



Live interpretation at Stobi (Image: Vasilka Dimitrovska)

Re-interpreting heritage in the light of Faro: #iecon26

Bettina Lehnies (Germany)

Come to Portugal in April to discuss what the Faro Convention means for heritage interpretation and how we can contribute to its implementation.

Faro, at the very Southwestern edge of the continent, is the right place to reflect on a theme which we consider of central importance for the future of Europe in challenging times of rapid change.

It was here where the Council of Europe launched the 'Faro Convention' in 2005, embarking on a transformative journey towards more democratic, people-centred, and value-based practices in dealing with Europe's heritage. Today, the Council of Europe's Faro Convention is more relevant than ever for all heritage – cultural and natural.

The Faro spirit provokes the entire heritage sector to re-assess its basic assumptions and practices and it provides guidance to lead the sector into a new era.

It can inspire all professionally involved in heritage interpretation, including

- those working on the ground as front-line heritage interpreters, as interpretive writers or interpretive planners, or as interpretive agents and mediators, as well as others working in the field of heritage education,
- those engaged in professional development as trainers, teachers or researchers related to heritage interpretation, and

- those who govern or influence the framework conditions for heritage interpretation as site managers or as policy makers at local, regional, national or international level.

Heritage interpretation in the Faro spirit can become a catalyst for societies that seek unity in diversity. We can empower people, communities and societies to establish common ground while embracing diversity by engaging them in fruitful reflections about the past that matter for the present and future.

The Algarve – so much more than a tourist destination

The whole region has been shaped throughout history by the succession and coexistence of diverse cultures and religions arriving by land and sea. It can look back on a turbulent past and it displays traces of these events everywhere.

There is the old town of Faro with a labyrinth of narrow cobbled streets lined with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century houses and its Gothic cathedral where you find many traces of its history and feel the spirit of the city's eventful past.

Not quite as old is the Club Farense, a renowned place where, over cigars, gentlemen once debated world events and ladies met for more than card games. This is the unique setting for our next Interpret Europe conference in April 2026.

Founded over 150 years ago, the Club Farense in Faro hasn't lost its special atmosphere even after so many decades. Every room tells its stories and transports visitors to times long past. We can immerse ourselves in this world and fill the rooms

 Interpret Europe
European Association for Heritage Interpretation

 SCIAENA
Society for Cultural Interpretation and Analysis

interpret europe conference 2026

Re-interpreting heritage in the light of Faro

16-19 April 2026 in Faro, Portugal

#iecon26

with our stories and contributions. While the club is usually reserved for its members, on weekends you can experience just about anything related to art and culture there – from all kinds of music to readings, theatre and shows.

And it will be at the heart of our conference!

Exploring the region

Our study tours will take us to places where we dive deep into the heart of heritage, both natural and cultural, tangible and intangible. Each tour will reveal unique stories and connections that tie individuals to their homeland, illuminating the dedication of those committed to preserving and sharing these treasures with both locals and visitors alike. Details of the study tours and more about the region we will be visiting will be announced on the website and in the next newsletter.

If you're an early bird, you'll be able to start your day with an exhilarating birdwatching tour in Ria Formosa at sunrise, providing a breathtaking start to your day before the conference day begins.

Your contribution

Our conferences depend on your contributions. We're sure many of you have ideas and experiences connected to the theme which you'd like to share with others, and we look forward to a diverse range of sessions and workshops.

The call for papers will be open in October so keep an eye open for information coming on that.

Our 2026 conference will be organised in partnership with Sciaena, a non-governmental organisation that works towards a healthy marine environment through the promotion of sustainable ways of exploitation, the involvement of the population and political intervention.

Make sure you join us in April 2026 at the Algarve and be inspired by the light of Faro!

Want to know more? Take a look at the conference website: www.interpreteuropeconference.net.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me at: bettina.lehnes@interpret-europe.net.

Bettina Lehnes
IE Events Coordinator



Inside Club Fareense, A sneak peak at the Algarve landscape, The King of Portugal & the Algarve waiting to welcome you (Images: Bettina Lehnes)

Learning Landscapes Initiative symposium: The role of narratives in 21st century heritage interpretation

Lucija Gudlin (Germany)

Dave the date! More details of this online symposium are coming soon.

This is the pre-announcement for an online symposium that Interpret Europe and UNESCO are organising on 26-27 February 2026 under the title 'The role of narratives in 21st century heritage interpretation'.

In recent years, a shift has been observed in heritage interpretation. At the turn of the millennium the focus was mainly on entertaining storytelling. Today, however, stories are increasingly seen as offerings, encouraging and empowering people to share their experiences and to interpret for themselves.

This shift presents heritage professionals at sites, parks, museums and monuments with new challenges:

- How can diverse narratives be embraced and integrated?
- How can heritage experiences foster learning around global citizenship and sustainability?
- How can interpretation become more inclusive and participatory?

These questions are at the heart of the Learning Landscapes Initiative (LLI), a joint effort by Interpret Europe and UNESCO, which is pioneering new approaches in this field.

We are now inviting experts and practitioners to contribute with ideas, share examples, and to participate in this exchange.

Please save the date. We expect an intense and inspiring symposium. Further information will follow at the end of the year.

Welcome new members

Institutional members

Tonnenloods Terschelling, Netherlands
Stichting Texels Museum - Ecomare, Netherlands
Collection Secerovic Conic - House of Jevrem Grujic,
Serbia

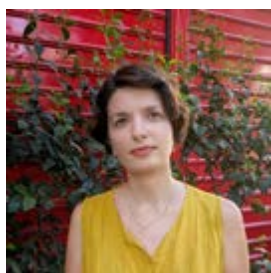
Individual members

Željko Anđelković, Serbia
Dorotea Asceric, Serbia
Chrysoula Athanasiou, Greece
Dhuratë Azizi, Kosovo
Milot Berisha, Kosovo
Lieke Buls, Netherlands
Alexandra Chroni, Greece
Alexandra Cioara, Romania
Franziska Fett, Germany
Ismail Gagica, Kosovo
Jana Gamilec, Croatia
Aleksandra Głowacz, Poland
Jehona Guri, Kosovo
Marta Hekselman, Poland
Vesel Hoxhaj, Albania
Marta Hresova, Slovakia
Christine Ilic, Germany
Ilir Kamberi, Kosovo
Gresa Kelmendi, Kosovo
Iliana Kleiasou, Greece
Bojan Kojičić, Serbia
Jakub Korytiak, Slovakia
Ermira Krasniqi, Kosovo
Jelena Ladavac Sisinački, Croatia
Areti-Myrto Lampri, Greece
Vasiliki Lappa, Greece

Marina Makri, Greece
Daniela Matelić Kozlovič, Slovenia
Dejan Milosavljevic, Serbia
Laura Mlinaku, Kosovo
Besnik Morina, Kosovo
Martin Mraz, Slovakia
Kristina Načinović Jakovčić, Croatia
Alexandra Papigkioti, Greece
Ivana Ranković Miladinović, Serbia
Leartë Salihu, Kosovo
Elvis Shala, Kosovo
Erza Shala, Kosovo
Mirëjeta Simitçiu Demjaha, Kosovo
Mirjana Slavković, Serbia
Tsialikis Stelios, Greece
Veron Tara, Kosovo
Niovi Tomou, Greece
Rijad Turku, Kosovo
Đorđije Vasiljević, Serbia
Ivana Vesković, Serbia
Jelena Vickić Stepčić, Croatia
Lisa Vieno, Finland
Senka Vlahović, Croatia
Tanja Wolff, Germany
Jenny Wolgast, Germany
Merita Zekolli, Kosovo

Welcome new coordinators

Country Coordinator Greece – Labrini Tsitsou



You can find out more about all of IE's country, subject and managing coordinators on the website:

<https://interpret-europe.net/our-structure-and-bodies/>

Together with my team, I will work to make heritage interpretation more visible and valued in Greece, and communicate the practices and philosophy of Interpret Europe. Above all, it is important to support the Greek heritage interpretation community, and keep it vibrant, growing, and closely connected.

As an archaeologist-diver, I am engaged in the research, documentation, and protection of submerged and coastal sites. I hold two MAs—in Heritage Interpretation (University of Leicester, School of Museum Studies, UK) and Cultural Management (Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Greece)—as well as a PhD from Aix-Marseille University, France. My doctoral research examined the interlinkages between cultural and geological heritage in coastal landscapes of southeastern Attica. My work moves across archaeology, geosciences, environmental studies, critical heritage, and heritage interpretation.

I stand for interdisciplinary approaches, active community participation, and awareness of the political dimensions of heritage, since interpretation and representation shape public understanding. I believe heritage practice should be inclusive, responsible, and connected to wider ethical questions, respecting both people and the non-human world.

I first joined the network of Interpret Europe in 2017 and continue to support its mission to break down barriers in heritage and (re)connect us with each other, with places, and with nature. In recent years my work has taken me across different aspects of heritage and I've gained a deeper sense of how they are all interwoven. I'd like to use this perspective to support our network, open opportunities for collaborations with communities and professionals, and contribute to making heritage interpretation more recognised and practiced across Greece.

Further announcements

Upcoming events

Keep an eye on the IE website for details of international heritage interpretation events that we are aware of: <https://interpret-europe.net/ie-events-calendar/category/other-events/>

NEMO European museum conference

26-28 October 2025

Horsens, Denmark

<https://www.ne-mo.org/news-events/nemo-european-museum-conference/>

NAI national conference

11-15 November 2025

Virginia Beach, USA

<https://nai-us.org/NAIConference/>

Interpret Europe conference 2026

16-19 April 2026

Faro, Portugal

<https://www.interpreteuropeconference.net>

And finally...

Thank you for your contributions.

Warm greetings from your IE News Team.
Marie Banks (UK) – News Coordinator, supported by
Anna Carlemalm (Sweden), Abby McSherry (Ireland),
Elisabeth Nübel-Reidbach (Germany), and Ivana
Zrilić (Croatia).

Any news, projects, thoughts or adventures in interpretation that you want to share?

Send a report and some photos to:
news@interpret-europe.net.

Please consider that we like to promote best practice
examples in the field of heritage interpretation and
follow the guidelines for newsletter authors:

<https://interpret-europe.net/news/guidelines-for-authors/>

**Deadline for contributions for the winter 2025
edition: Sunday 30 November 2025**

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content.



<https://www.facebook.com/interpreteurope>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/1227939/>



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDbwylo-tJugfsKXIEI21fQ>

As a member you can also join our [closed Facebook group](#) or our Facebook country groups for more regular, informal interpretation chat.

Albania: [Interpret Europe Albania](#)

Bosnia & Herzegovina: [Interpret Europe Bosnia & Herzegovina](#)

Croatia: [Interpret Europe Croatia](#)

Greece: [Interpret Europe Greece](#)

Italy: [Interpret Europe Italy](#)

Kosovo: [Interpret Europe Kosovo](#)

North Macedonia:

[Interpret Europe North Macedonia](#)

Poland: [Interpret Europe Poland](#)

Scandinavia: [Interpret Europe Scandinavia](#)

Slovenia: [Interpret Europe Slovenia](#)

Interpret Europe
European Association for Heritage Interpretation
Carl-von-Ossietzky-Straße 3
14471 Potsdam
Germany

+386(0)41 911 112
office@interpret-europe.net
www.interpret-europe.net

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with Europe's natural and cultural heritage
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