



interpret europe
European Association for Heritage Interpretation

Newsletter

Summer 2026



www.interpret-europe.net

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Dear members and friends of Interpret Europe,

This summer issue perfectly reflects a vibrant development and current trends many of our members have been busy with in the recent months. Ideas about involvement and co-creation have been echoing at the conference and manifesting in several activities.

The issue opens with a thoughtful reflection on the subtle pressures that influence our work. In a world increasingly shaped by ratings, public opinion and instant reactions, the author asks an uncomfortable question: How do we remain true to our values without simply telling people what they want to hear?

Those same themes echo throughout our coverage of the 2026 Interpret Europe Conference in Faro, Portugal. Through personal reflections, conference highlights and the inspiring wrap-up session of the New Paradigm Café, you'll discover why the 2005 Faro Convention remains relevant, and much more than a policy document. Twenty-one years after its adoption, it continues to challenge us to see heritage as glue for communities, for democracy and, ultimately, for peace.

Across these pages you'll find accounts of co-creative approaches being put into action: from the conclusion of the Learning Landscapes initiative to our Trainers' Summer School programming exercise.

Read about our new partnership in the Liberation Route Europe Youth Ambassadors Network, interpretive writing and community projects in Albania and Latvia to heritage education in schools. Different places, different contexts, but all driven by a belief that heritage interpretation can contribute to a better society.

You will also find news from within our own association. We report on our recent General Assembly, welcome new and renewed members to our Supervisory Committee, celebrate newly certified professionals, introduce new members and coordinators, and invite you to look ahead to future conferences, training opportunities and funding calls.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue: our authors, photographers and editorial team. And thank you to all of you who continue to make Interpret Europe a vibrant and inspiring community.

Enjoy the summer reading!

Helena Vičič, IE Managing Director

Bow your views to reviews

Iva Silla (Croatia)

Adapting, people-pleasing and self-censoring in interpretation.

Freedom of expression is making way for 'feardom' of expression in every area of our lives, and heritage interpretation isn't exempt. Some fields have been pointing to issues such as self-censorship, commercial pressure, societal sensitivity, cancel culture, backlash, neutrality, and audience alienation, even though they still don't offer real solutions. Heritage interpretation communities haven't even started this discussion. Review-based environment, self-censorship and their sister phenomena have crept into the work of heritage interpreters, taming their creative aspirations and neutralising their output. This affects both interpreters and society.

Anyone who deals with audiences is bound to face reviews, and the very notion of it will influence their work. The influence can be very direct, with management looking for highly rated personnel, or it can result from adapting what you deliver to anything that will gain five stars. There are several problems here. For starters, you cannot please everyone, but that doesn't mean a bad review doesn't hurt a venue, a business, or a person. On the other hand, if an experience is praised by the majority, with constant fabulous ratings, it might have already turned to the dark side of people-pleasing.

There is a limitation to value-based heritage interpretation in practice, as interpreters need to check many boxes. They should be enthusiastic about the heritage they're presenting and, at the same time, ready to lead a fruitful and meaningful discussion that challenges harmful views. People who are enthusiastic about anything are often passionate, and it's hard to be diplomatic when a fire is burning within you. Interpreters should also show significant empathy while resisting the urge to be too accommodating. As interpreters, we are well aware of potentially provocative situations, and we might, because we are only

human, decide to tone down or even dismiss topics that promote tolerance, inclusion, antifascism, and everything that should be at the core of our shared European values. If we are honest, we sometimes don't dare to openly criticise the practices that run against our own values, simply because of the very human feeling of fear.

This short article is just food for thought and an invitation to read a longer paper on this subject. I presented it at the 2026 conference in Faro, Portugal. I'm normally good with time management in presentations, but I barely managed to cover one-third of what I had planned to share due to the immediate response. Everyone had questions and wanted to share their stories and views. Up until the end of the conference, people came up to me to share their experiences dealing with unfair reviews, management expectations, and all the topics mentioned above. There is an apparent need for exchange.

The full paper includes my own experience, insightful resources, raises more questions, and is enriched by the honest contributions of two interesting women who shared their stories. I would love to hear from you, too, if you wish to share your thoughts or have an idea on how to approach all this actively and constructively.

The 2026 conference proceedings will be available soon on the IE website:

<https://interpret-europe.net/material/>

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Interpretive guide entered dark shade (Image: Dada Žitko)

Faro at 21!

Jackie Lee (Scotland, UK)

Community, conversation and the Spirit of Faro: Reflections from an inspiring Interpret Europe conference.

In April I attended the Interpret Europe conference wearing my Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI) hat, as I am the current Chair of AHI. It was my first IE conference and what an inspiring few days I had! This year, this major event in the Interpret Europe calendar was built around The Faro Convention, created in 2005 by the Council of Europe. Discussion throughout focussed on how the 'Spirit of Faro' operates now, 21 years after its creation, and whether it still matters in contemporary European heritage interpretation.

To be honest, I had never heard of The Faro Convention, as the UK Government did not ratify it. However, it is a very important document as it emphasises co-creative shared values and community-led interpretation. At its core is the belief that heritage is not just about objects, places or traditions, but about the meaning and value communities attach to them. These connections linking past, present, and future are central to people's sense of identity and wellbeing. This perspective aligns closely with the principles we champion within AHI.

The conference programme offered a rich blend of thought-provoking presentations, hands-on workshops, and engaging site visits. The keynote speakers were particularly inspiring. Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins, who chaired the Council of Europe's steering committee that shaped the Faro Convention, opened the event. He was followed by Amra Hadzimuhamedovic, President and CEO of the House of International Dialogue and the Research Centre for Peace and Heritage in Sarajevo. Her work integrating cultural heritage into post-conflict recovery efforts brought a powerful and deeply human dimension to the discussions. Notably, she also contributed to drafting the Faro Convention.

While I enjoyed all the content of the conference, the New Paradigm Café on the last morning was particularly stimulating. Split up into small groups, we all worked on one particular issue - what the Faro Convention means for the future of heritage interpretation. From a variety of different perspectives related to the various winds that blow across the continent, each group representing one of these winds, we produced large posters summing up our thoughts on the way forward. Without exception, we all highlighted the importance of working within our communities and using heritage as the common denominator to begin discussion and stimulate understanding of the diverse world in which we live and the heritage that has got us to this point and is still part of every community's culture.



Working groups at the Paradigm Café in Club Farensé, Faro
(Image: Dubravko Fijacko)



Our group's poster resulting from the Paradigm Café discussions
(Image: Jackie Lee)

Any meeting of heritage interpreters becomes a celebration of community and friendship, and what interpretation can achieve. At a time of global uncertainty, this conference seemed particularly meaningful with its emphasis on telling the stories of diverse cultures across Europe and how, by understanding these and the value of everyone's heritage, we can all co-exist in democratic societies.

While political decisions may set boundaries, there is no reason why we in the UK cannot continue to connect with our European colleagues, sharing ideas and enjoying good conversation and laughter together.

Jackie Lee combines practical experience with a passion for bringing history to life. Chair of the UK's Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI) and founder of Artemis Scotland, she specialises in first-person costumed interpretation and wrote *A Practical Guide to Costumed Interpretation* (Routledge, 2023). Jackie can be contacted at: jackie@artemisscotland.com.



AHI representatives at iecon26 (Image: Jackie Lee)



Jackie Lee, Chair of AHI meets Helena Vičič, IE Managing Director (Image: Chris Lee)

iecon26 wrap-up

Dubravko (Max) Fijacko (Croatia)

Shifting paradigms in heritage interpretation, in the light of Faro.

You know that feeling... when you walk into a dark room and you can't see anything? Then someone lights a small candle. Not to show you the whole room. Not to give you all the answers. Just enough light so you know you are not alone.

This was the spark that ignited the final session of the IE Conference 2026, where we gathered under the title, Re-interpreting heritage in the light of Faro. But this New Paradigm Cafe was much more than a traditional wrap-up. Eight groups, eight tables, one morning. It was a live, collective creation and one of the crucial first steps in a much longer journey toward building Interpret Europe's new Framework of Reference. We didn't come to listen to lectures. We came to talk, to argue, and most of all, to listen to each other. Anchored in the Faro Convention. Driven by its spirit.

We didn't come to Faro to stay safe. We came to set sail. Like the Portuguese navigators: Gil Eanes, Vasco da Gama, Magalhães. No perfect map. Just a brave heart. And each other.

Under the banner of 'The Winds of Faro', the eight working groups actively gathered raw ideas, insights, and perspectives to feed into this new process. We learned that co-creation matters more than delivery, and that visitors want authentic experiences rather than official stories. We talked about brave environments instead of safe spaces. Safe can be too still, too quiet. Brave is alive, messy, and open to change. Disturbance, we realised, is not a problem. It is a chance to adapt. The core? Trust. Love. Respect. And gentle humour.



Group discussions at the Paradigm Cafe (Image: Dubravko Fijacko)

We drew a red line. All opinions are welcome, but when human dignity is attacked, we do not stay quiet. We take a stand. Pushing our values onto others is still colonisation, even when we mean well. We faced the heavy stuff too: guilt, lies, and difficult history. We learned to move from guilt to acceptance, and from acceptance to making things right. It's not about whose story wins. It is about relationships.

Then came the idea of empathy as a vaccine. If 85% of people in a community truly care, the whole community becomes immune to hate. Not conflict-free, just immune to hate. And that, we agreed, is enough. This changes how we see the interpreter. Not an expert on a hill with ready-made answers or narratives, but a listener, a mediator, a host. Someone who builds trust over time, reacting to the community instead of lecturing it.

Eight winds. One direction. Stay in conversation. Build relationships. Strive for empathy. This collective effort brought us directly back to the heart of the Faro Convention through the words of Amra Hadžimuhamedović, one of the key experts behind the Convention and one of our keynote speakers at this conference. She reminded us of a vital truth: if heritage is a resource, it is a resource for peace. Not for tourism. Not for money. Peace.

Reflecting on more than two decades since she helped shape the convention, she invited us to go a few steps further, expanding our relationship with heritage into something more holistic, balanced, and responsible.

This relationship reaches its true meaning only when we also embrace the planet and the children we will never meet. All of it belongs together.

The new Framework of Reference will not be written behind closed doors. The invaluable raw material gathered in Faro is just the beginning of a broader collaborative effort that will continue through dedicated working groups and deeper analysis. But it proved that our members are ready to share the weight of this journey. Because the best heritage interpreters don't tell you what to see. They show you where to look.

Dubravko (Max) Fijacko is Interpret Europe's Outreach Coordinator and is an active Interpret Europe trainer. He can be contacted at: dubravko.fijacko@interpret-europe.net.



Group discussions at the Paradigm Cafe (Image: Dubravko Fijacko)

IE General Assembly and new Supervisory Committee member

IE News Team

The IE community of members, Directors and the Supervisory Committee gathered online to talk business and share opinions before voting commenced.

In a change from previous years, when the General Assembly has been held in-person in conjunction with the annual conference, with online presence an optional extra for those not attending the conference, this year's General Assembly was held online only.

We were invited to gather online on Monday 25 May 2026. Any member who registered beforehand held the right to vote in the following 24-hour period, regardless of attendance at the meeting – that was 50 members.

The meeting was chaired by Eva Sandberg, Chair of the Supervisory Committee, and the matters included the annual reports for 2025, the status and outlook for 2026 presented by IE Director Helena Vičič, the candidates for the Supervisory Committee elections, and any motions presented by members. The full minutes have been emailed to members and you are invited to comment or offer suggested amendments up until 31 July when the draft will be accepted as final.

The results of the member votes were included in the email to all members. In summary, all motions were unanimously accepted.

The exciting news from this is that, in addition to renewing Jurn Buisman's standing on the Supervisory Committee for a second term, we also welcome a new member to the committee. Many of you will already know or have heard of Carol Ritchie, formerly the CEO of the EUROPARC Federation, and we welcome her and look forward to having her aboard to help steer the next exciting phase of IE's development.

Let's find out a bit more about Carol...



Carol Ritchie, new Supervisory Committee member

IE: You grew up in Stirling, Scotland, UK – a medieval town with lots of stirring history and stories. How much has this influenced your life and career?

Carol: Yes, my grandfather was a guide at Stirling Castle, a site that holds much of our nation's story, and I come from a family of storytellers, so I suppose interpretation is in my blood, although I didn't realise it. The Scottish countryside definitely influenced my early career, training as an ecologist and then a teacher, and bringing nature to life as a ranger and park manager.

IE: And this led to your work with EUROPARC – Do you see any similarities with IE?

Carol: Absolutely! The EUROPARC Federation is a non-governmental member organisation, providing a forum to share professional experience, collaborate on technical projects and progress common aims, for all those working to protect Europe's natural heritage. Apart from the obvious synergies, I hope that my 17 years' experience working for a German Verein and all the intricacies of the German system, as well as European funding streams, will be valuable support to the IE team.

IE: What are you most looking forward to in IE's future?

Carol: When with EUROPARC, I had frequent contact with IE and have watched you develop and grow over the years. I hope I can offer some perspective and advice, building on the great

work that has already been done, that would look at options for the infrastructure of the organisation to bring some foundational stability and strategic planning. I would also want to ensure IE retains and builds deeper connections to the natural heritage community and I will advocate and support that.

IE: And, finally, what might we find you doing on your days off? Can we get a little insight into what interests you and keeps you occupied when you're not working?

Carol: Currently, my work revolves around my puppy, Biscuit, but when she lets me, I am lucky to have multiple interests and hobbies that I participate in. I have for a very long time taken part in various Scottish dance traditions, and in more recent years I have married that with playing the clarsach (Scottish harp). In between, I am in the garden or cooking my home-grown fruit and vegetables or off further afield - walking in the Scottish hills with Biscuit, where I may stop and fly fish on a wee loch. I round off most days by enjoying a good malt whisky.

IE: That all sounds perfect, and very Scottish! Welcome once again to the IE family. Thanks for sharing your expertise with us.

Online symposium proceedings

IE News Team

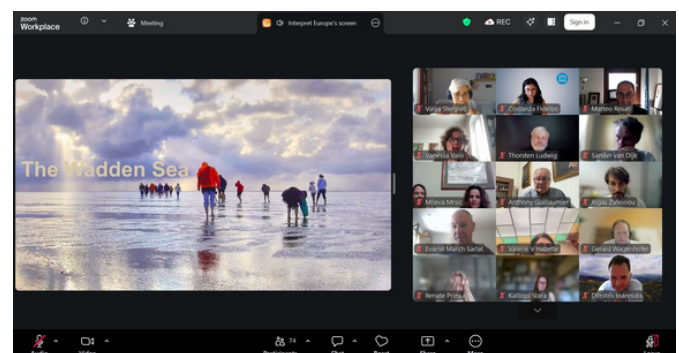
Reimagining our connection with heritage through learning landscapes.

The Learning Landscapes initiative's final event brought together more than 70 partners and stakeholders online on 8 June to reflect on an inspiring journey, connecting people and heritage through learning, participation, and community engagement.

As the initiative concludes, its legacy continues: making heritage more meaningful to people, qualifying local people to share their thoughts about their heritage with visitors, and in this way making us all more mindful of our common future.

The proceedings of the online symposium held in February are available on IE's website, so please do take a look and use this as a starting point to keep these important discussions going.

https://interpret-europe.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/ie_online_symposium_2026_proceedings_2nd_ed_compressed.pdf



IE online symposium screenshot (Image: UNESCO Office Venice)

Liberation Route Europe is creating a Youth Ambassadors Network

Samia Zitouni and Iva Silla (Croatia)

Interpret Europe's participation in an Erasmus+ Project supporting WW2 heritage projects for a better future.

Last year, Interpret Europe joined the consortium of an Erasmus+ project called LRE Youth Ambassadors Network. The project kicked off at the end of 2025, and the team has been working behind the scenes to set the stage for the main project activities. After the recent launch of the recruitment for the new Youth Ambassadors Network, our work has become more tangible, so we feel it's time to share it with you.

About the project

Project coordination is in the hands of LRE Foundation, an international network dedicated to preserving the heritage of World War 2 and its memory, making that history relevant to everyone, especially new generations. They have a special LRE Youth Programme, which sparked the idea of creating a network of LRE youth ambassadors, and led to this project. The aim of the project is to provide a platform for young individuals aged 15-30 to deepen their historical understanding and actively contribute to the preservation and interpretation of WWII history. Other partners include: the Max Mannheimer Study Center from Germany; the Museum of the Second World War from Poland; Post Bellum from Czechia; the Tourism, Culture and Heritage Association from Belgium; Studio Globo from Belgium; and, last but not least, Interpret Europe.

Upcoming events

During the course of the project, we plan to organise various events, starting with some free online training sessions in digital storytelling. A study trip with on-site workshops in Bavaria is planned for 2027. The first in-person event is the Youth Forum in Prague, Czechia, in February 2027. Another one will take place in Bastogne, Belgium, in 2028. The final is the Youth Remembrance Summit in Gdansk, Poland.

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The first activities open for participation are online training sessions. They will be conducted in several cycles, with the first starting before the end of this year. We will include a detailed programme and the application form in the next issue of the newsletter.

Interpret Europe's role

The project involves educational activities that could benefit from heritage interpretation training. Interpret Europe's main task is to work with the Belgian NGO Studio Globo to develop online training sessions. IE's engagement started a few years ago, when the LRE Foundation asked Interpret Europe to join a project application. IE sent out a call to its trainers, and the joint application by two of our trainers was selected, should a project receive funding.

The trainers are sharing their expertise and finding ways to implement it in the online setting. Our partners from Studio Globo have vast experience working with schools and teachers, and they believe in the importance of education as a lever for social change. Our close collaboration with them has been very rewarding as they are working towards openness, empathy, and values that can build a democratic, inclusive society.

Towards the end of the project, we plan to put together a document that will share details of the training process, its outcomes, and, hopefully, a good model for anyone to work with.

How can you get involved?

If you're 30 or younger, you can get involved directly by joining the Youth Ambassadors Network (see the link below). You will receive the information about the exact dates, programmes, and ways to join the upcoming project events. Your participation doesn't have to be passive. In fact, we hope that some of you will soon take over the network.

The main target group for the online training sessions is youth, but they will be open to anyone.

If you work with people aged between 15 and 30, you can share this information and any future updates with them and help them join the network. We would love for you to contact us if you'd like more details or have any suggestions. For example, an entire class or study group can join the online training session. If we notice greater interest from a particular age group, we can adjust the content of a training cycle to better accommodate them.

Also, if there is interest from a large number of young people who don't speak English, we might consider organising an online workshop in their native language.

If your institution also works on a remembrance project, this could be a good addition to your own curriculum. It doesn't hurt to drop us a message, because there is a lot of flexibility.

We could also use help with expertise and stories. If you have special expertise in working with youth, know of other related projects, have strong practice examples, or would like to share with us works that explore WW2 and related social challenges in an interesting way, please share them with us. Also, please share examples of inspiring stories from your countries that could serve as inspiration when we ask young people to retell a historical event from their surroundings.

We will provide regular updates throughout the project. Until then, we hope this article sparked some interest. If you're wondering how WW2 history can be relevant to youth, let us assure you that some of the project partners already have extensive experience working with young people on these difficult topics.

The times we are living in are the closest the world has come to the situation leading to WW2. It couldn't be more relevant for the youth, or all of us.

Find out more:

LRE Youth Ambassadors website:
<https://www.lre-youth.eu/>

LRE Youth Ambassadors Network application form: <https://www.lre-youth.eu/sign-up-youth-ambassadors/>

LRE Youth Ambassadors on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/lre_youth/

Samia Zitouni and Iva Silla are Interpret Europe trainers from Croatia. They are working with experts from Studio Globo to develop a set of interactive and reflective online sessions for the LRE Youth Ambassadors project. Contact Samia at samiaztn@gmail.com and Iva at iva@questoftales.com.

Is it possible to co-create a summer school?

Thorsten Ludwig (Germany)

This year's IE trainer summer school took place from 4-7 July in Slovenia – and it turned into an exciting ride through more than 50 subjects.

The Training Team had discussed the event for several months. A former monastery in Mekinje, near Kamnik, appeared to be the ideal location for a retreat, the EU network grant enabled organisational support and reduced participation fees – but the team was still torn regarding the programme's structure.

On the one hand, there was a desire to announce a wide range of offerings to the trainers. On the other hand, the trainers had to become aware that they needed to take more responsibility to keep the IE training programme alive with almost no financial means; and then there was also an urgency for all to become more familiar with the participatory methods that have been incorporated into all IE certification courses since the 2022-23 review of the IE training programme.

The final decision was made only shortly before the summer school began. 25 trainers had registered, and the programme would be developed almost entirely by them. After their arrival, trainers were asked to write their suggestions on colour-coded facilitation cards. The colours distinguished between theory, exercises, workshops, open discussions and 'desires', i.e. topics trainers simply wanted to address or learn about from one another.

Expectations ranged from very high to fears that not enough proposals would be gathered. In fact, the Training Team held their breath while the courtyard filled with cards. Trainer after trainer presented their proposals – and there seemed to be no end to them. Finally, more than 50 suggestions were clustered and arranged into colourful thematic blocks to be implemented during the following days.



Inspiring each other (Image: Thorsten Ludwig)

It would be presumptuous to claim that everything went perfectly well. Anyone wishing to learn through hands-on experience how to avoid mistakes in planning and facilitation certainly had the opportunity to do so. However, while there was no shortage of subjects, the challenge lay more in bringing the various sessions to clear conclusions and to document the results. Since parallel sessions were to be avoided whenever possible, one trainer handed over to the next without significant breaks – and the consistently high standard maintained throughout was an impressive proof of our trainers' versatility and expertise.

On the last day, the group left 'their monastery' and was 'catapulted' via cable car up to Velika planina, a mountain plateau at 1,500m, characterised by alpine pastoral farming, where the trainers carried out interpretive exercises and freed their minds while hiking together in the fresh mountain air.

The summer school concluded with a guided walk through the old town of Kamnik, led by a local guide who immigrated from the USA and suggested that this was the town with the highest density of breweries in the world relative to its population. Consequently, the summer school wound down in one of Kamnik's beer gardens...

The group concluded that, especially in times of increasing online meetings, there is hardly anything more enjoyable and more important for strengthening the bonds than an in-person meeting over several days.

In the final circle, the trainers from Hungary announced that the next summer school will take place in June/July 2027 in Szombathely – close to the Austrian border, where the 2018 IE conference was held. I think it is safe to say that many of us are much looking forward to it.

Thorsten Ludwig is an interpretive trainer, planner and consultant based in Germany. He has run his own company, Bildungswerk interpretation, since 1993. You can contact him at: ludwig@interp.de.



IE trainers' summer school in Slovenia (Images: Thorsten Ludwig)

Trainers' Summer School – Where exchange leads to change

Bojana Sekulić (Montenegro)

For four unforgettable days, 4-7 July 2026, Mekinje Monastery in Kamnik, Slovenia, was a vibrant hub of learning, communication and inspiration.

The IE Trainers' Summer School 2026 was the third in a row, confirming it as a cherished tradition of great significance for the IE training community. It is one of the IE events that every Certified Interpretive Trainer (CIT) looks forward to as a chance to do things together, learn, make new friends, reconnect with colleagues, and get inspired.

This year, Javni zavod za kulturo Kamnik opened the doors of the charming Mekinje Monastery to host us. We, as an international team of 24 trainers, together with the IE management representatives, gathered there to grow through exchange.

What made this summer school truly exceptional was its innovative participatory concept, making the participants active contributors from the very beginning. Instead of following a programme designed in advance, we created the agenda together, allowing everyone to express their expectations, interests and professional challenges. That way, every voice mattered and helped to shape this learning experience, reflecting the importance of the participatory meaning-making process advocated by heritage interpretation for community building.

The topics chosen were facilitation and mentoring, outreach, training material development, building the training system, and training in the age of AI. Coordinators were named for each topic and they became responsible for managing the groups' work, plenary discussions, exercises and presentations done by participants, and delivering summaries after the sessions. Bearing in mind the significance of the synergy between management and trainers, participants



IE trainers feeling inspired in Slovenia (Image: Helena Vičič)

proposed the steps to take together, which would support all trainers, and the management too, and vice versa. So, it became clear that the event was much more than just a regular professional learning opportunity – it was a transformative step in our joint interpretive journey.

In addition to the event's co-creation perspective, some trainers gave presentations that were prepared in advance, covering some important topics. Also, a hybrid meeting with trainers who weren't able to join us in person was organised. During this part, a summary of the coordinators' meeting held at the IE Conference 2026 in Faro was presented. The participants also discussed the trainer licencing system inspired by a presentation on the proposal to changes to the criteria. The summer school was attended by some new trainers who attended the subsequent three-day upgrade course for certification, so they got an early insight into the IE training system and community spirit.

Beyond the sessions in the monastery, participants enjoyed a visit to the impressive Velika planina and a guided tour through the picturesque town of Kamnik.

The summer school, of course, had to come to an end, but its impact is only beginning. We returned to our homes carrying much more than knowledge and skills. We carry a renewed passion and power of togetherness, fresh perspectives, and the confidence to inspire others across Europe where we act as trainers,

with a deeper understanding that every community has voices worth hearing. This event confirmed that the summer school is an experience that keeps the IE trainers coming back year after year. Stay tuned for the next chapter.

Bojana Sekulić is an IE Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) and trainer (CIT), as well as a certified hiking and tour guide in Montenegro. She is passionate about heritage protection and local community empowerment, so she creates and delivers meaningful experiences for travellers. Bojana believes heritage interpretation enables responsible tourism to become a powerful force towards sustainability. She can be contacted at: bojana.sekulic.bs@gmail.com.



IE trainers at the 2026 summer school (Image: Barbara Golebiowska)



Looking over Kamnik (Image: Thorsten Ludwig)

Interpreting heritage, discovering yourself

Ilaria Scarmagnan (Italy)

Can a training course change the way you see heritage - and yourself? My CIG experience in Zagreb.

Attending a Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) course is not only about learning and practising heritage interpretation—it is also a valuable opportunity for personal growth, meaningful connections, and discovering new strengths.

Before attending the CIG course in Zagreb in May 2026, I thought heritage interpretation was largely a theoretical concept, something discussed mainly in academic circles. A week later, I left with a completely different perspective—not only on interpretation itself, but also on my own abilities.

Together with a diverse and dynamic group of participants from across Europe, I joined the course for reasons ranging from professional development and capacity building to exploring new career opportunities. What I did not expect was how enriching the experience would be on both a personal and collective level.

My background is not in tourism, and I had only limited experience as a guide. What brought me to Zagreb was a passion for both tangible and intangible heritage and a curiosity about interpretation. Before the course, my understanding of the field was quite abstract. Through practical exercises, discussions and exchanges, I discovered that interpretation is far more than a theoretical framework. It is a powerful approach that helps people connect with heritage in meaningful ways and can be applied across a wide range of contexts.

On a personal level, the course revealed a strength I had not fully recognised: public speaking. During an interpretive exercise at the Museum of Natural History, I found myself speaking confidently in front of the group and genuinely enjoying the experience. For someone with little guiding experience, this was an unexpected achievement.



Great group dynamics (Image: Museum Guide for Ilaria Scarmagnan)

Yet I believe it would not have been possible without the supportive atmosphere created by both the participants and our trainer. Watching others step outside their comfort zones, embrace challenges and grow in confidence was equally inspiring.

Our trainer played a key role in creating an environment where learning felt both engaging and encouraging. Alongside the theoretical sessions, we took part in practical outdoor activities that allowed us to explore Zagreb's hidden gems while developing our interpretive skills in small groups. Constructive feedback, enthusiasm and constant encouragement helped us focus not on perfect performance, but on continuous learning. The warm and welcoming atmosphere quickly turned a group of strangers into a supportive learning community. And we were often reminded, "There is always room for improvement".

Looking back, one of the most valuable aspects of the course was the opportunity to learn from one another. Through activities that encouraged personal connections and deeper reflection, we exchanged perspectives, shared experiences and discovered new ways of approaching heritage interpretation. In doing so, many of us began to experience a genuine shift in perspective.

The greatest lesson I took away from the CIG course is that interpretation is not simply about communicating heritage. It is about creating meaningful connections—with places, stories and people, including ourselves. That is why I would recommend this experience not only to guides and tourism professionals, but to anyone curious about heritage and eager to discover new perspectives, new skills and perhaps even new paths for the future.

Ilaria Scarmagnan is IE's Project Assistant for delivering the European-funded project HI-People, having previously worked in the Culture unit of the UNESCO office in Venice. She can be contacted at: ilaria.scarmagnan@interpret-europe.net.

Interpretive writers at The New Shore

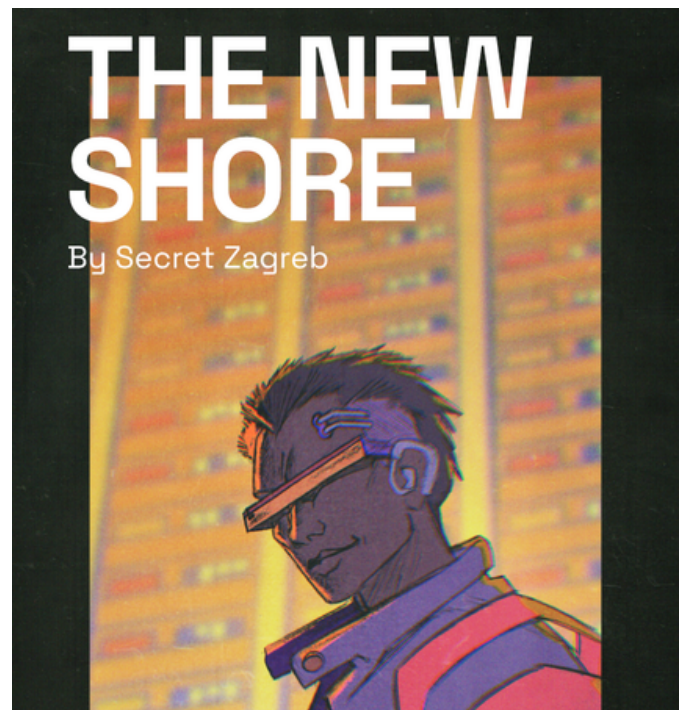
Iva Silla (Croatia)

How to put the Certified Interpretive Writer (CIW) skills into use – An idea from Zagreb.

Is there a future for interpretive writers? All of us interpreters, and especially interpretive writers, are facing huge challenges and threats as artificial intelligence tools develop rapidly. It probably comes down to a choice: Do we want to support creative professionals and their expression, or not? Luckily enough, there are a lot of us who do. And, since we are creative, we will always have ideas and new projects. If we respect human effort and incorporate it into our projects, we still have some hope.

What is there to see in the Novi Zagreb (New Zagreb) area? Novi Zagreb is part of Croatia's capital, built during the socialist era. Of all of the places you could visit in Croatia, why on Earth would you go and see the Novi Zagreb neighbourhood? Curiosity! If there is a place not on the tourist trail, that residents are fond of, there will be someone who wants to understand what there is to love about it.

And now, let's combine the two charismatic underdogs: Novi Zagreb and interpretive writers. This September, an Interpret Europe training course for Certified Interpretive Writers (CIW) will take place in the Novi Zagreb neighbourhood, on the grounds of the Zagreb fair, once a place where you could see Sputnik and Apollo up close, and now a photogenic spot if you like urban decay. The training is a part of the project, The New Shore vol 2. Last year's first edition of the project comprised several interpretive walking tours of the area for the locals. Participants exchanged thoughts and stories, and, based on their contributions, a map for a self-guided tour was created. The resulting New Shore map can be found at: www.secret-zagreb.com.



The New Shore map cover artwork (Image: Athan, for Secret Zagreb)

This year, the new edition of the project takes a leap forward. An alternative guidebook will be published, containing self-guided walks crafted as part of the certification process after the CIW course. At least that's the plan. Of course, we cannot force the participants to find inspiration in Novi Zagreb, but if they do and their home assignments show sufficient quality, they might be included in the booklet.

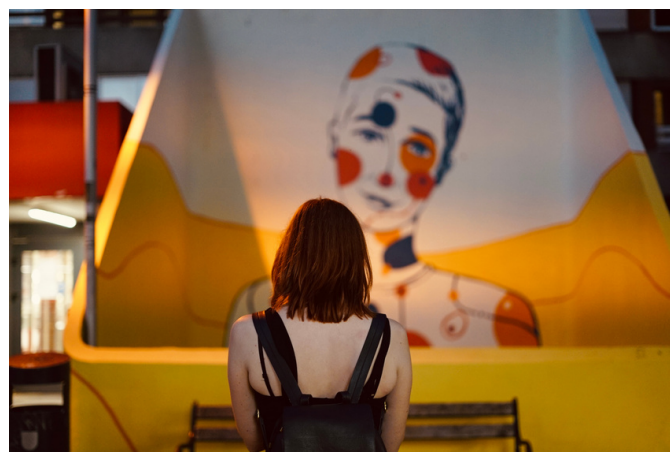
Two CIW trainers, Ivana Jagić Boljat and Iva Silla, came up with this idea during a brainstorming walk around the Budek lake in Novi Zagreb several years ago. How about thinking about CIW as a part of a project that could have a goal to publish a book with self-guided tours – as the CIW homework? A participatory guidebook that brings together different stakeholders and different perspectives? After several attempts to secure funding to help us realise such a book, we finally have an opportunity to try it. The idea has changed a bit: the book now contains several 'chapters', and the CIW self-guided walks are just one of them. Another chapter will feature fictional stories inspired by the area, to show that tourism and art can work together, that interpretation blends perfectly with artistic expression, and the specific knowledge, viewpoints, and unique human styles are not so easy to replace.

Both editions of The New Shore project are financially supported by The City of Zagreb, proving once again that heritage interpretation can be implemented in various ways, that various institutions recognise its benefits, and that an independent jury is ready to invest in our plan. Let's hope we have positive updates by the end of the year, and let's cheer that the walk around the lake will come full circle with a creative guidebook that unveils the spirit of the lake's surroundings. Will the CIW help increase the visibility of an under-visited area? We hope you, too, will cheer for the underdogs!

Find out more about IE's training courses and sign up for one near you:

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

Iva Silla is an experience designer and the owner of Secret Zagreb tours and activities. She is an active Interpret Europe certified trainer. Last year, she published her first book, *In the Footsteps of Secret Zagreb*, using the guidelines of interpretive writing. Contact her at: iva@questoftales.com.



Top: Moments of exchange on the New Shore tour
Bottom: Observing the Socialist beauty
(Images: Zitko)



Top: Moment of contemplation during the New Shore tour
Bottom: The New Shore walking tour for locals
(Images: Zitko)

Congratulations to our newly certified members

Certified Interpretive Guides (CIG)

Lukáš Adásek, Czech Republic
Anela Borčić, Croatia
Jadranka Dujić Frlan, Croatia
Maja Ergović, Croatia
Tina Fornarić, Croatia
Iva Hrdlička, Croatia
Giovanna Jerolimić Toić, Croatia
Jelena Jurić, Serbia
Jakub Korytiak, Slovakia
Silvija Limani, Croatia
Ivana Marić, Croatia
Anabela Maričić Milić, Croatia
Danijela Martić, Croatia
Tatjana Martinjaš, Croatia
Marina Matjašić, Croatia
Katarina Matkerić, Croatia
Rebeka Meglič, Croatia
Bogdan Milić, Serbia
Ivana Mlacović, Croatia
Diana Nola, Croatia
Jadranka Petrušić, Croatia
Petra Salković, Croatia
Ivana Šeparović, Croatia
Eleftherios Sioutis, Greece
Đivo Sjekavica, Croatia
Dunja Sladić, Croatia
Petar Stanojlović, Montenegro
Kalliopi Stara, Greece
Željka Stašić, Croatia
Barbara Stupan, Slovenia
Danijela Vidić, Croatia
Dijana Žaja, Croatia
Evrinomi Zavra, Greece
Wilhelmina Zelić, Croatia

Certified Interpretive Writers (CIW)

Vasiliki Faki, Greece
Milica Peković, Montenegro
Kalliopi Stara, Greece
Dina Stober, Croatia
Margareta Turkalj, Croatia

Certified Interpretive Planners (CIP)

Iulia Balint, Romania
Lucija Gudlin, Germany
Olga Kostoula, Greece
Crina Mareş, Romania
Florentina Murea-Matache, Romania
Mirela-Stefana Pascu-Nica, Romania
Sofia Stara, Greece
Orsolya Szilágyi, Romania
Vanessa Vaio, Italy
Sorana Vlad, Romania
Constantin Zainea, 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			
9-13/11/2026	Croatian	Split, Croatia	Max Dubravko Fijacko
16-20/11/2026	Swedish	Koster, Sweden	Per Sonnvik
Certified Interpretive Writer (CIW) course			
23-27/09/2026	Croatian	Novi Zagreb, Croatia	Iva Silla
Certified Interpretive Planner (CIP) course			
16-21/08/2026	English	Uppsala, Sweden	Valya Stergioti

Upcoming IE webinars

8 September 2026 at 15.00 CEST

Online networking event

Join us to meet others in the heritage interpretation field. Bring a project idea to discuss, a question you need help with, or just come and listen to learn more.

October 2026 (Date/time TBC)

The importance of good planning and practice as essential to the development and management of a sustainable tourism product

Steven Timoney (UK)

10 November 2026 at 15.00 CET

Camps in the Kruger National Park for differently abled children and interpretation around those experiences for different disabilities

Chris Patton (South Africa)

December 2026 (Date/time TBC)

Lima Milenaria - Urban heritage narratives and civic conversations about identity and belonging

Javier Lizarzaburu (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.

When flamingos took to the Albanian streets

Daniela Ruçi (Albania)

Pretty pink protests are raising awareness of unsustainable tourism development on protected habitats.

For more than 25 years, I have worked in environmental education in Albania. In the early years, whenever we designed a project, donors would ask the same question: What will be the outcome?

The answer is not always easy to measure. How do you measure a child's first understanding that a wetland is alive? How do you measure a teacher who begins to include nature in a lesson plan? How do you measure the moment when a young person stops seeing a protected area as empty land and starts seeing it as heritage, responsibility and identity?

Today, on the streets of Albania, I feel I am finally seeing one of those outcomes.

In recent days, young people, many of them belonging to Albania's Gen Z, have joined public protests in defence of protected areas, especially around the Vjosa-Narta landscape and the planned luxury tourism development near the sensitive coastal wetlands. The flamingo has become one of the symbols of the protest. Pink inflatable birds, handmade posters and sharp, simple messages have filled the streets. Behind the humour and colour, there is a serious demand: Protected areas must remain protected.

This is not only an environmental protest. It is also a civic lesson taking place in a public space. Albania has made important progress in recognising its natural heritage. Areas such as Vjosa, Narta, Divjaka-Karavasta, Prespa and many others are not just beautiful landscapes. They are living classrooms, migration routes, habitats, and memory places. They connect biodiversity with local communities, stories, livelihoods and culture.



Flamingo protest on the streets of Albania (Image: Orkida Ruci)

But protected areas in Albania are now under pressure. Amendments to the Law on Protected Areas, approved in 2024, have been strongly criticised by environmental organisations because they open the door to large-scale development inside areas that were previously intended to benefit from stronger protection. Conservation groups have warned that projects in sensitive zones, including the Vjosa-Narta area, could damage habitats for flamingos, sea turtles, monk seals and many bird species. International attention has also grown, with concerns linked to Albania's path toward alignment with EU environmental standards.

For me, the most powerful part of this moment is not only the legal debate. It is the faces of the young people in the crowd. Many of them were born after the first wave of environmental education projects began in Albania. They grew up with recycling days at school, nature clubs, field visits, campaigns, posters, clean-ups, biodiversity lessons and outdoor activities led by teachers and civil society organisations. Some of these activities were small. Some lasted only a few months. Some were funded by donors who needed indicators, reports and final evaluations.

But something remained.

A vocabulary remained. A sense of care remained. A belief persisted that nature is not a luxury and that development cannot mean sacrificing everything that makes a place unique.

This is why I see the current protests as more than resistance. I see them as interpretation in action. Interpretation is not only what happens at a visitor centre, in a museum, on a trail or beside a monument. Interpretation also happens when people connect meaning with place. It happens when a flamingo is no longer just a bird, but a messenger. It happens when a wetland is no longer just a map category, but part of a shared future. It happens when young people take scientific facts, personal emotion and civic courage and turn them into a public voice.

For many years, environmental educators in Albania have tried to help people understand that protected areas are not barriers to development. They are a different model of development. They protect water, soil, birds, landscapes, local economies and cultural identity. They give communities the chance to build tourism that respects place, rather than consuming it.

The young people in the streets seem to understand this very clearly. They are not against Albania's progress; they are asking what kind of progress we want. They are not against tourism; they are asking whether tourism should destroy the very nature that attracts people here. They are not speaking only for birds and wetlands; they are speaking for public trust, transparency and the right of future generations to inherit more than concrete.

As someone who has spent more than a quarter of a century working in environmental education, I feel pride, but also responsibility. Pride, because I can see that education has roots. Responsibility, because this moment reminds us that education must not stop at awareness. It must grow into participation.

The lesson from Albania today is simple and deeply important for all of us working in heritage interpretation: When people truly understand the value of a place, they are more likely to defend it. For years, we planted small seeds in classrooms, youth camps, teacher trainings, and community projects. Now, some of those seeds are standing in the streets, holding flamingos above their heads. And for the first time in a long while, amid all the concern, I feel hope.

Daniela Ruçi has worked for many years as an environmental education expert for sustainable development, and she is passionate about the effective use of heritage interpretation to engage the next generations. Daniela is Interpret Europe's Social Media and Design Officer. She can be contacted at: daniela.ruci@interpret-europe.net.

When heritage interpretation enters the classroom

Evgenia Stavradi (Greece)

A school journey using heritage interpretation to turn a familiar neighbourhood into a field of stories and meanings.

Heritage interpretation often reaches schools through museums and organised visits to monuments, where students encounter interpretations prepared by others. This project began closer to home: in Tavros, a neighbourhood of Athens shaped by refugee settlement, industrial activity and social housing. Working within the Greek Skills Workshops curriculum, Grade 9 students of the 1st Junior High School of Tavros were invited to explore the stories of their neighbourhood and transform their own interpretations into a podcast.

“Boring”, “ugly”, “a place everyone wants to leave”: this was where the project actually began. Most students’ first reactions revealed distance rather than connection. Instead of seeing this as a problem, we treated it as a call for interpretation. Could heritage interpretation help students connect with places they passed every day but had never really noticed?

Students explored archival material and oral-history testimonies related to local landmarks. They investigated stories of migration and urban change, and imagined the experiences of people who had lived and worked in the neighbourhood at different moments in time. Most importantly, they were encouraged to reflect on how these stories related to their own lives.

Gradually, familiar places began to look different. Apartment blocks, busy streets and public spaces started to carry memories, experiences and meanings. In classroom discussions, students negotiated different perspectives and constructed a shared narrative about the place they inhabit.



Social housing block in Tavros as an everyday heritage landscape
(Image: Evgenia Stavradi)

The process culminated in the creation of a student podcast, *A Neighbourhood Unfolding*, shared through the European School Radio network. Using voice, music and sound, students communicated their own interpretation of Tavros beyond the classroom, reaching both the local community and a wider audience. In doing so, they contributed to how their neighbourhood is perceived. The podcast was also recognised through the European School Radio contest process.

Seen through the lens of the Faro Convention, the project opens up a broader question about the place of heritage interpretation in formal education. Faro reminds us that heritage is shaped by the meanings people attach to places, stories and experiences (Council of Europe 2005). From this perspective, schools can become spaces where young people learn to recognise these meanings, connect them with wider stories and communicate their own perspectives.

In our project, heritage interpretation supported key learning skills: students worked critically with sources, but also imaginatively with stories. They collaborated to shape a shared narrative and then communicated it to audiences beyond the classroom. In this sense, when students are given opportunities to inquire, interpret and create, heritage interpretation becomes both a way of engaging with heritage and a way of learning.

This article is a summary of a presentation given at the Interpret Europe Conference 2026. The full paper with references can be read in the conference proceedings, available soon on the IE website:

<https://interpret-europe.net/material/>

References:

Council of Europe 2005, Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199), Council of Europe

<https://rm.coe.int/1680083746>

A Neighbourhood Unfolding, European School Radio, can be accessed here:

<https://europeanschoolradio.eu/episode/13362>

Evgenia Stavraki teaches mathematics at the 1st Junior High School of Tavros, Athens, Greece. She holds an MA in Museum Studies and an MA in New Technologies in Education, with a focus on STEAM education. Her interests lie in bridging heritage interpretation and formal education, exploring how culture and community can become creative spaces for communication and learning. She can be contacted at: eugenia.stav@gmail.com.



Students' planning for the podcast (Image: Evgenia Stavraki)

Reimagining Beļava Manor through shared values

Ilze Vanaga (Latvia)

An abandoned manor house in north-east Latvia is trying out new functionality and interpretation based on values and community participation.

The Beļava Manor House is a mid-18th-century Baroque monument of national importance located in north-east Latvia. After losing its function in 2019, the manor was left without active management, raising an important question: How can a heritage site regain functionality, meaning, visibility, and a sustainable role in contemporary community life?

In 2025, local visioners – Ilze Vanaga, Herta Pugača and Laura Vecmane-Bārtleja – initiated activities aimed at building a new heritage community for the manor, identifying the site's values, strengthening public awareness, and developing meaningful interpretation. A development workshop, concerts, lectures, poetry events, pottery workshops, and other activities helped reactivate the site while also testing its possible future uses.

The case of the Beļava Manor demonstrates how a values-based heritage approach can go beyond the preservation of physical fabric alone. It highlights a broader understanding of heritage by recognising historical, aesthetic, social, spiritual, ecological, and economic values that were attributed to the site by different stakeholders. At the centre of this process were people — residents, former users, heritage and tourism specialists, and community leaders — whose knowledge, memories, and expectations helped to shape the future of the site.

The value mapping process revealed both tangible and intangible elements that were highlighted by different interest groups: the manor's park and old trees, its historical landscape, Baroque architecture and interior details, authentic elements, and the strong emotional connection of the former school community.



Development workshop of the Beļava Manor, 18 July 2025
(Image: Herta Pugača)

From this process emerged two interpretation directions – Magnetic Authenticity and Contemporary Enlightenment. The mapping process revealed a strong presence of shared values, namely, different interest groups expressed similar views, memories and visions about the site and its future uses. This significantly facilitates the process of its interpretation and development in the future.

Rather than remaining a museum-like monument, Beļava Manor is imagined as a dynamic place for community events, festivals, children's camps, residencies, restoration activities, and tourism. The case also underlines the importance of keeping the property in municipal ownership to protect its public value and support long-term, inclusive development. It offers an inspiring example of how heritage can be reactivated through shared values, participation, and imaginative interpretation.

Ilze Vanaga is a life-long learning and heritage projects coordinator based in Gulbene county, Latvia. She is open for collaboration in the field of manor heritage, and can be contacted at: ilze.vanaga@gulbene.lv.

This article was submitted in response to the IE Learning Landscapes online symposium held in February 2026.

Weaponising the past in Belarusian schools

Nikolai Shpil'kov (Italy)

How the Lukashenko regime turns school history into a weapon of authoritarian survival, and what the 2020 protests revealed about its limits.

Contemporary heritage interpretation rests on the conviction that the past is best engaged through multiple voices, open dialogue, and inclusive narratives. But what becomes of this vision in an authoritarian state, where engagement with history is treated as a strictly controlled political resource?

This article examines how the Belarusian regime under Alexander Lukashenko has, over three decades, turned the history classroom into an instrument of authoritarian survival. Drawing on a longitudinal discourse analysis of four state-mandated history textbooks published between 2006 and 2019, it traces how heritage interpretation can be inverted: instead of opening the past to dialogue, it is sealed off to silence dissent.

Three mechanisms stand out.

First, the textbooks rely on strategic lacunae (gaps). Stalinist repressions are paradoxically depoliticised. The famine of the 1930s is erased. The democratic transition of 1991–1994, including Lukashenko's contested rise to power, simply disappears: the 1994 Constitution appears out of nowhere, and his rule begins as a natural, uncontested historical destiny. Through such omissions, the curriculum purges the past of any element that might suggest alternative political possibilities.

Second, the textbooks weaponise heritage symbols against contemporary opposition. The white-red-white flag and the 'Pahonia' coat of arms — historic Belarusian emblems and banners of political resistance — are systematically linked in textbooks to Nazi collaboration. The educational narrative laid the legal and moral groundwork for the regime's later official ban of these symbols as 'extremist'. Heritage is reframed not as inheritance, but as



Crowd protest on Belarus street (Image: Juuud28 via Pixabay)

evidence in a political trial.

Third, the regime extends this work from the printed page into physical space. 'Lessons in a museum', and the spatial organisation of state exhibitions constructs what may be called a 'route of loyalty': a curated pathway dictating the boundaries of acceptable memory. Classrooms and museums cease to function as sites of inquiry and become sites of loyalty enforcement.

Yet this monopoly carries its own vulnerability. The unprecedented civic protests of 2020 — in which the 'Pahonia' and the white-red-white flag returned as symbols of mass resistance — revealed that a narrative stripped of trauma, complexity, and citizen agency cannot indefinitely contain the lived reality of those it claims to represent.

For heritage interpreters, the Belarusian case is a cautionary one. Multiperspectivity, plural memory, and dialogic interpretation are the practical safeguards against the political capture of the past.

Nikolai Shpil'kov is an independent journalist and historian. A former PhD student in Russia, he left the country in 2022 and is now completing an MA at the University of Siena, Italy, while seeking a PhD position to continue his research on Belarusian memory politics. Nikolai can be contacted at: nickolay.rayskiy@outlook.com.

A full paper was presented at Interpret Europe's Learning Landscapes online symposium in February 2026. It can be found in the proceedings:

https://interpret-europe.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/ie_online_symposium_2026_proceedings_2nd_ed_compressed.pdf Page 29

'Heritage as the Soul of Mare Nostrum' – The European Cultural Heritage Summit, May 2026

Ewa Wojtoń (Poland)

Heritage, climate, cultural diversity, conflict, cooperation, mutual understanding. Is there a sustainable future without heritage?

Culture is important; without heritage, there is no future. It seems we are all aware of this, but are we really? It is always worth repeating this, speaking out loud, so that everyone who cares deeply about memory and heritage does not cease in their efforts and feels that their work is not in vain.

If we think of European tradition, of Western civilisation from its very beginnings, it is hard to find a better place than Cyprus, a country where trade routes and paths of cultural exchange have crossed for centuries. It was the Mediterranean region that gave rise to socio-cultural and economic transformations across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, and from our ancestors in this area we can learn how to foster the peaceful coexistence of civilisation and nature.

What heritage experts are currently focusing on is its significant role in the daily lives of local communities, its impact on environmental protection, and its importance for resilience to crises. It was these issues that formed the leitmotif of the meeting at the European Cultural Heritage Summit, which I attended in Nicosia, Cyprus, from 26-30 May.

In the discussions and speeches that took place during those few days, several points were consistently emphasised: without heritage, there is no future; it is on this foundation that a shared, peaceful future can be built, even when there is a degree of hostility between nations.

It was noted many times how vital the local community is to the preservation of heritage, including natural heritage. Informed residents recognise that the past surrounding them is an undeniable asset, without which the creation of



European Cultural Heritage Summit venue, Cyprus (Image: Ewa Wojtoń)

a sustainable future is impossible and pointless. The fundamental conclusion: that education, cooperation, and learning about the heritage that surrounds us is vital to our shared future, as well as subsequent proper and comprehensive interpretation of our heritage, combined with an interesting, engaging narrative.

The five-day meeting in Nicosia featured events that are a regular feature of every Europa Nostra General Assembly: Excellence Day, during which representatives of the award-winning projects presented their work; and the following day's European Heritage Award Ceremony, at which we celebrated outstanding achievements in the field of heritage conservation and promotion.

During the European Heritage Policy Agora and the European Heritage Hub Forum, discussions focused on how cultural heritage influences sustainable development and how it can help overcome crises and conflicts. The proceedings concluded with a visit to the Turkish side of Europe's only divided capital, where we discussed cross-border cooperation and overcoming various barriers, using Nicosia as an example.

The Summit is supported by the European Union and was this year held under the patronage of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Ewa Wojtoń is a historian working as a specialist in the Research Institute of European Heritage in the International Cultural Centre in Kraków, Poland (www.mck.krakow.pl). Contact her at: e.wojton@mck.krakow.pl.

Heritage adapts

European Heritage Hub

Take the pledge to take climate adaptation action for heritage sites and cultural practices by 2030.

Climate change is the fastest growing threat to heritage sites and cultural practices worldwide, yet many are unable to take needed action—there's already so much to do, it's hard to know where to start, and it often feels like you're the only one thinking about it. You're not alone! There are thousands of people like you around the world, so a pledge was started to unite us, and a community is being built to support us. We adapt better when we work together!

On 4 June, the global campaign Heritage Adapts was launched, aiming to unite the heritage sector behind a shared mission: at least 3,000 heritage sites and cultural practices to take locally led climate adaptation action by 2030.

Alongside other organisations from around the world, the European Heritage Hub (including Project Leader Europa Nostra and partner ICLEI Europe) is involved as a founding leadership partner.

The campaign's goal is to mobilise local stewards behind this collective pledge and provide the technical guidance, localised data access, and global connections to help them succeed.

The initiative is recognised by the U.N.'s climate agency as a Plan to Accelerate Solutions advancing the Global Goal on Adaptation.

The partners urge you to join the movement. Let's work together to build community resilience worldwide and show that heritage is part of the solution!

Find out more on the Heritage Adapts website: <https://act.heritageadapts.org>



Nesting stork on church roof in Faro, Portugal
(Image: Patrick/Bettina Lehnies)

Funding opportunities

Several European funding programmes are currently open or forthcoming.

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>

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

Call for expressions of interest to establish a pool of experts to the Panel for the European Capital of Culture Action

Deadline 30 September 2027.

More information:

<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/funding/calls/c-all-for-expressions-of-interest-to-establish-a-pool-of-experts-to-the-panel-for-the-european-capital-of-culture-action-0>

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

More information:

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



AgoraEU - Up to 10.7 billion Euros will be available for projects during 2028-2034

This new integrated EU funding stream will merge the Creative Europe and CERV (Citizens, Equality, Rights & Values) programmes.

It will be organised around three pillars:

- **Creative Europe – Culture:** Supports cross-border cultural creation, artistic freedom, and the international circulation of cultural and creative works
- **MEDIA+:** Boosts the competitiveness of Europe's audiovisual and video game industries while actively funding and safeguarding independent journalism and news media diversity
- **CERV+:** Promotes fundamental rights, equality, active civic participation, and strengthens democratic engagement and the rule of law

The programme aims to:

- Defend against AI
- Fight disinformation
- Simplify access

Updates will be posted on the Culture Action Europe website:

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

Interpret Europe Conference 2027 - In the planning stage

Bettina Lehnies (Germany)

We will meet in Nuremberg, Germany, next Spring for our next annual conference.

Times are changing—and with them, the work of heritage interpreters.

Digitalisation and AI introduce entirely new challenges. At our conference in Nuremberg, we will explore and discuss from every angle the risks and new opportunities brought about by these developments.

With its museums and other sites, the city of Nuremberg offers numerous opportunities to explore this topic in greater depth during our study visits. Modern media have arrived in many locations, while other sites are still developing ideas and plans for the future.

We can trace how we communicate - and how we used to communicate - while considering the future direction of our field and the role the human dimension plays within it.

Nuremberg is deeply shaped by history. It is a city of medieval life and former wealth - once a Free Imperial City, home to the Imperial Castle, and the famous painter Albrecht Dürer. Yet, it is also the city associated with the Nazi Party Rallies and the Nuremberg Trials, events that continue to have a global impact to this day. Hence its designation as the City of Peace and Human Rights.

Nuremberg is also the birthplace of the first German railway and a hub for toys and games; not to forget its famous gingerbread, bratwurst, wine and beer of which you will surely get a taste.

Come to Nuremberg next May and be part of another inspiring IE event!



Nuremberg Castle (Image: Patrick Lehnies)

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.

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

The newsletter needs you!

Marie Banks (UK)

This is YOUR newsletter ... What would you like to see more of?

We are thinking about some changes to how we package and deliver news, but we'd love to hear your views first. Thank you to those who joined for the Market of Ideas session at iecon26 in Faro where we started a discussion that will continue while we investigate some options.

In the meantime, this newsletter is for all of us to communicate what we're up to and what we're thinking, to support each other, and to start conversations that can help to shape our profession. So, please consider contributing something for future issues and spreading the word among your colleagues to support this communication outlet.

Also, if you think you could spare some time to help on the team - please let Marie know! There are various support roles available and if we change the format of the newsletter, there could be more!

Marie Banks is IE's News Coordinator. She can be contacted at: marie.banks@interpret-europe.net or news@interpret-europe.net.



Newsletter ideas ..? Call me! (Image: Marie Banks)

Welcome to our new members

Institutional members

Banská Bystrica Region Tourism, Slovakia
British Museum, UK
Eurasian Tourism Association, Kazakhstan

Individual members

Tapio Alakörkkö, Sweden
Maria Andersson, Sweden
Ilenia Atzori, Italy
Aleksandar Bančić, Croatia
Patricija Bijažić, Croatia
Alexandru Binescu, Romania
Marko Bolkovic, Croatia
Vasile Cristian Botar, Romania
Magnus Bozell, Sweden
Maria Brandt, Sweden
Lea Brönnér, Germany
Stelian-Vasile Burduhos, Romania
Antonio Carfi, Italy
Viktória Chilová, Slovakia
Rafael Deroo, Belgium
Luan Dervishej, Albania
Swenja Dorn, Sweden
Kristina Erdfeld Pliško, Croatia
Zuzana Faboková, Slovakia
Rui Fragata, Portugal
Marius Frost, Sweden
Alexandru Ioan Furdui, Romania
Jonathan Guggenbichler, Germany
Anthony Guillaumier, Malta
Margareta Hansson, Sweden
Veronika Hirschnerová, Slovakia
Cristina-Ana Iliescu, Romania
Ardelean Ionut, Romania
Malin Juter, Sweden
Barbora Kyzeková, Slovakia
Cristina Lazar, Romania
Gabriele Lazzara, Italy
Robert Lindqvist, Sweden
Judith Logall, Germany
Erik Lorentsson, Sweden
Maria Lundgren, Sweden
Thomas Markström, Sweden
Andreia Marujo, UK
Daniel Modigh, Sweden
Bogg Daniel Nilsson, Sweden

Individual members (continued)

Anna Nordén, Sweden
Mikael Nyman, Sweden
Åsa Övrelid, Sweden
Janka Pálešova, Slovakia
Peter Pastier, Slovakia
Bettina Peters, Romania
Pavel Plavec, Slovakia
Danijela Rajkovic, Croatia
Bara Ramona Ioana, Romania
Ellinor Rasmusson, Sweden
Peter Rechterík, Slovakia
Carol Ritchie, UK
Elizabeta Rogović, Croatia
Jens Sarlin, Sweden
Ilaria Scarmagnan, Italy
Julius Schestag, Slovakia
Catharina Schmitz, Sweden
Joseph Schmitz, Sweden
Elise Schreiber, Germany
Kajsa Seinegård, Sweden
Elin Sörensson, Sweden
Nicole Spittel, Germany
Ingrid Svensson, Sweden
Anja Tomljenović, Croatia
Mihai-Filip Țonea, Romania
Ilze Vanaga, Latvia
Ján Vasil', Slovakia
Ivana Vasil'ová, Slovakia
Barbara Vižintin, Croatia
Vladimir Vuk, Croatia
Hannah Wiklund, Sweden
Tanja Wolff, Germany
Olena Zhukova, Ukraine

Welcome to our new coordinators

Welcome and thanks for joining the IE team to one new coordinator this time.

Country Coordinator Slovakia

Aurélia Bachoríková



Aurélia is grateful for the opportunity to act as IE Country Coordinator Slovakia. This is the destination she has been working toward—a role where she can effectively apply everything learned throughout her previous career while helping to discover the potential of our region, and Slovakia as a whole, in promoting heritage interpretation and supporting the protection of our natural and cultural heritage. Because heritage is our ancestors' investment in our common future.

Aurélia is a project manager and destination management specialist dedicated to promoting natural and cultural heritage through interpretation. Combining strategic thinking, organisational expertise, and a passion for storytelling to inspire meaningful engagement with heritage.

You can read more about Aurélia and about our whole team of coordinators here:

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

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/>

48th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Commission

19-29 July 2026

Busan, South Korea – and available to watch online

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/48COM>

Europeana webinar: Creating interactive experiences with 3D cultural heritage

8 August 2026

Online

<https://www.europeanheritagehub.eu/event/creating-interactive-experiences-with-3d-cultural-heritage/>

8th international conference on cultural sustainable tourism

8-10 September 2026

Turin, Italy

<https://www.ierek.com/events/cultural-sustainable-tourism-cst-8th-edition#introduction>

GEM conference: Learning is digital?

9-11 September 2026

Bletchley Park, UK – and online

<https://gem.org.uk/training-and-events/gem-courses/gem-conference-2026/>

21st ICOM-CC Triennial Conference: The Norwegian Miracle, Cultural Connections

14-18 September 2026

Oslo, Norway

<https://icom-cc2026.org/>

19th European Cultural Heritage Network Conference

23-26 September 2026

Skiathos, Greece

<https://www.culturaltourism-network.eu/conference-2026.html>

AHI conference

7-9 October 2026

Newcastle-upon-Tyne/ Northumberland, UK

<https://ahi.org.uk/event/2026-annual-conference/>

NEMO European Museum Conference 2026: Human After All – Museums in the wake of AI

11-13 October 2026

Vilnius, Lithuania

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

Youth Heritage Days #2

22-24 October 2026

Palermo, Italy

<https://www.youth-heritage-europe.org/youth-heritage-days-2.html>

18th World Congress of the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC)

26-29 October 2026

Marrakech, Morocco

<https://www.ovpmmarrakech2026.com/>

2027 International Officina for the Culture of Dialogue: Heritage practices in dialogue

11-12 March 2027 (Deadline for registration: 31 August 2026)

Florence, Italy

<https://www.lifebeyondtourism.org/officina-2027/>

IE conference 2027

Spring 2027

Nuremberg, Germany

www.interpreteuropeconference.net (will be updated soon)

And finally...

Thank you for your contributions.

Sunny summer greetings from your IE News Team!

Marie Banks (UK) – News Coordinator
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 Autumn 2026 edition: Monday 31 August 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.

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<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.

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

