



interpret europe
European Association for Heritage Interpretation

Newsletter

Spring 2026



www.interpret-europe.net

Contents

Editorial	02
Thoughts	03
Dear Nature	03
To misname an object is to add to the misery of the world	05
IE activities	07
Here we are equal. regardless of where we're coming from	07
What the online symposium left behind (and why it matters)	09
European projects update	11
IE training	14
ICIT Frankfurt: Raising the bar together	14
What truly makes a difference in a CIG course?	15
Finding inspiration in unlikely places	16
Become a Certified Interpretive Planner (CIP)	17
Congratulations to our newly certified members	18
IE training courses and webinars	19
IE member activities	20
Listening to forest narratives	20
In This Place: A soundwalk at the former KL Plaszow site	21
Why can't interpretation do more to tackle society's problems?	24
What's going on elsewhere	27
NextGen Heritage Ambassadors	27
Interpreting with the LGBTQIA+ community in mind	28
Funding opportunities	30
IE announcements	32
Open space for your voice at iecon	32
Welcome to our new members	34
And finally...	36

Cover images: Vidar Ungar (1), Marie Banks (2-5)

Dear members and friends of Interpret Europe,

Without hesitation I can say that this is one of the richest volumes in our newsletter history. Therefore, big thanks to everyone who contributed with extremely relevant articles and please keep on doing so in the months and years ahead.

While hardly anyone can ignore the horrifying developments in the world, we need to stay faithful to our mission. For IE, this has been “empowering all who inspire meaningful connections with Europe’s natural and cultural heritage to shape our common future”. Never before has it been more important that educators and learning providers help people make sense of what is going on and help them to deal with the complexities and controversies of our time. Heritage, either cultural or natural, is a perfect backdrop to ignite and lead discussions about the critical issues we are facing. This can be our own powerful contribution to a more bearable future.

IE is taking action this spring, working on IE’s Faro Declaration, which aims to put the Faro Convention in the spotlight, a visionary text, introducing an emerging paradigm, issued by the Council of Europe 21 years ago. Heritage interpretation is the key to bring the Faro Declaration to life and we’ll kick off this process by first involving members at the upcoming conference in Faro. It is a good moment to be part of it.

This newsletter edition is a perfect resource if you want to delve deeper into the questions around the new role of our profession and explore techniques that foster multiperspectivity and multivocality in interpretation. Start with the articles in the Thoughts section, reflecting on the question of human aspects in nature interpretation and on the danger of ‘interpretganda’ if we don’t call things by the right name.

Our Learning Landscape interpretive agents have been busy in Greece and our recent symposium on The role of narratives in 21st century heritage interpretation brought up an abundance of topics and angles for us to

become aware of how powerful narratives are that govern thoughts and actions of individuals and how important it is for interpreters to become “mediators, facilitators, negotiators” instead of replicators of established narratives. If you missed the symposium, the recordings will soon be available to members and you will get notified about it.

On a similar note, reflecting on forest bathing techniques further down this edition, as the entry point to interpretation of natural heritage, contributes to our toolkit for personal meaning-making at any heritage site. You will also find a case study of a soundwalk interpretation service in a concentration camp, helping to make sense of some very sensitive and difficult heritage.

Last but not least, the ‘testament’ of ten points on how to make interpretation more holistic, nicely rounds up the ‘hot’ topic in our current discourse.

There’s much more to explore, from the LGBTQIA+ interpretation guide issued by our colleagues at AHI, to the teaser for our already overbooked conference, to new funding opportunities.

Want to become a certified interpretive planner? Then Sweden in August is the place to be.

Don’t miss out on two new programmes for supporting emerging interpreters, check them out in the European project updates section.

Reports from our courses are this time crowned by enthusiastic accounts from the new generation of trainers that gathered in Frankfurt. If all goes well with the final assignments, 16 new trainers will contribute to the acknowledgement and implementation of interpretation practice across Europe.

We are again reminded how vibrant the field of heritage interpretation and our community really is.

Spring is underway and fresh energy with it. Surf its waves and enjoy longer days until we read each other again.

Helena Vičič, IE Managing Director

Dear Nature

Dubravko (Max) Fijacko (Croatia)

When we say 'people-centered', are we placing humans above nature or finally admitting we are part of it? Aren't we nature too?

Dear Nature,

I'm writing to you, even though we keep insisting you are 'non-human'. As if that word solved anything. We invent terms to manage the distance. Maybe distance is just a narrative we keep repeating.

Anyway. That's not why I'm writing.

There's a phrase being used: people-centred. Some hear humans above everything. Again. But others might see it less threateningly, as bringing us closer to the heart of the matter — the way John Muir read the mountains, the way we interpret stones and rivers, framing nature and culture so we can begin to understand them.

Some might say it's old wine in new bottles, the same interpreter still in charge. Why add another term if it's all already there? Maybe that's exactly the point. Some things are so obvious we stop seeing them. Naming them doesn't invent something new. It simply helps us pay attention.

And then there's the one who quietly asks: Where is nature in all of this?

That's you, isn't it?

I know, dear Nature. It sounds like we're putting ourselves at the centre again, in that modern sense shaped by the industrial revolution. That was the moment when the division hardened, the idea that you are separate from us, a resource to be exploited. A modern narrative that slowly turned distance into doctrine.

Anthropologists like Philippe Descola remind us that not all cultures accepted this split. For many, the divide between 'nature' and 'society' simply never existed. As if everything, even you, exists for us.

But what if it's not that? What if people-centred is not about dominance, but about recognition? About connection?

What if, instead of society, we saw you and us as part of many collectives — different places, different ways of belonging? We are the ones who name, who feel, who care. Without us, you would still be you, vast, wild, complete, but would you be recognised as heritage?

You don't need us for that. But maybe we need you.

And here's a question I keep coming back to: Aren't we also you?

Not separate. Not above. Not outside. Just you, in another form, walking, wondering, trying to make sense, to interpret (that's what we do).

Freeman Tilden spent years in forests, mountains, wild places, and still he wrote: People are interested in people. Not instead of you. Through you.

Because even in the middle of a forest, we don't stop being human. We meet you with our minds and our bodies, with our emotions, with one another, and sometimes with that quiet inner landscape where meaning settles. We bring our stories, our questions, our need to connect – to a place, to each other, to those who walked here before and those who will come after. That's not a distraction. That's often where meaning begins for us.

So, where are you in all of this?

Everywhere. In the stone. In the story. In the silence between words. But, also in the person who stops, looks, and begins to care.

Maybe people-centred isn't a turning away from you. Maybe it's the only way we learn to love you.

So maybe we're part of the same whole. And maybe that changes something. I don't know. But it feels like it could.

Yours,
Someone who's trying

Dubravko Max Fijačko is a licensed trainer and IE Certified Interpretive Writer from Croatia. As IE Outreach Coordinator, he contributes to expanding the reach of the interpretive approach and to strengthening its integration into professional practice, increasing its availability through learning initiatives. You can contact him at: dubravko.fijacko@interpret-europe.net.



Care held by the landscape (Image: Dubravko Fijacko)

To misname an object is to add to the misery of the world

Alexander (Sandy) Colvine (France)

If language hides the truth, people are misled and harmful acts on others are easier to justify.

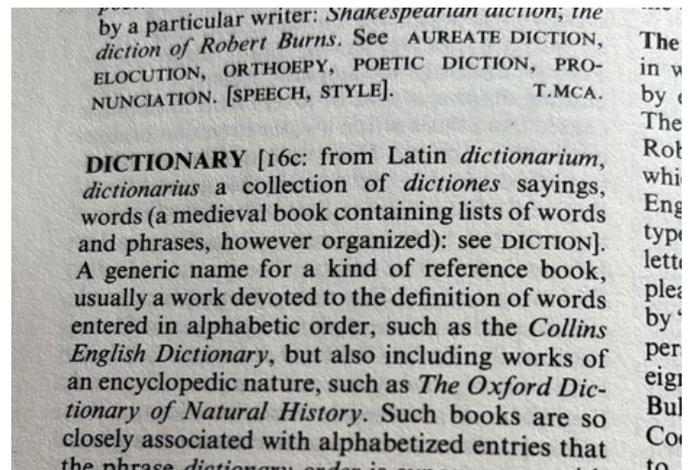
“To misname an object is to add to the misery of the world.”

French philosopher and author, Albert Camus, wrote this in 1944 as Europe entered the final phase of a bloody global war. He believed that clarity in language is morally important. Imprecision, lies, or euphemisms distort reality and fuel injustice or suffering.

For Camus, the words we use don't just describe the world, they influence how we understand and act within it. So, if we call something by the wrong name, we distort reality, for example calling injustice 'security', oppression 'order', or war 'peacekeeping'.

If language hides the truth, people are misled and harmful acts on others are easier to justify. So, where does heritage interpretation sit in this? Interpretation starts with clarity in the form of facts (information) to reveal the meanings (understanding) behind those facts, or the story behind.

But if those facts are corrupted by the language used, they can influence our understanding of the world and how we act within it. For instance, in his work on mental frames, George Lakoff used the example of “war” (on terror) and “crime”, frames that lead to completely different outcomes (victory and justice respectively). The words we use have a powerful effect on framing our thinking, triggering a succession of thoughts and arriving at a conclusion. That conclusion might be what the originator of the information intended, or it might not. It may be morally right or deliberately morally wrong in relation to universal human values of love, justice, empathy, compassion or honesty, for instance.



Dictionary of definitions - our reference point for naming things (Image: Alexander Colvine)

Despite its best intentions, interpretation is not neutral. Interpreters are human, at least most still are in the AI revolution. They have their biases and filters (as does AI). Their role is to avoid 'interpreganda' yet provoke thinking, not fights.

Camus lived through WWII and saw the use of propaganda to manipulate, divide and justify death and cruelty. This has not gone away, and certain leaders are using the same methods just three generations later for obvious outcomes that we cannot pretend to ignore anymore.

If interpretation fosters multiple narratives from multiple perspectives, personal meaning-making instead of message-driven linear communication, multiple truths instead of the truth, it has an important role to ensure that people exposed to different understandings of the world from their own can consider these perspectives constructively rather than negatively. Some of these understandings might be morally reprehensible but should we suppress these views and pretend they do not exist? They are there but where is the red line? To what extent should we accommodate these contrasting perspectives and give them consideration? If we reject them, do we just fuel their fire?

Interpreters are changing from message-givers, channelling what site owners and authorities would like people to think, to become facilitators of personal understanding. This is a demanding task.

It is fraught with the potential for clashes and conflict, especially in an increasingly polarised world. Heritage sites do, however, provide a transformative setting to reflect and consider what we and others think, whether it is a visit to Dachau concentration camp or to the Great Barrier Reef.

Shifting up to the meta level of universal human values is a way of reconciling those differences and finding common ground, for the common good, for our common future.

Ultimately, people decide what they believe. No one likes being told what to think. But if interpreters can offer safe opportunities in meaningful sites and places to consider our thoughts, beliefs and values then this is a positive step to foster personal growth in a world in which it is all too easy to fall prey to manipulation, whether it boils down to what coffee we buy or party we vote for.

Alexander (Sandy) Colvine is IE's Project Manager for the EU projects EMPATHS and HI-People. This article was originally published in February 2026 on Sandy's personal blog:

<https://substack.com/@sandycolvine>

Sandy can be contacted at:

alexander.colvine@interpret-europe.net.

Here we are equal, regardless of where we're coming from

Valya Stergioti (Greece)

IE's interpretive agents, Kalliopi Stara and Dimitris Ioannidis, share their experience from the co-creative workshop in Zagori, Greece.

IE's Learning Landscape initiative, in collaboration with UNESCO, aims to arm interpretive agents in four different regions in Europe to strengthen local stakeholders' capacities in heritage interpretation, and together create an interpretive strategy for their region. In January 2026, at one of these regions (Zagori, Greece) Kalliopi and Dimitris organised a co-creative workshop that brought together stakeholders to discuss heritage interpretation for the very first time. We asked them to share their experience, together with Dimitra Kotsia, one of the participants.

What do you consider to be the greatest success of the workshop?

Kalliopi: The greatest success was the level of participation and the quality of discussions. These were achieved because people trusted in us, thanks to our long-term presence in the area. We visited many villages, discussed with the residents, encouraged local actors to get involved. Logistics helped too: a well-organised venue, offering handmade local delicacies, being punctual and treating everyone equally, regardless of their professional attributes. The result was a friendly, comfortable atmosphere – the perfect basis for co-creation!

Dimitris: Our venue, the old school at the village of Miliotades, proved to be an ideal choice in terms of ambience as well as accessibility. We had to carefully design the invitation and to compile a list of invitees. That part was very significant as we had to ensure that a wide range of stakeholders would be invited, and no one would feel left out. We sent about 70 personal invitations but dealing with the Greek reality of people not responding to invitations, we were unsure up to the last minute of how many people to expect.

This is an issue when it comes to space required, adequate number of chairs and tables, catering provisions, etc. Finally, 37 people took part at the workshop, and we think that this was a very satisfactory turnout for the co-creative workshop.

What advice would you give to those wishing to run a co-creative workshop?

Kalliopi: The organiser needs to put themselves in the participants' shoes. In our case, choosing the location was also important, since it helped everyone, both locals and visitors, understand the 'genius loci'. Starting from there, we explored their hopes, concerns for Zagori, their expectations from UNESCO's designation, etc. During the workshop, we used familiar visual stimuli that highlight values such as beauty, honour, respect for heritage, and nature conservation. These specific objects and concepts made it easier to then discuss more complex topics, such as authenticity.

Dimitris: Not knowing in advance the number of people that would finally participate in the workshop was a difficult uncertainty to deal with. Ultimately, we had to prepare for the best and expect the worst scenario in dealing with either an overcrowded room or a small group of participants. We also had to ensure that all participants would feel at ease and free to speak their minds. From the outset we said: "Here we are all equal, whether we come from the Ministry, the Municipality, the academia, the local villages or the farms".

Dimitra, as a participant, how did you experience this workshop? Was it worth it, in your opinion?

Dimitra: I found this workshop to be an important event, something between education and research. Even if we all live in the Zagori area, the workshop gave us the opportunity to get acquainted with our own cultural heritage, as well as with each other! This sets the basis for a future fruitful collaboration between us, the residents, and the local authorities and even Interpret Europe and UNESCO.

So, in the end, the workshop didn't just 'train' us all but also reinforced our local identity. Through interpreting our own heritage, it encouraged a sustainable relationship between us, the locals, our heritage and the visitors.

How would you like to see the outcome of this workshop implemented in Zagori?

Dimitra: A practical outcome of the workshop could be different interpretive services, like interpretive walks, panels, leaflets and even apps for the villages of Eastern Zagori. Then participants can get to know our villages, their traditional character but mostly our local history.

Also, I hope that the workshop will lead to initiatives that will encourage us, the locals, and especially the young ones, to find ways for protecting and interpreting our heritage. Then, all the knowledge that has been accumulated will expand beyond theory, and become a medium for development and for preservation of our local identity.

Kalliopi: Indeed, continuing these activities and keeping this network alive is our challenge, as we continue to work together.



Resident of Vovoussa village in Zagori showing an old photo of his village's stone bridge (Image: Dimitris Ioannidis)

Valya Stergioti was IE's first Training Coordinator and held the position for eight years after establishing the training programme. She is a member of IE's Learning Landscape initiative team and runs her own interpretive consultancy in Greece: Ali Meria. Valya can be contacted at: vster@outlook.com.

Dimitris Ioannidis is an architect and heritage manager. Although based in Athens, he spends six months a year in Zagori where he is working towards turning his ancestral home into a museum of local history and culture. He can be contacted at: zagoristas@gmail.com.

Dimitra Kotsia is an Agronomist – Agricultural Advisor. In her free time, she actively participates in cultural activities in the village of Liapi Zagoriou (insta# Liapi_Zagoriou) and does volunteer work. She can be contacted at: demikotsia@gmail.com.

Kalliopi Stara (MSc Ecology, PhD Folklore) is a researcher and lecturer on Cultural Ecology. Her research interests focus on Sacred Natural Sites, Ethnobiology and ICH. Her book '[The Trees of Our Land](#)' (Arteon 2021) was awarded by the Academy of Athens in 2022. You can find out more and contact Kalliopi here: <https://kalliopistara.com/>

What the online symposium left behind (and why it matters)

Vanessa Vaio (Italy)

We met online. 27 presentations. 130 participants. The slides are gone — what stayed is harder to package, and far more useful.

On February 26 and 27, we held our first online symposium to allow a greater depth of exploration and discussion on one topic: The role of narratives in 21st century heritage interpretation. Delivered as part of the Learning Landscape initiative, which was established in collaboration with UNESCO, the online symposium invited heritage professionals, practitioners, researchers and educators to reflect on the role of narratives in contemporary interpretation. Moving beyond single stories and fixed messages, it provided a space to explore narratives as spaces for dialogue, learning and shared meaning-making.

What the symposium left behind (and why it matters)

When a symposium ends, what actually remains? Not the presentations. Not the programme. What stays is the conversation — the kind that shifts something, even slightly, in the way you think about your work.

The Interpret Europe online symposium was conceived as a new format: a space to explore one subject in greater depth than our usual conference structure allows – not instead of it, but alongside it. Across 27 presentations and with 130 participants from across Europe, this online gathering did exactly that. We asked some of those who took part — as presenters, agents, and experts — not to report back on what was said, but to reflect on what it stirred.

The value was in the friction

The most meaningful moments, Lulia Balint observed, happened when interpretation came closest to practice — when abstract concepts met the messiness of real sites and real people. Seeing ideas "in the making", as she put it, is what makes them stick.

Bojana Čibej pointed to something equally important: the online format, often dismissed as second-best, created an unexpectedly horizontal space. Chat threads allowed challenge and commentary in real time, producing what she described as a "colourful mosaic of ideas". But she also raised a sharper question — does attachment to a single methodology risk producing interpreters who are "narrowly mentally modeled"? Heritage is too plural for one-size-fits-all frameworks. The more principles we share, the richer our collective toolkit becomes.

Stories are never neutral

We live in a world where information is abundant but often fragmented — and where many different actors tell stories about places and heritage across a growing range of platforms. In this context, as Sabina Viezzoli argues, narratives in interpretation matter more than ever. Not because they provide answers, but because they offer something information alone cannot: a meaningful pause — space for attention, connection, and reflection.

Yet, working with narratives responsibly means acknowledging what they do and don't include. Stories are never neutral. They amplify certain voices and quietly sideline others. As interpreters, our responsibility is to recognise those dynamics and actively make space for the perspectives that tend to get left out — rather than smoothing complex histories into a single, reassuring storyline.

Listening is not passive

Steve Slack reminded us that interpretation is not a broadcast. Multiple narratives make our work stronger — but only if we've actually heard them first. If we can't listen fully and authentically to the stories that matter to communities, we can't responsibly shape the narratives we tell. Listening is a craft, and it deserves as much attention as storytelling.

Towards discomfort — on purpose

Jon Kohl offered perhaps the most provocative reframe: if narratives are the primary way humans make meaning of the world, then interpreters can no longer afford to be just storytellers. They need to become mediators, facilitators, negotiators — roles rarely included in interpretive training, but increasingly essential. Heritage institutions have long preferred smoothed-over consensus. But in a fragmented public space where different perspectives and values compete, an "aversion to conflict" is no longer a neutral stance. It's a missed opportunity.

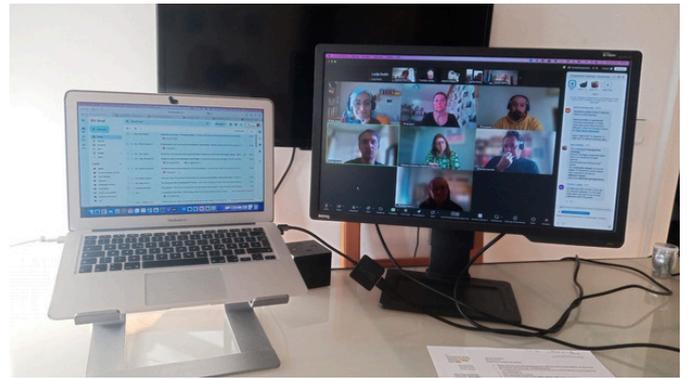
What comes next

Iulia advocates for more "show and tell" formats — spaces to observe how others translate the meanings of their sites into practice. Sabina points to something similar: shorter, more regular opportunities for exchange throughout the year — thematic online sessions, a podcast series, or simply the chance to visit colleagues at the sites where they work. For her, the symposium also reinforced something more personal: a sense of belonging to a community that shares values, questions, and a genuine commitment to the practice.

Within Interpret Europe, the work now is to keep this space open — co-creative, inclusive, and willing to sit with the questions a little longer rather than rushing toward answers.

The proceedings from the symposium will be published soon, so keep an eye on IE's website: <https://interpret-europe.net/material/>.

Some participants were also inspired to write articles based on their thoughts and experiences, a couple of which you can read in this newsletter, and we hope there will be more to come as we foster this open space for exchange within our network.



Behind the scenes view of the symposium (Image: Lucija Gudlin)

Vanessa Vaio is IE's Country Coordinator Italy and she is a member of the Learning Landscape initiative team. She can be contacted at: vanessa.vaio@interpret-europe.net.

European projects update

Alexander (Sandy) Colvine (France)

Busy as bees enjoying the spring, and there's plenty of action to catch up on.

The HI-People project

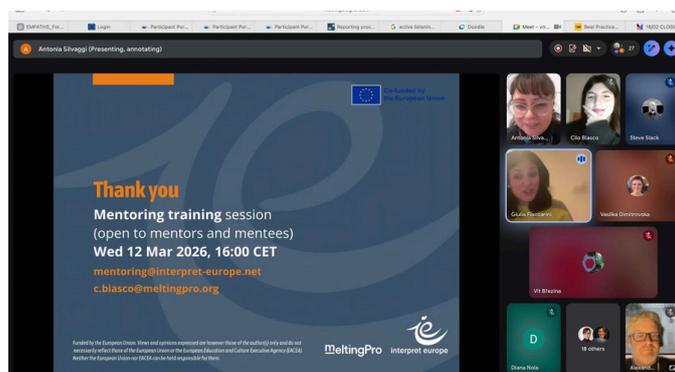
HI-People, supported by the European Union Creative Europe programme, has begun its second year (of four) with some exciting developments for IE members.

First, our new mentoring and peer support programme is now up and running. Designed to help early-career and more experienced freelance interpreters/trainers meet the challenge of sustaining and growing their businesses, it complements our training programme to provide excellence in the practice of heritage interpretation and support to capitalise on these skills to forge a successful freelance career.

Our partner, Melting Pro, held an introductory meeting on 18 February attended by almost 40 IE members and non-members, with an inspiring keynote from UK interpretive consultant, Steve Slack. The meeting highlighted the importance of self-awareness, particularly personal and professional values, when establishing an online and offline presence in the marketplace.

Running your own business is always a challenge, but the mentoring programme recognises the value of the human connection as a supportive pact in which knowledge and values can be shared in a structured and empathetic relationship to build a robust freelance mindset.

The programme may have started life as a bullet point activity in a project proposal, but it is a key piece of the jigsaw, to equip a community of highly competent interpretive consultants and/or trainers with the mindset and resilience to succeed as freelancers.



The first mentoring meeting (Image: Alexander Colvine)

We look forward to our first intake of mentors and mentees who will meet at regular intervals in 2026 to address the challenges mentioned above and this year's topic of developing a digital presence, which came top in a recent survey of needs. Each year the programme will adopt a new topic based on a survey.

If you missed the opening meeting but would still like to join the programme, it's not too late! Just email mentoring@interpret-europe.net. Full details on the programme can be found [here](#).

Another interesting addition is the IE training scholarship scheme, which offers up to 50% off IE training course fees, or for travel and subsistence if a course is provided free of charge, up to a maximum value of €300.

While we strive to keep our IE-certified training opportunities as affordable as possible, taking part in a five-day course, often in another country, represents a significant investment, especially for new interpreters just starting out. So, whether you are a new heritage professional or plan to make your career in heritage, we hope this new scheme can provide you with a welcome boost to justify your decision to become a heritage interpreter. Further details on eligibility, conditions and the application process can be found [here](#).

Digital technology and AI are a growing part of visitor experiences at heritage sites worldwide, so the HI-People project offers us the opportunity to develop a training module for digital interpretation, which will take shape over the next two years.

Targeting heritage professionals, curators and decision-makers, the module seeks to foster critical and considerate adoption of digital resources (including AI) to provide meaningful heritage experiences reflecting heritage interpretation principles and standards advocated by IE. In this way, participants can make informed decisions, brief providers, follow the planning process and engage in discussions with them to ensure that the resulting digital interpretation fulfils the aforementioned principles. The module will be accompanied by examples of best practice, ethical guidelines and a short series of webinars for members to discuss the subject. We hope to engage a multidisciplinary team who will work with the IE training team, as well as members with digital experience, to ensure that the activities best meet our short-term and long-term needs. More news to follow soon!

Finally, the IE conference 2026 in Faro, Portugal, marks the 21st anniversary of the Faro Convention and the notion of 'heritage communities' as well as people's participation in heritage governance as a means of upholding democracy, human rights and sustainable development. It provides the stage for IE to advocate for a framework of reference for value-based heritage and people-centred approach to interpretation to affirm IE's essential role in helping achieve these aims and to move closer to the centre of strategic decision-making and policy-making conversations. The conference is the starting point for the framework of reference and a subsequent forum for research and exchange on the subject over the next three years. In addition, there will be an interactive plenary workshop at the conference, to gather feedback, views and ideas to shape the future framework of reference.

The Empaths project

Empaths, our second European project, funded by the European Union Erasmus+ programme, is developing a pilot training course on participatory heritage interpretation for heritage professionals. It gives IE the chance to experiment with value-based interpretation with piloting partners at sites in Northwestern Greece, Southern Italy and on the Austrian/Slovenian border together with the people who live there.

The 'people' part is key to the whole project as members of the local community will take part in the field-based part of the training, entitled 'community labs', to develop ideas for interpretive opportunities to enhance a specific site or a wider area of tangible or intangible heritage, such as an old stone quarry or traditional religious processions. It is, however, the process that matters, not the result. The piloting partners will soon invite local people to preparatory meetings to present the Empaths project, and to select the tangible or intangible heritage for the community lab. The community will have the final decision.

The heritage professionals will first follow a series of online training modules in May/June to learn the principles of participatory HI, before putting their knowledge into practice by facilitating a community lab in their pilot territory in September. Each lab will partially follow a 'design thinking' sequence with the aim of creating interpretive themes and narratives, or a format to tell a story from different perspectives. The way the community empathises with the heritage and with each other will dictate what ultimately transpires, so flexibility must be built in to avoid rushing stages or the influence of external agendas that might undermine the priorities of the local participants.

An experienced trainer in participatory practices involving HI will support the heritage professionals to facilitate the local community participants towards their goal, to validate their work and to consider how they might want to continue their efforts for a finished interpretive experience.

It will be an exciting and ambitious undertaking for the project, but the considerable experience of the local piloting partners who work extensively with local communities will be crucial to bring credibility, encourage people to take part and start a collective action that may continue beyond the lifetime of the Empaths project.

[Click here](#) for more details on the Empaths project and the latest news, including the Empaths newsletter and Empaths Manifesto.

Alexander (Sandy) Colvine is IE's Project Manager for HI-People and Empaths. He can be contacted at:

alexander.colvine@interpret-europe.net.

CIT Frankfurt: Raising the bar together

Cornelia Lütcke (Germany)

16 trainers from ten countries enjoyed a high-level CIT week in Frankfurt, linking values, practice and participation in a new blended format.

Three years after the last IE Certified Interpretive Trainer (CIT) course, 16 participants from ten European countries gathered in Frankfurt am Main for an intensive week of learning – to join the ranks of the IE training team. Having met online for six preparatory sessions since October, they arrived well prepared and eager to delve into heritage interpretation.

For the first time, the CIT was delivered in a new blended format combining online sessions, lectures, study visits, and participants' own presentations and assessed training sessions. This structure created a continuous learning journey and ensured an exceptionally high academic and practical level throughout the course.

From day one, the atmosphere was vibrant. Different professional and cultural backgrounds quickly revealed shared challenges. Whether discussing cultural or natural heritage, the group repeatedly returned to key concepts such as experience, resonance, stewardship and participation, as well as the central role of values. With guidance from experienced safeguarding trainers, open questions and new encounters continuously reshaped participants' understanding of, and approach to, interpretation.

Daily study visits connected theory with practice. A particular highlight was the visit to the Deutsches Romantik-Museum, which is the first museum to be dedicated entirely to the Romantic era. A curator provided valuable insights into the museum's inner workings, sparking enriching discussions about storytelling and the philosophical roots of interpretation.



Inspiring each other (Image: Thorsten Ludwig)

At the Goethe House in Frankfurt, participants climbed the same stairs once used by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, reflecting on the interplay of biography, place, and literature in creating meaningful visitor experiences.

At the Historisches Museum Frankfurt, participants had the opportunity to engage in conversation with the curator of the permanent exhibition, exploring how interpretation can translate into active participation in exhibition design. Reflection on legacy and responsibility towards future audiences was sparked by the long-term 'Library of Generations' project, which runs until 2105.

Day four was largely dedicated to practical work. Participants conducted their assessed sessions along the river and through Frankfurt's reconstructed old town, exploring participatory approaches and co-creation. At the Museum Judengasse, the focus turned to addressing sensitive heritage, followed by a reflective visit to the Old Jewish Cemetery. The theme of sustainability remained an essential thread throughout the week.

On the final day, participants visited the Struwwelpeter Museum and the Kaiserpfalz Franconofurd, before concluding the course with candlelit singing. Participants returned home to finalise their assignments and prepare for trainer upgrades, ready to deliver future IE certification courses across Europe.

Cornelia Lütcke is a tourism expert who also works as a freelance tourist and nature guide in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Germany. You can contact her at: cluettcke@gmx.de.

What truly makes a difference in a CIG course?

Penelope Gkini (Greece)

Looking at the key ingredients of an IE Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) course.

Beyond careful planning and organisation, other powerful elements shape the experience: the place itself and the people who live there, the participants, and the relationships they share with the trainer. These were the key ingredients that made this CIG course in Greece so unique.

We gathered in Anogeia, a renowned mountain village in Crete, birthplace of some of the island's most celebrated traditional musicians. At 700 metres above sea level, with temperatures ranging from 2 to 6 degrees Celsius (yes, it can be cold in the south!), we met in the heart of the Psiloritis UNESCO Global Geopark, beneath the imposing peak of Mount Psiloritis — the legendary mountain of Zeus.

The participants formed an inspiring mosaic of natural and cultural heritage professionals. They travelled from every corner of the island — east and west — to meet under Zeus' mountain: cavers, mountain leaders, tourist guides, museum staff, and museum educators. Yet, what made this gathering truly special was not only the diversity of backgrounds. It was the joy of training friends and long-time colleagues — people we have met time and again along the stony paths of our island. Sharing such a transformative experience with those you have grown and worked alongside for years — How rare and meaningful is that?

Even more touching was returning to a village after ten years and being welcomed with such warmth. Despite the rain, members of the cultural association guided us through their village, Gonies, proudly revealing its hidden corners — its 'gonies', as the word beautifully suggests in Greek. And then came more surprises: they had prepared a feast in our honour. This is the true meaning of 'filoxenia' — Cretan hospitality at its finest.



Great group dynamics (Image: Penelope Gkini)

As a final gift, we gathered with the villagers to watch a short film about the heritage of a local instrument, the lute, and the moving story of a woman from the village who secretly learned to play it at a time when girls were not allowed to study music.

This course was truly a blessing. I am deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to making this first interpretation course in southern Greece a reality, in collaboration with Mountain Leaders Association of Crete and Unesco Psiloritis Geopark.

Penelope Gkini is an IE Certified Interpretive Guide and Trainer. You can reach her at: porizocrete@gmail.com.

Finding inspiration in unlikely places

Maša Pavičić (Croatia)

Making connections via the often-overlooked cities of Gračac and Obrovac in search of lasting inspiration and deeper meaning.

It's hard to believe it's been three months (at time of writing) since the Interpret Europe Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) course that I attended.

Nestled between the start of winter holidays and the last bits of autumn, we gathered in the unlikely yet ideal setting of Gračac. Thanks to the Zadar Region Tourist Board, the Cerovac Caves Centre of Excellence was our home for the next few days. We gathered from all over Croatia to learn, discuss, and dive into a new experience.

Our trainer encouraged us to search for phenomena inspired by our rugged surroundings. Getting out in the cold was a welcome opportunity for us to seek meaning, try out stepping stones, and apply what we had learned so far in the warmth of the inside space.

After spending two days soaking in all things interpretation, it was time to test out our skills in the once-thriving city of Obrovac at the other side of Mount Velebit. Fortunately, our group was blessed with an enthusiastic tour guide-to-be of just the area, who gave us a brief guided tour through the small town that has seen better days. It was surprisingly exciting to explore its riverbanks and hidden corners, discovering layers of history and centuries of life that formed the identity of its people. With so much inspiration it was easy to create our own interpretive walk connecting places of encounter in the seemingly empty city. The sights we chose spoke to us past what the eye could see. I don't remember everything that was said, but I remember the emotions we felt and shared in our communal space. Isn't that what interpretation is all about?



The underworld (Image: Vida Ungar)

Connecting with our surroundings on a deeper level happened quite literally on the second weekend of our brief but impactful gathering. We were invited to explore the lower part of the Cerovac caves. The underworld thrilled us and made us feel like a part of a larger ecosystem, both socially and historically. Seeing the formations created over thousands of years really puts things in a different perspective. Working again with the rough surface of the northern slopes of Mount Velebit made so much more sense after touching its dark underground heart. Even the cold seemed a bit softer and became one of our phenomena.

A sunny Sunday marked the end of our time together. Climbing the old fortress of Obrovac and marvelling at the Zrmanja river canyon made us fall in love with the region all over again. It was especially emotional to search for meaning in this area, which suffered greatly in the Croatian Homeland War of the 1990s. Making new connections through our shared values seemed more meaningful than ever.

To say our goodbyes with more ease, we shared a rich meal together in a rustic local restaurant. The memory of our time together, the knowledge we gained, and the connection we experienced will be ground for all our future interpretations.

Maša Pavičić is a tour guide and writer, mostly focused on culture and travel. She also does communication for the Dalmatian Islands Environment Foundation. Maša can be contacted via her website, Cultourist: www.cul-tourist.com.

Become a Certified Interpretive Planner (CIP)

Per Sonnvik (Sweden)

Register before 22 May for a CIP course in August. Find out more at the info webinar on 27 April.

IE's next Certified Interpretive Planner (CIP) course will take place 16-21 August in Uppsala, Sweden. Find full information about the course at www.slu.se/CIP26eng

On the course you will learn how to plan for meaningful experiences at a heritage site, based on the principles of interpretation, and how to use interpretation to provoke new perspectives, critical thinking and inspire active citizenship.

Why the course is relevant for you

This course is for all of you who work with planning for nature interpretation or heritage/culture interpretation. It is relevant for a wide range of sites and areas where you want to communicate with visitors about the local stories and values, for example national parks, heritage sites, visitor centres and museums. Maybe you work in the public sector with areas, sites and trails for the public, or at a consultancy firm producing exhibitions for visitor centres and museums or interpretation for other kind of sites.

Join this course to explore how heritage sites can be made more meaningful and accessible for all. You will discover the essentials of heritage interpretation and, together with others, work on a real site to create inspiring and practical planning proposals.

Course content

The course programme covers all that is relevant for adding the interpretive component to planning for and together with local people and visitors around specific heritage sites.

The course consists of three parts:

1. Introductory online meeting in June. This is an opportunity for participants to meet each other, and to gain an initial understanding of the course content and logistics.
2. Main course in Uppsala 16-21 August. This includes intensive training activities, presentations, study visits, individual and group work. You, together with other participants, will work as a team to develop interpretive proposals for a site. On the last day, all participants will present their proposals.
3. Online meetings after the course. Three optional online meetings to assist you in your homework about developing an interpretive plan.

You can see more about course content at www.slu.se/CIP26eng

You will be certified

Participants that successfully meet all certification requirements of the course will be certified by Interpret Europe as interpretive planners - CIP.

Our venue

The venue for the course is SLU in Uppsala. During the course we will work with an area in the beautiful campus Ultuna, as well as visit a different site to get inspiration and provoke new perspectives.

Info webinar about the course

Join webinar about the course on 27 April at 13:00-13:30 CET to find out more and ask any questions. The session will be recorded.

How to register

Register at www.slu.se/CIP26eng by 22 May.

For content-related questions, please contact Valya Stergioti at: vster@outlook.com.

For registration - to the webinar or the course, and any questions on logistics and practical arrangements, please contact Per Sonnvik at: per.sonnvik@slu.se.

Congratulations to our newly certified members

Certified Interpretive Guides (CIG)

Dejan Anđelić, Serbia
Aurélia Bachoríková, Slovakia
Karin Baloh Martić, Croatia
Gabrijela Baraban, Croatia
Lolita Bizzarri, Italy
Teodora Branković, Serbia
Antonio Consoli, Italy
Kristina Delalić Vetengl, Croatia
Danijela Đokić, Serbia
Žiža Dragičević, Serbia
Danijel Drpić, Croatia
Letizia Filippini, Italy
Sara Freire, Portugal
Frana Galjanić, Croatia
Piriovoli Georgia, Greece
Anna Gondová, Slovakia
Annalisa Guaraldo, Italy
Jovana Jovanović, Serbia
Květa Kicková, Slovakia
Bojan Kojičić, Serbia
Iva Labas, Croatia
Gianmarco Lazzarin, Italy
Ivana Manevska, Serbia
Sara Marinello, Italy
Ivana Miladinović, Serbia
Olivera Milović, Serbia
Martin Mráz, Slovakia
Miljan Nikolić, Serbia
Milica Nikolić, Serbia
Giovanna Petrone, Italy
Marija Petrović, Serbia
Slađana Pupovac, Croatia
Tajana Rogulja, Croatia
Eleonora Rossi, Italy
Vittorio Ruberto, Italy
Ivona Sabo, Serbia
Dalia Škrget, Croatia
Jovana Trailović, Serbia
Chrisje Van Ek, Netherlands
Đorđije Vasiljević, Serbia
Marko Vasiljević, Serbia
Francesco Verzulli, Italy
Ivana Vesković, Serbia
Sandra Zubcic, Croatia

Certified Interpretive Writers (CIW)

Zorana Cuca Krivokapic, Montenegro
Vesna Kovač, Montenegro
Ivana Krivokapić, Montenegro
Bogdan Milačić, Montenegro
Iva Papić, Croatia
Daliborka Pavićević, Montenegro
Milica Popović, Montenegro
Lana Skender, Croatia
Jovana Stanišić, Montenegro
Anica Tomovic, Montenegro

Certified Interpretive Planners (CIP)

Ronia Anastasiadou, Greece
Korrie De Boer, Netherlands
Neža Loštrek, Slovenia
Laura Time, Romania

IE training courses and webinars

Certification courses and modules

Would you enjoy an enriching course with like-minded people and to gain an IE certification? Keep an eye on the training pages of the IE website for up-to-date information on the next courses available near you: <https://interpret-europe.net/training/ie-courses/ie-training-courses/> or email training@interpret-europe.net.

We also now offer a scholarship scheme! Find out more and check your eligibility here: <https://interpret-europe.net/training/ie-courses/scholarship-scheme/>

Date	Language	Location	Trainer
Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) course			
03-12/04/2026	Macedonian	Skopje, North Macedonia	Vasilka Dimitrovska
13-22/04/2026	Croatian	Velika Gorica, Croatia	Iva Silla
Certified Interpretive Writer (CIW) course			
16-20/08/2026	German	Greifswald, Germany	Thorsten Ludwig
Certified Interpretive Planner (CIP) course			
16-20/08/2026	English	Uppsala, Sweden	Valys Stergioti

Upcoming IE webinars

29 April 2026 at 09.00 CEST

Lima Milenaria - urban heritage narratives and civic conversations about identity and belonging.
Javier Lizarzaburu (The Netherlands)

12 May 2026 at 15.00 CEST

Case studies from museum and cultural heritage projects in the Czech Republic.
Barbora Klapalová (Czech Republic)

9 June 2026 at 15.00 CEST

How digital cultural heritage collections can be used to create off-site digital experience
Adrian Murphy (The Netherlands)

IE webinars are free for members and are conducted in English.

Keep an eye on the website for upcoming webinars, which are usually offered monthly:

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

Email webinar@interpret-europe.net for more information or if you would like to present a topic yourself.

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.

Listening to forest narratives

Georgia Pyriovolis (Greece)

Forest bathing invites us to slow down and hear the multiple narratives living in the landscape.

[Submitted in response to the Learning Landscape initiative online symposium]

Forest bathing, or *shinrin-yoku*, is often described as a wellbeing practice, an immersion in the sensory atmosphere of the forest. Rather than offering a structured story, it offers a space where participants slow down, notice more, and connect with the diverse narratives present in a natural landscape. In this way, forest bathing aligns with the wider shift in interpretation toward dialogue, reflection and personal meaning-making.

The forest is an ideal setting for exploring the question, Whose stories are told? While many heritage sites still emphasise dominant historical or cultural narratives, natural landscapes hold a multiplicity of simultaneous narratives – ecological, cultural, scientific, spiritual and personal. Forest bathing does not prioritise one over the other. Instead, it invites participants to recognise that their own presence becomes part of the place's evolving story. Gentle prompts, such as "Notice what draws your attention", help individuals uncover personal memories, associations, and emotions, addressing the question, How can people become aware of their own narratives?

This approach also helps address another challenge: How do we balance factual accuracy with narrative richness? Forest bathing does not contradict scientific knowledge; instead, it places it in context. A guide may share ecological perspectives, but these serve as invitations rather than explanations. Participants are encouraged to sense, reflect, and co-create meaning from their encounters. Forest bathing shows that facts can be offered not as directives, but as invitations to reflection. Emotional engagement becomes a pathway to critical thinking and self-reflection, rather than conflicting with evidence-based understanding.



Listen to the narratives of the forest (Image: Georgia Pyriovolis)

Most importantly, forest bathing highlights how the interpretive profession is evolving, responding to the question, How is the interpretive profession adapting for the future? Guides become facilitators, mediators, and co-creators of meaning rather than solely conveyors of knowledge. Shared silence, sensory invitations and reflective circles enable participants to contribute their own perspectives, showing that heritage interpretation can trigger experiences rather than only deliver information. Such experiences can support dialogue, help manage narrative tension and foster social cohesion.

In a time of ecological crisis, forest bathing offers a gentle yet profound method for shaping new narratives, ones rooted in presence, reflection, and co-creation. After all, heritage is not just what we preserve, but how we relate to the world.

Georgia Pyriovolis is an English teacher, certified tour leader and mountain guide, as well as a pioneer of Forest Bathing practice in Greece. She facilitates nature-based experiences that foster reflection, dialogue and meaningful connection with place. You can get in touch with her at: gpyriov@gmail.com.

In This Place: A soundwalk at the former KL Plaszow site

Aleksandra Kumala (Poland)

Exploring through a soundwalk, which integrates multiple stories and engages with its palimpsest nature and difficult heritage.

[Submitted in response to the Learning Landscape initiative online symposium]

History

The Plaszow German Nazi concentration camp (KL Plaszow) was established in two districts of Kraków – Podgórze and Wola Duchacka – on the grounds of two pre-war Jewish cemeteries.

The camp operated between 1942 and 1945 on an area of approximately 0.8 sqkm (today, only half of that terrain is officially recognised as a memorial site). Depending on the period, it functioned as a forced labour camp, a concentration camp, and a transit camp.

Imprisoned there were Polish Jews (including those deported from the liquidated Kraków Ghetto), Poles, Hungarian and Slovak Jews, Romani families, and Germans. The total number of prisoners is estimated at over 35,000 people, with approximately 6,000–10,000 victims.

Commemoration and controversies

Commemoration efforts date back to the communist era. Between 1947 and 2002, seven monuments and plaques were erected, the most recognisable being the Monument of the Victims of Fascism (1964). The site gained broader public visibility in the 1990s, particularly after the premiere of the Oscar-winning *Schindler's List*, directed by Steven Spielberg.

In 2002, the site was entered into the official heritage register as a war cemetery. In 2006, a competition for a memorial was announced; although a winning design was selected the following year, it was significantly modified in 2013 after a series of controversies. One major concern was its incompatibility with Halacha (Jewish religious law), which prohibits the disturbance of human remains.



In This Place soundwalk (Image: Vira Kosina-Polańska)

In 2016, the Kraków Museum initiated activities to raise public awareness of the site, including a conference, guided walks, and the beginning of conceptual work on a new commemoration scenario. Archaeological research was conducted on-site between 2016 and 2019. In 2017, an outdoor exhibition was installed.

Between 2016 and 2020, extensive public consultations took place. The proposed commemoration plan sparked further controversy, as it included fencing the area and the large-scale removal of trees to construct a museum building (ongoing). In 2020, the [KL Plaszow Museum](#) was officially established.

By that time, due to urban development and changes in the surrounding landscape, the former camp site had become a vast green area near the city centre, approximately 20 minutes from the Main Square. Residents used it for a range of everyday activities that were not always aligned with the site's traumatic history: walking with children and dogs, picnicking, sunbathing, jogging, and social gatherings.

In 2017, shortly after its founding, FestivALT began working with and on the site. It aimed to mediate tensions surrounding the commemorative process and to propose participatory projects that would engage the local community, deepen knowledge of the area's Jewish history, and acknowledge the site's palimpsestic character.

Among these initiatives was a series of walks titled The Jew, the Dog, and the Neighbour, designed to familiarise participants with the locations of mass graves and to indicate which areas (then still unmarked) should not be disturbed. The walks were led by a Halacha expert, accompanied by his dog, creating a symbolic and practical gesture of coexistence and care.

Other projects included Medicinal Plants of Płaszów and a participatory marking of mass graves with Berlin-based artist Anna Schapiro. Using ecological, earth-based pigments safe for the environment, animals, and people, participants created temporary visual markers, gradually fading with rain and snow – both a practical intervention and a metaphor for the fragility and disappearance of memory. Simultaneously, the Still Standing – Monument in Motion project introduced a performative monument presented on the site yearly.

Soundwalk 'In This Place'

In 2024, FestivALT received funding from the Jewish Historical Institute Association and the National Recovery Plan (KPO), enabling collaboration with Polish artists Marcin Dymiter and Ludomir Franczak, who had previously worked with the audiosphere of the former KL Stutthof site (now Stutthof Museum) in northern Poland.

The project draws on nearly 100 interviews conducted by the FestivALT team throughout the years with diverse stakeholders, as well as excerpts from essays and books, and ambient compositions created by Dymiter specifically for the soundwalk.

It integrated multiple perspectives: human (residents, researchers, guides, descendants, decision-makers) and non-human (elements of the soundscape reflecting the agency of nature and other-than-human actors).

The freely accessible mobile application Echoes.xyz (also available via desktop) was used to implement the project. The platform operates through geolocation: each sound piece is assigned to a specific location and appears on

the map as a geometric shape, accompanied by a title and short description. Sounds are activated by the listener's movement, creating an embodied, multisensory, site-specific experience. The soundwalk can be explored individually or in groups, and allows the site to be encountered within the rhythms of everyday life.

Narrating difficult heritage

The KL Plaszow site embodies both difficult history (the stories and traumas of victims and survivors) and difficult heritage (the physical remnants of camp infrastructure embedded in the contemporary landscape). The Echoes app serves here as an accessible technological tool for mediating such difficult heritage and supporting the broader process of heritagisation that, for FestivALT, began in 2017.

Memory activism in this context seeks to foster accessibility, civic dialogue, and ethical engagement with the site. It emphasises community-led, bottom-up practices as a potential counterbalance to institutionalised, top-down narratives.

The KL Plaszow Museum is currently developing its own "Sound Monument," scheduled to premiere later this year. This project will be accessible exclusively through the museum's infrastructure, via dedicated headphones available on-site.

Aware of this initiative, FestivALT deliberately structured its soundwalk around two opposite ends of the former camp area – larger than the officially designated memorial zone and encompassing spaces now occupied by, for instance, a gas station, supermarket, and branch of McDonald's – while leaving the central part untouched. The intention was not to overlap with the Museum's forthcoming project, but also to preserve the 'heart' of the former camp – where the appellplatz once stood, where the mass graves and monuments are located – as an undisturbed space. Visitors can thus experience its present-day audiosphere directly: birdsong interwoven with the distant echoes of urban traffic.

Ultimately, the project seeks to “reveal unheard or silenced stories, challenge perception, encourage emotional and empathetic response, and create a sense of presence.” (Stylianou-Lambert et al, 2022).

Reference:

Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert, Alexandra Bounia, and Antigone Heraclidou, 'Introduction: Emerging Technologies, Museums and Difficult Heritage', in *Emerging Technologies and Museums: Mediating Difficult Heritage*, ed. Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert, Alexandra Bounia, and Antigone Heraclidou (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2022)

Aleksandra Kumala (PhD) is a cultural studies scholar working as a head of research at FestivALT, Poland (www.festivalt.com) and research and documentation officer at ESHEM (https://holocaust-memory-sites.ec.europa.eu/index_en?prefLang=pl). You can get in touch with her at: aleksandra@festivalt.com.



Listening to the soundwalk (Image: Vira Kosina-Polańska)

Why can't interpretation do more to tackle society's problems?

Jon Kohl (Costa Rica)

We consider ten ways to make heritage interpretation more holistic for greater impact.

Interpretation might play on a field two sizes too small. Of course, you may not be sure if your interpretation does or not, until you zoom beyond the small field. It is hard to imagine the feel of playing inside a major soccer stadium if you have only ever played on a local field.

To upscale, both the way interpreters think and do must take in more of the big picture by including previously hidden dimensions, perspectives, forces, and goals. Below, I share five ways of thinking and five ways of doing more holistically to reach that stadium.

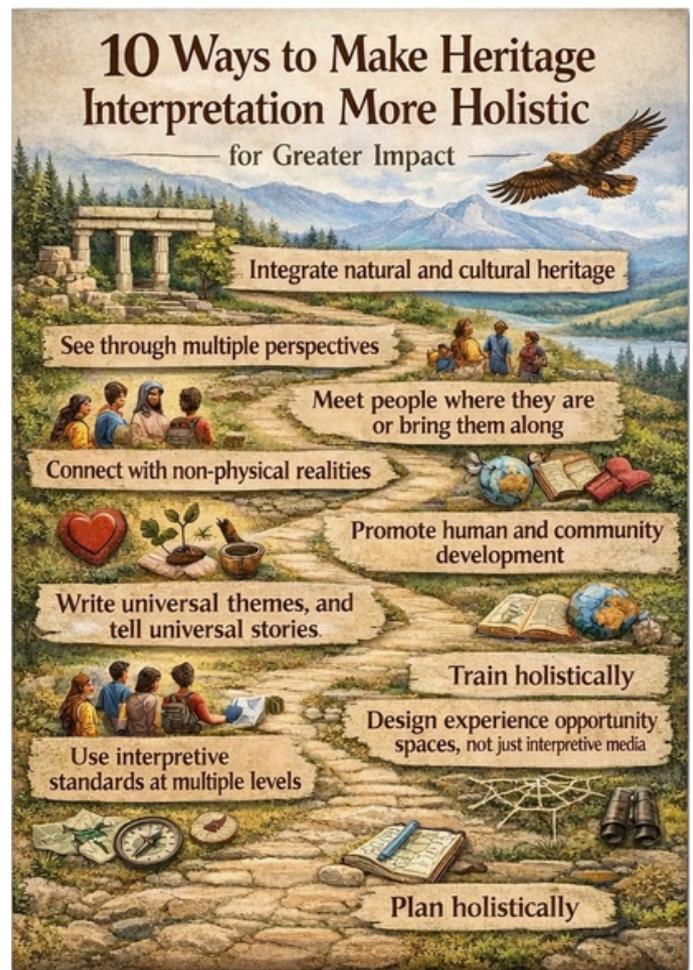
Thinking

1. Integrate natural and cultural heritage

Chopping heritage into parts hides the larger picture. In fact, people often regard culture as separate from nature because they see humans as separate. But the larger evolutionary process since the Big Bang has been leaving evidence of its work across galactic, geologic, biological, cultural, and technological dimensions, all part of one universal process. So, one way to think more holistically is to interpret the universal journey that creates all heritage.

2. See through multiple perspectives

Interpreters often interpret from a single perspective. It is the safest but least impactful way. We can view every object, whether pea or planet, through multiple lenses. These lenses can be physical or they can be through different worldviews. Visitors do not transform their perspectives or grow into better people simply by wearing the same glasses. We only grow when challenged. One way to challenge is to interpret from multiple perspectives.



Ten ways to make HI more holistic (Image: Jon Kohl - AI generated)

3. Meet people where they are or bring them along

Typically, interpretation meets audiences where they are, that is, they translate or interpret ideas into an audience's language-mindset. Interpreters must understand which worldview their audience holds and which they themselves embrace to jump the gap between them. But another tool less employed is transformation: rather than meet the audience where it is, interpreters meet them and then bring them to where the interpreter is. Transformation increases consciousness and introduces new values. Though more challenging, transformation is ultimately key for interpreters who aspire to broaden perspectives and inspire engagement with the world around us.

4. Connect with non-physical realities

Humans have always coexisted with the divine, spirits, and ancestors. But when modernism arrived, it rejected the intangible, spiritual, otherworldly as unmeasurable, unprovable, and non-existent. It then explained away inner personal experiences as electrical currents pulsing through grey matter. Surveys show that most people believe in God, ghosts, energy bodies, life after death, or greater universal purpose. Science itself researches consciousness fields, extrasensory perception, reincarnation, while UNESCO designates intangible heritage. So, one way to include more universe is to tell stories about non-physical phenomena that represent how many cultures experience their heritage.

5. Promote human and community development

Evermore, people advocate that interpretation should build something beyond visitor knowledge and awareness. The field can contribute to human and community development. Many interpreters already practice participatory interpretation and UNESCO/Interpret Europe's values-based interpretation. Some use interpretation to manage and conserve heritage. Others facilitate community-based processes to collectively interpret heritage for community benefit.

Doing

6. Write universal themes, and tell universal stories

While interpreting frog maturation and Roman architecture has its place, people transform when they grapple with bigger, more existential realities that challenge them to contemplate civilisation, human history, evolution, and the universe. While no theme or story is immune to change, interpreters who write themes and tell stories about beauty, truth, and goodness can captivate, provoke thought, and deepen consciousness.

7. Train holistically

Too often, one-off trainings benefit instructors more than students. Students can even lose motivation when they return home with new ideas and practices only to find that no one understands or supports them. Piecemeal trainings occur when trainers sequester students at locations that bear no resemblance to real work environments. They focus only on student performance without considering the influence of colleagues, supervisors, policies, or the social context where they work. They overlook trainees' psychological wellbeing. They try to make one curriculum fit all... A holistic approach transcends these problems.

8. Design experience opportunity spaces, not just interpretive media

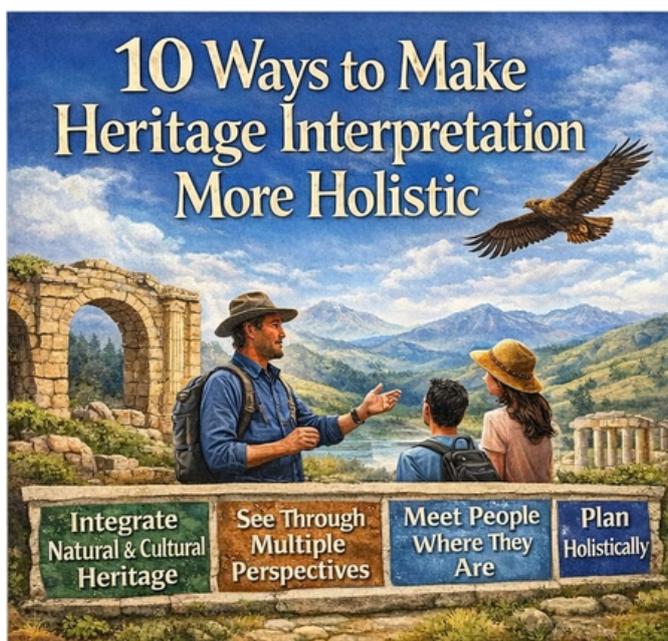
Interpretive media most often focus on just a single intervention and audience effect, whether a human guide, signage, or exhibit. But this narrow field of view excludes many factors that sculpt visitor opportunities to live an experience. Consider a circus tent. Within that controlled space, different designers synchronise their control of lighting, music, smells, actors such as clowns and animals, symbols and decorations, movements, visitor flow, visitor interactions, food, temperature, timing, object authenticity, and of course meanings and messages trumpeted by the ringmaster. A more holistic interpretation manages multiple interacting conditions through which visitors pass.

9. Use interpretive standards at multiple levels

Interpretive standards almost always focus on individual interpreters even though many goals can only be achieved by teams and communities. Interpretation occurs at different levels of organisation. While individuals may offer programmes, teams design exhibits, and communities manage heritage.

10. Plan holistically

Modernist interpretive planning employs a technical, expert-driven, data-intensive approach that often excludes real participation of other non-technical stakeholders resulting in a published, polished plan that cannot be updated, ends on the shelf, and is ignored by stakeholders. A holistic approach considers feelings, aspirations, and beliefs of individuals; the culture that shapes community beliefs; planning skills of community members and interpretive planners; the laws and systems that govern planning, interpretation, and implementation. Holistic planning considers all these and other factors to increase the chance that an interpretive plan not only gets implemented but creates desired results in the world.



Ten ways to make HI more holistic (Image: Jon Kohl - AI generated)

Playing on the larger field means playing with a broader field of view. By thinking and doing more holistically we launch greater impact in society. But the real question is not whether interpretation can play on a larger field, but whether we have the courage to step onto it in the first place.

A longer version of this article, including graphics and references, was originally published online in February 2026. You can see the full article here: [Medium.com](https://medium.com).

Jon Kohl is an interpretive planner, author, and researcher whose work explores how narratives shape meaning, decision-making, and collective futures in natural-cultural heritage contexts. Jon is the executive director of the PUP Collaboratory and can be contacted at: jon@pupcollaboratory.net.

What's going on elsewhere

NextGen Heritage Ambassadors

European Heritage Hub

An important milestone for youth engagement in Europe's cultural heritage landscape.

[Youth.Heritage.Europe](#), together with [Europa Nostra](#) — Project Leader of the [European Heritage Hub](#) — is proud to announce the NextGen Heritage Ambassadors (NGHA).

Following a highly competitive selection process with more than 300 applicants, 12 exceptional young professionals and students from across Europe have been selected to join this newly established advisory group. The NGHA places young voices at the heart of the European Heritage Hub, ensuring that emerging perspectives actively shape the future of Europe's cultural heritage.

Over the next two years, the NextGen Heritage Ambassadors will act as youth advisors, advocates, and co-creators, bringing fresh ideas, creativity, and energy into strategic discussions. Their work will focus on key challenges and opportunities facing the heritage sector today — from climate change and social justice to digitalisation, participation, and intergenerational dialogue.

Chaired and coordinated by [Youth.Heritage.Europe](#), with the support of [Europa Nostra](#), the NGHA complements the work of the Advisory Council by strengthening the Hub's commitment to youth engagement, innovation, and long-term sustainability.

We invite you to discover the 12 NextGen Heritage Ambassadors and learn more about the inspiring individuals behind this initiative — the voices shaping what comes next for Europe's cultural heritage!

Meet the youth ambassadors:

<https://www.europeanheritagehub.eu/hub-unveils-12-new-nextgen-heritage-ambassadors-to-guide-youth-priorities-in-heritage/>



**European
Heritage
Hub**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Interpreting with the LGBTQIA+ community in mind

Danni Gilbert & Steve Slack (UK)

A new free guide supporting confident, care-led LGBTQIA+ interpretation through practical questions and real-world examples is available from AHI.

Heritage professionals are increasingly engaging with LGBTQIA+ histories, lives and experiences, yet many report uncertainty about how to do so responsibly, confidently and with care. Questions around language, representation, consultation, organisational context and public response can feel complex, particularly when there is no single 'right' way to proceed.

In response to this, the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI) has recently published a new Best Practice Guidance on LGBTQIA+ Heritage Interpretation, developed collaboratively by a working group of LGBTQIA+ interpreters from across the sector. Rather than offering prescriptive rules or checklists, the guide is structured around a set of open, practical questions designed to support reflection, discussion and better decision-making in real-world contexts.

The guidance is aimed at interpreters working in any heritage setting, museums, galleries, archives, historic sites or community projects, and at any scale or budget.

Its core premise is simple - good LGBTQIA+ interpretation begins not with certainty, but with thoughtful questioning. The guide invites teams to pause and consider where they are starting from, how care is embedded in their work, who is involved in shaping interpretation, how words and images are used, and how organisations respond to feedback or challenge. There are no right or wrong answers, just more informed, thoughtful ones that emerge through reflection, collaboration and care.



Peterborough Museum credits (Image: Steve Slack)

A key strength of the guide is its emphasis on process. It was developed through shared discussion and debate – through a working group of LGBTQIA+ interpreters representing a breadth of practice in natural, cultural and historic interpretation; activism; design; writing; collections; communications; in-person interpretation; interpretive planning and a range of career stages and geographies. It quickly became clear that queer interpretation is far too complex for a simple list of 'dos and don'ts'. The resulting guide reflects the reality that LGBTQIA+ heritage interpretation is not a single story, voice or approach.

This collaborative development really mattered to us. Interpretation is rarely at its best when created in isolation. Multiple perspectives strengthen practice. And in work that seeks to address LGBTQIA+ heritage, lived experience, collaboration and care are essential. Case studies and suggested further reading offer inspiration rather than templates, while a short glossary supports those who may be new to the terminology often used in this field.

Importantly, the guidance also acknowledges the organisational context in which interpretation takes place. It encourages heritage professionals to consider values, ethics and institutional responsibility alongside creativity and storytelling, and to distinguish between genuine questions from audiences and bad faith responses that may require firm boundaries.

In line with AHI's commitment to inclusive and ethical practice, the guide is free to download and intended for international use. While developed within a UK and Ireland context, its questions and principles are designed to be adaptable across different cultural, legal and institutional landscapes.

Ultimately, the guide does not aim to provide definitive answers. Instead, it offers a framework for better conversations, conversations that can support more authentic, confident and care-led LGBTQIA+ heritage interpretation over time.

Download the free guide here:

<https://ahi.org.uk/resource/lgbtqia-heritage-interpretation/>

Find out more about AHI here:

<https://ahi.org.uk/>



Project Unicorn at Perth Museum (Image: Julie Howden)

Free webinar

In addition to the guide, AHI is also hosting a free webinar: LGBTQIA+ heritage interpretation.

When? Thursday 21 May 2026 at 17.00 BST/ 18.00 CEST

Join us for this online session where we will showcase the contents of the new guide, discuss how we attempted to 'queer' the interpretation process and highlight some of the case studies from across the UK and Ireland.

Queer heritage is embedded in society and can be found in museums, galleries, heritage properties, outdoor sites and beyond. But some interpreters tell us they are unsure as to how to approach this subject. This guidance and webinar aim to offer some reassurance, some insight and some inspiration through reference to some inspirational queer interpretation. There will be time for questions and conversation during the session.

The webinar will be hosted by Steve Slack (FAHI) with members of the collective who created the best practice guide.

Find out more and register here:

<https://ahi.org.uk/event/lgbtqia-heritage-interpretation-webinar/>

Danni Gilbert is Marketing & Communications lead at the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI). She works with heritage organisations to support inclusive, ethical interpretation practice and leads on sector wide guidance, campaigns and knowledge sharing initiatives. Contact: marketing@ahi.org.uk.

Steve Slack is a heritage interpretation consultant in the UK and a Fellow of the Association of Heritage Interpretation (FAHI). His current work focusses on including audiences in participative exhibition making processes and in engaging visitors through interpretive experiences that provoke dialogue and active meaning making. He can be contacted at: steve@steveslack.co.uk.

Funding opportunities

Several European funding programmes are currently open or forthcoming.

The following calls may interest organisations working in heritage interpretation, museums, and cultural heritage. Please always check the original links for full, up-to-date details and how to apply.

A good place to start is the overview of open calls maintained by the European Commission:
<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/funding/calls>

European Cooperation Projects (Creative Europe)

Under the Creative Europe Programme, the European Cooperation Projects call supports cross-border cultural collaboration.

Deadline: 5 May 2026

<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/2026-creative-europe-call-for-european-cooperation-projects-open>

Projects may focus on:

- transnational cooperation between cultural organisations
- innovative cultural practices
- audience development and participation
- sustainability and inclusion in cultural work

Projects must involve multiple partners from different European countries, making them well suited for networks of heritage sites, museums, and interpretation organisations.

Creative Innovation Lab

Also part of Creative Europe's cross-sectoral strand, this call supports experimentation and innovation across cultural sectors.

Deadline: 23 April 2026

https://creativeeurope.in.ua/en/call/crea_cross_2026_innovlab

Topics include:

- digital tools and new cultural business models
- AI and immersive technologies
- cross-sector collaboration (e.g. heritage, audiovisual, gaming)

This may be relevant for projects exploring digital interpretation or virtual exhibitions.



Research and Innovation Projects (Horizon Europe)

The EU research programme Horizon Europe regularly publishes calls under Cluster 2: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society.

These calls often support research and pilot projects on themes such as:

- participatory heritage and cultural engagement
- digital transformation of heritage
- social inclusion through culture

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

Cultural initiatives linked to the New European Bauhaus

Projects combining culture, sustainability, and community engagement may also find opportunities linked to the New European Bauhaus.

<https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu>

Tip: Many EU programmes require international partnerships, so organisations considering applying should start exploring potential partners and project ideas well ahead of the deadlines.

EU funding opportunities for the natural heritage sector

LIFE Programme

The LIFE Programme is the EU's main funding instrument for nature conservation, biodiversity protection, and environmental action. It supports projects implemented by NGOs, public authorities, universities, and other organisations.

Typical projects range from €1–5 million and run for 3–5 years.

2026 Calls - Expected publication: 21 April 2026

LIFE Info Days: 28–30 April 2026

https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/life-calls-proposals-2026_en

Key sub-programmes include:

- Nature and Biodiversity – habitat restoration, species protection, Natura 2000 management
- Circular Economy and Quality of Life – pollution reduction, environmental solutions
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation
- Clean Energy Transition

This programme is particularly relevant for natural heritage organisations, including projects focused on:

- biodiversity conservation
- ecosystem restoration
- nature interpretation and visitor engagement in protected areas
- community participation in nature protection

Horizon Europe – Cluster 6

The EU research programme Horizon Europe funds research and innovation on biodiversity and ecosystems.

Upcoming call (2026) opening: 17 April 2026

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/cluster-6-food-bioeconomy-natural-resources-agriculture-and-environment_en

These calls are best suited to research institutes, universities, and large partnerships, but NGOs and heritage organisations can participate as partners.

IE announcements

Open space for your voice at iecon

Bettina Lehnés (Germany)

Many of us will meet soon in Faro and we are looking forward to hearing your opinions. Even if you cannot join, there will be food for thought.

It is really great that this year's topic and location seem to have proven popular before we even begin, with the Interpret Europe conference becoming fully booked in no time.

When 150 people from diverse regions of Europe, as well as from South Korea, Brazil, Kenya, and the USA, gather for the next Interpret Europe conference in April, the Faro Convention and its significance for natural and cultural heritage will be the central focus.

Open space

Even before the conference gets fully underway, we will welcome members and non-members to our first IE open space session - a participant-driven forum where we will come together to explore the questions that matter most to us. Whether your passion lies in advancing heritage interpretation practice or strengthening the way our membership organisation functions, this method of working invites you to step forward, voice your ideas, and collaborate with others who care just as deeply.

How do we make Interpret Europe even more resilient and impactful together - for ourselves as members and for more and better interpretation across Europe? Bring a theme you want to discuss and develop with others.

Open space thrives on the belief that the people who show up are the right people, the topics that emerge are the ones we are ready to tackle, and the outcomes depend on the collective energy we bring. Here, you are not just a participant but an active co-creator, free to move between discussions, propose themes, challenge assumptions, and shape practical results. Your curiosity, commitment, and willingness to engage are the driving forces behind what we discover - and the impact we create together.



Peter Seccombe of the conference review panel and Bettina Lehnés, IE Events Coordinator, meet on the Path of Legends in Faro (Image: Patrick Lehnés)

The open space forum will take place on 16 April 2026 at 14:00-17:00. Make sure to book a space and come along if you will be joining us for iecon.

(This year's IE General Assembly will be digital and will take place in May instead of in this usual pre-conference spot.)

Developing the Faro Declaration

On the last day of the conference, full of inspiration, new ideas and thoughts from numerous presentations, workshops, study visits and conversations during the breaks, we will come together in a plenary session. Your input and active participation will be needed here too! Organised by our colleagues from MIK Małopolski Instytut Kultury in Krakow, we will gather and discuss what we've learned from these days together, which will hopefully culminate in a final document - the IE Faro Declaration - that will give the Faro spirit a new boost.

Let us carry the light of Faro into the world spreading how interpretation can enhance the value of heritage for people and societies not only in European democracies.

Join the team!

Do you have ideas for future conferences? Do you see yourself getting more involved in the IE events team? We are looking for one, or several, volunteers to help take on some of the tasks involved in managing the IE annual conference. The idea would be to shadow a little this year to understand more about what is involved with a view to taking on more responsibility.

If this sounds like something you could get your teeth into, please make contact with Bettina either by email or in person at iecon.

Bettina Lehnes is IE's Event Coordinator. She can be contacted at: bettina.lehnes@interpret-europe.net.



Welcome to our new members

Institutional members

Albanian Tourism Institute, Albania
Academy of Arts and Culture, Centre for Cultural
Heritage, Croatia
Institute of European Studies at Jagiellonian
University, Poland
Hunebedcentrum, Netherlands

Individual members

Iris Alkaher, Israel
Ero Alykatora, Greece
Christoforos Baladimas, Greece
Katarina Beneš, Serbia
Katica Biber Snur, Serbia
Joselina Borges-Mayze, United Kingdom
Paula Bučar, Croatia
Sofia Capaccioni, Italy
Saša Čaval, Slovenia
Sophia Rebecca Chapman, Greece
Dimitris Chondros, Greece
Kristína Cibulková, Slovakia
Stefan Dabižinović, Montenegro
Maja Dabović, Montenegro
Giovanna Del Greco, Italy
Dijana Djurdjic, Montenegro
Marijana Dragičević, Croatia
Jadranka Dujčić Frlan, Croatia
Maja Ergovic, Croatia
Tina Fornarić Žic, Croatia
Maria Forslund, Sweden
Frana Galjanić, Croatia
Marko Grdan, Croatia
Clark Hancock, USA
Dražen Horvat, Croatia
Indy Hunjan, United Kingdom
Mladen Ilic, Montenegro
Ronald Jarrett, Ireland
Giovanna Jerolimić Toić, Croatia
Lenka Jovicin, Serbia
Muriel Joyeux, France
Euaggelia Kamilaki, Greece
Eleftheria Kanavaki, Greece
Konstantina Karsioti, Greece
Andreja Kolić, Croatia
Paulina Kovacevic, Croatia
Jackie Lee, United Kingdom
Chris Lee, United Kingdom

Individual members (continued)

Silvija Limani, Croatia
Adrian M, Romania
Boris Magdić, Croatia
Anca Majoru, Romania
Ivana Maric, Croatia
Livia Maričević, Croatia
Anabela Maričić Milić, Croatia
Katarina Matkerić, Croatia
Rebeka Meglič, Croatia
Snezana Mijic, Serbia
Tatjana Miljenovic, Montenegro
Ivana Mlacović, Croatia
Gemma Mughini, United Kingdom
Michala Mydlářová, Czech Republic
Gioti Nadia, Greece
Suzana Amalia Nemes, Italy
Martina Novak, Croatia
Martina Opačak, Croatia
Robert Outram, Greece
Stefania Papadaki, Greece
Chara Papailiou, Greece
Andjela Pejak, Serbia
Dalibor Petković, Montenegro
Jadranka Petrušić, Croatia
Sanja Prijatelj, Croatia
Nešo Radulović, Serbia
Aivar Ruukel, Estonia
Natalija Šagud, Croatia
Petra Salković, Croatia
Aleksandra Sambure, Greece
Kristina Saric, Montenegro
Ivana Šeparović, Croatia
Eva Simeonoglou, Greece
Nikolina Šimunović, Croatia
Jelena Škrabe, Croatia
Dunja Sladić, Croatia
Natalia Smerechinskaya, Croatia
Ioannis Soultatos, Greece

Individual members (continued)

Sarah Spiegler, Germany

Željka Stašić, Croatia

Daniele Surdić, Croatia

Teresa Sweeney Meade, Ireland

Anja Szczesinski, Germany

Emilie Theodoridou, Greece

Liliana Trindade, Portugal

Ana Usanovic Vulovic, Montenegro

Marija Vasovic, Croatia

Natasa Velimirovic, Montenegro

Paul Verhoeff, Netherlands

Mihajlo Veselinovic, Serbia

Saša Vochl, Slovenia

Ellen Warren, USA

Μαρίνα Αγγελδάκη, Greece

Μαρία Μπαριτάκη, Greece

Welcome to our new coordinators

Welcome and thanks for joining the IE team to two new coordinators

Country Coordinator Albania - Luan Dervishej

Country Coordinator Spain - Elisa Bailey

You can read all about them, and our whole team of coordinators here:

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

And finally...

Thank you for your contributions.

Sunny spring greetings from your IE News Team!

Marie Banks (UK) – News Coordinator
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.

www.interpret-europe.net/news/guidelines-for-authors/

Deadline for contributions for the summer 2026 edition: Sunday 31 May 2026.

The articles, news items and event announcements reflect the views and opinions of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of Interpret Europe or other organisations.

All photos are under CC0 licence or credited to the authors unless otherwise specified.

Are you following us on social media? Please also engage with us on Facebook and LinkedIn and subscribe to our YouTube channel for regular content.

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

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

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDbwyl-o-tjugfsKXIEI21fQ>

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

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

office@interpret-europe.net
www.interpret-europe.net

**Empowering all who inspire meaningful connections
with Europe's natural and cultural heritage
to shape our common future**

