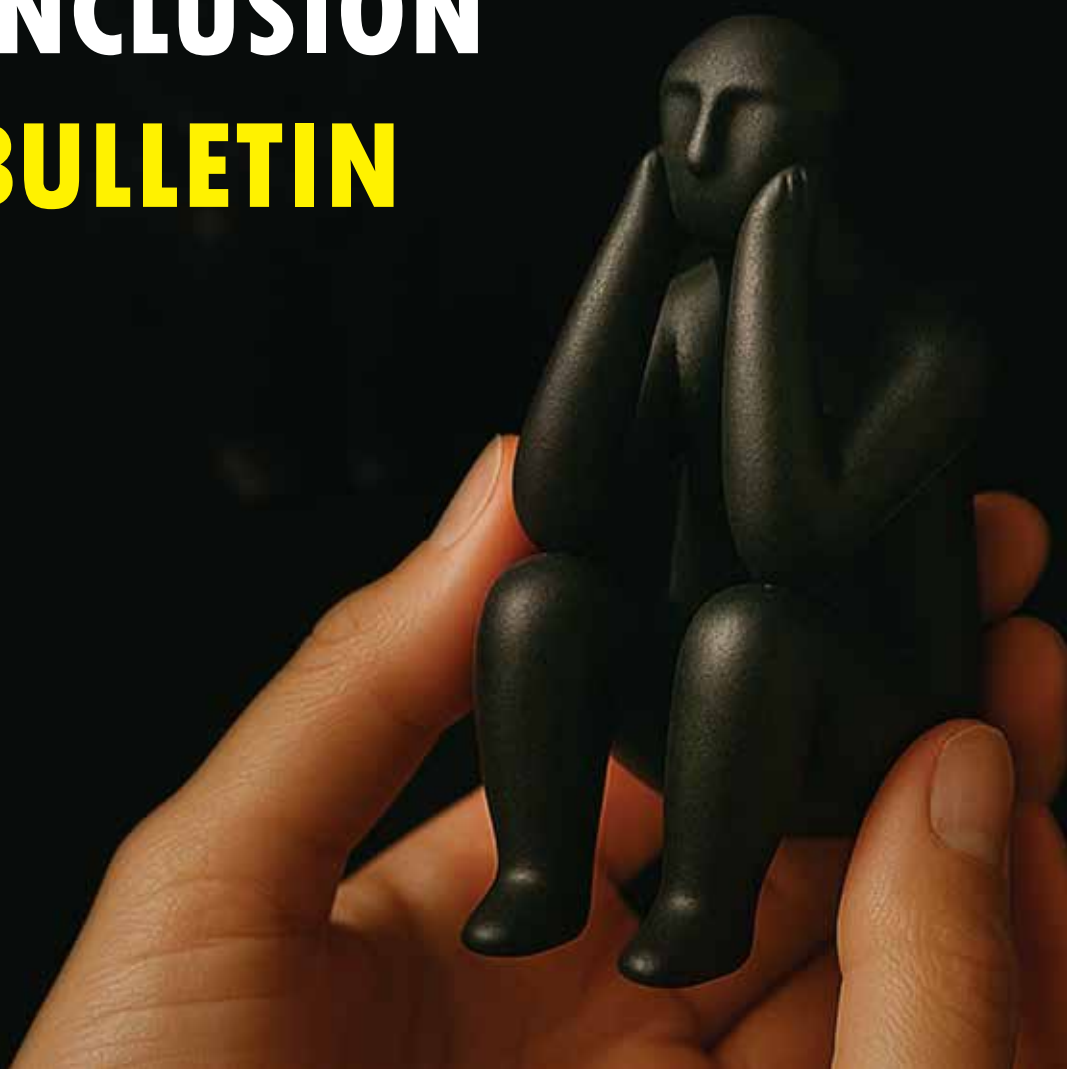


HERITAGE *and* INCLUSION BULLETIN



„Heritage and Inclusion Bulletin“

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ΑΡΧΑΙΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΤΕΧΝΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ
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THE NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF ROMANIA

HERITAGE
and
INCLUSION
BULLETIN

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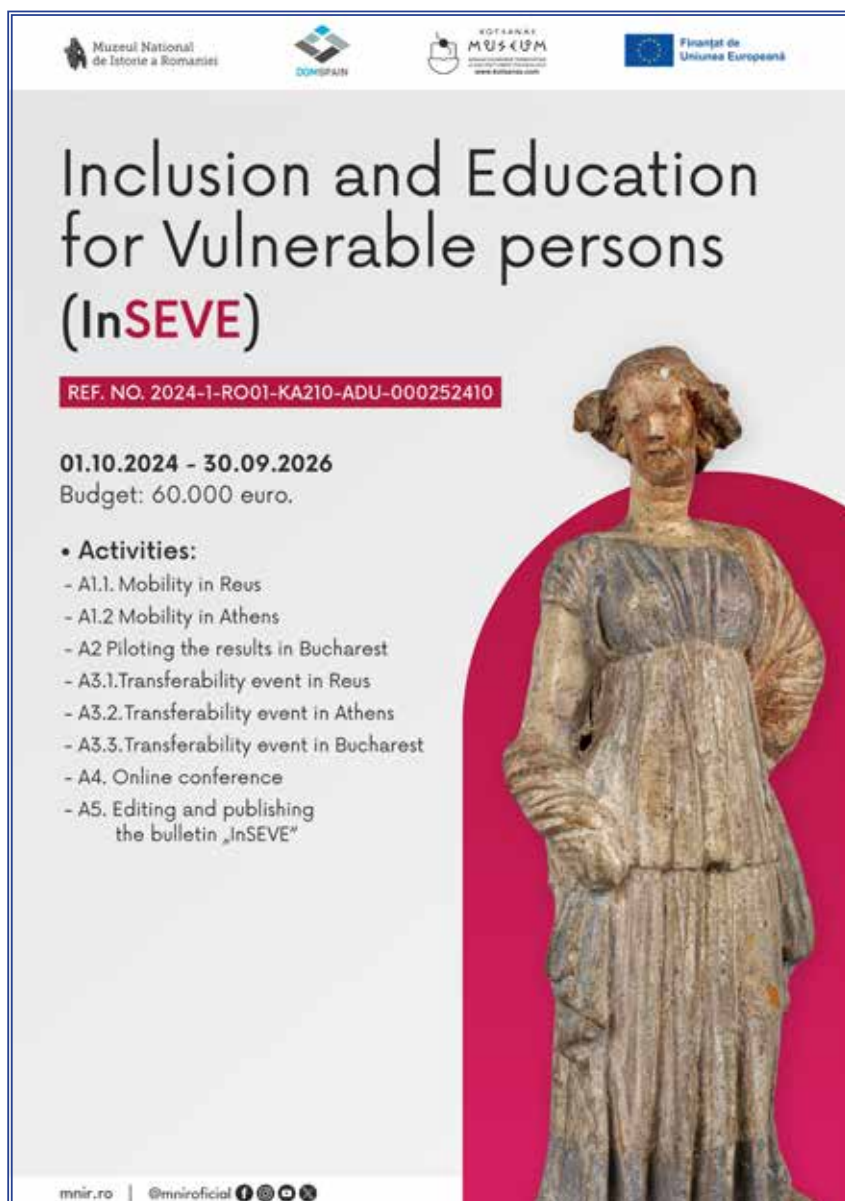
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INCLUSION AND EDUCATION FOR VULNERABLE PERSONS

Marius Neculae



Muzeul National de Istorie a Romaniei

COMENIUS

MUSEUM

Finanțat de Uniunea Europeană

Inclusion and Education for Vulnerable persons (InSEVE)

REF. NO. 2024-1-RO01-KA210-ADU-000252410

01.10.2024 - 30.09.2026
Budget: 60.000 euro.

- **Activities:**
 - A1.1. Mobility in Reus
 - A1.2. Mobility in Athens
 - A2. Piloting the results in Bucharest
 - A3.1. Transferability event in Reus
 - A3.2. Transferability event in Athens
 - A3.3. Transferability event in Bucharest
 - A4. Online conference
 - A5. Editing and publishing the bulletin „InSEVE”

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The project “Inclusion and Education for Vulnerable persons” (InSEVE), ref. no. 2024-1-RO01-KA210-ADU-000252410, funded by the European Union’s Erasmus Plus program, Adult Education, small-scale partnerships, with the amount of 60,000 euros was proposed and is implemented between 1st of October 2024 and 30th of September 2026 by the National History Museum of Romania, together with its partners, DOMSPAIN SLU, from Reus, Spain and Kotsanas Museum of Ancient Greek Technology, Athens, Greece.

The initial aim of the project was to increase the organizational capacity of the partners through the exchanging, improvement and sharing of best practices and tools in the area of adult education, enhancing the transferability of best practices and quality assurance in adult education programs dedicated to persons confronting with fewer opportunities (refugees, minorities, convicts and disabilities / persons with visual impairments) thus, elevating the quality of adult education offer by enhancing the skills of educators and other professionals in the cultural sector.

In order to achieve this aim, the following specific objectives were designed:

- SO1: Increasing the organizational capacity of the partners, by conducting 3 mobilities, transferability events and a bulletin, during 24 months of implementation.

- SO2: Increasing the level of transferability of methods and good practices, developed by the 3 promoters through a piloting event, 3 transferability events (for at least 60 participants from 6 organizations) and a bulletin during 24 months of implementation.

- SO3: Increasing awareness on equality, non-discrimination and social inclusion, on involving of persons with fewer opportunities / disabilities in heritage related activities, but also on the funding program, for a minimum number of 20.000 adults, through methods and tools of dissemination and multiplication used in the project, during 24 months of implementation.

- SO4: Increasing the visibility and the capacity of promoters by establishing, strengthening, continuing and expanding an international partnership in the field of inclusion through education in the museum context, during 24 months of implementation.

The proposed activities necessary for fulfill the objectives were carried out according to the previously established plan:

A1.1. Mobility in Reus, Spain (4th - 9th of November 2024)

A1.2. Mobility in Athens, Greece (3rd - 8th of March 2025)

A2 Piloting educational activities in Bucharest, Romania (12th -17th of May 2025)

A3.1. Transferability events in Bucharest, Reus and Athens (3 days, in September 2025)

A4. An online conference on the theme of museum education programs and inclusion in the field of adult education (18th – 19th of November 2025)

A5. Editing and publishing of the "Heritage and Inclusion Bulletin"

A0. Promotion and dissemination events.

After 15 months of implementation, most of the activities have been carried out, achieving outstanding results that exceeded expectations:

- 19 members of the partner's staffs were involved directly in 7 activities and developed their personal and professional skills, leading to the development of the partners' organizational capacity.

- Each promoter collaborated within the activities with at least five organisations in their country (DomSpain with 12), expanding their network, consolidating their local partnerships and prestige, sharing Erasmus + experience, information about the project and topic, European principles and values.

- To date, 340 people participated in the activities (mostly employees and collaborators of the promoters and their partners), individuals who have gained information, shared their experience and broadened their horizons, and the number of those who have received information about the topic and the project is approx. 100,000 people

- The National History Museum of Romania has 2 new adapted workshops dedicated to beneficiaries with fewer opportunities and one tactile exhibition and an accessibility report.

- A new cooperation project has been generated due to InSEVE: "SenseAble Culture", ref. no. 2025-1-RO01-KA220-ADU-000350475 and the partners' staff members have gained enhanced confidence in European projects, which will lead to an increased collaboration and future projects developed.

Therefore, after almost 15 months of implementation, it can be observed that the project led to increased organizational capacity of promoters, increased visibility and trust in European programs, developed competencies for various participants and development of inclusion, through visibility, new cultural services and networking.

THE MOBILITY IN REUS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE InSEVE PROJECT

Ana Herranz Zentarski

The disability community holds a singular position, representing the only minority group that any individual may join at any given moment, whether through ageing, illness, or accident. This fact underscores the critical importance of universal design. By 2030, projections show that approximately **24% of the European Union (EU) population will be aged 65 years or over**, translating to hundreds of millions of citizens. Consequently, public infrastructure, digital platforms, and social systems must evolve rapidly to accommodate this sizeable and growing share of the populace. With this professional mission in mind, the **“Setmana de l’Accessibilitat Cultural”** (Cultural Accessibility Week), an event within the Erasmus+ InSEVE project, was held in Reus, Spain, in November 2024. This intensive six-day mobility session convened professionals from Spain, Romania, and Greece to explore Universal Accessibility in cultural and educational settings, aiming to equip staff with the necessary tools and strategies for engaging adults facing fewer opportunities (FO), including visually impaired individuals, migrants, and refugees.

Highlights: Embracing the Holistic Approach to Access

The central theme guiding the week’s activities was the **“Accessibility Chain,”** emphasising that accessibility is not a singular fix but a **continuous journey** that begins well before a visitor arrives at a museum, spanning from digital





information availability to physical navigation. This holistic view is paramount for effective institutional change. The week's programming was specifically designed to provide practical, actionable skills essential for implementation back in the home institutions:

- **Foundational Skills and Tools:** Participants engaged in practical sessions on **Introduction to Braille**, building foundational skills for tactile communication. Furthermore, they explored **Cost-Effective Tools (ICT Tools) for Inclusion**, discovering readily available digital resources that allow staff to make cultural content accessible to all visitors without requiring substantial financial investment.
- **Universal Accessibility in Practice:** Professionals undertook a powerful, real-world exploration of physical accessibility within the city of Reus. During this invaluable activity, participants checked the physical accessibility of the city's spaces firsthand while operating a wheelchair. They experienced the daily challenges this entails, assisted by Javi and Juanca of the La Lliga per la Inclusió and Club Esportiu Costa Daurada. This activity provided a necessary shift in professional perspective.
- **Practical Application:** The theoretical knowledge was



immediately tested. Participants visited the National Archeology Museum of Tarragona (MNAT) and the Necropolis, applying learned principles. Additional training included a rigorous **Checklist Workshop** focused on how to formally audit and adapt cultural spaces for accessibility.

Moving Beyond Compliance

The week culminated with a Conference and round table held at Espai Boule, featuring leading experts such as Francisco Antonio Sánchez Galera (Director of ONCE Reus), Cornel-Constantin Ilie (National History Museum of Romania), Panagiotis Kotsanas (Museum of Ancient Technology of Greece), and hosted by Alfred Blasi Escudé (Open Europe and La Lliga per la Inclusió). A key, overarching conclusion was that the visit for a person with a disability effectively begins at home. This means museum webpages must be fully accessible to allow autonomous actions like purchasing tickets, consulting amenities, or planning the journey—the initial access point.

A Collective Commitment to Inclusive Spaces

Achieving optimal inclusion requires ensuring that **museum staff are thoroughly trained** to provide appropriate attention and accompaniment. Staff must learn to adapt their language, descriptions, and explanations to ensure that every individual can enjoy the experience autonomously and fully. Professionals, including those from the National History Museum of Romania and the Museum of Ancient Technology of Greece, expressed eagerness to apply the knowledge and inclusive approach gained during the Reus experience in their home institutions, signalling a strong professional commitment to future action.



InSEVE WORKSHOP IN ATHENS: PROMOTING ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Panagiotis Kotsanas

In March 2025, from the 3rd to the 8th, Athens hosted partners from the InSeve project in a local workshop designed to promote accessibility, inclusion, and respect for diversity. The primary goal of this event was to not only showcase a structured and engaging program, but also to create an environment genuinely welcoming and supportive for visitors with visual impairments. Through this initiative, the museum aimed to demonstrate how cultural spaces can integrate accessibility as a central aspect of their identity, rather than as an optional addition.

Strategies for Inclusive Engagement

During the workshop, the museum presented a series of educational activities reflecting its commitment to inclusion. Three key workshops formed the core of this approach:

- Telecommunications and Cryptography in Ancient Greece: An interactive session exploring the application of ancient Greek knowledge in communication technologies.



- Birdly Virtual Reality Experience: Participants “flew” through space and time, experiencing different historical eras in a highly immersive way.
- Water and Air in Ancient Greek Technology: Hands-on activities connecting fundamental concepts of physics with technological inventions from antiquity.
- These workshops were not mere demonstrations; they illustrated how the museum bridges theoretical knowledge with lived experience, offering meaningful and memorable engagement for all visitors.

Ensuring Accessibility for All

A central element of the program was demonstrating practical accessibility measures. In collaboration with the Panhellenic Association of the Blind, the museum transformed its written guide into Braille in both Greek and English. This not only facilitated access for visitors with visual impairments but symbolically reinforced the museum’s philosophy that accessibility is a priority, not an afterthought.

For visitors with partial vision, printed materials were carefully designed with attention to colour contrast, font type, size, and spacing, ensuring clarity and legibility. By providing multiple accessible formats, the museum enabled every visitor to interact with the collection in a manner that was familiar and effective for them.

Learning Through Experience

The presence of Ms. Fardela, General Secretary of the Panhellenic Association of the Blind, highlighted the importance of understanding the everyday realities of people with visual impairments. Her guided discussion and participation in a museum tour offered invaluable insight into challenges often invisible to sighted visitors or staff, such as orientation difficulties, lack of tactile information, and inadequate infrastructure. Observing her interaction with the exhibits allowed all participants to experience firsthand how inclusive design transforms a museum visit into a fully engaging, multi-sensory experience.

Exploring Athens Beyond the Museum

In addition to activities within the museum, partners engaged with Athens’ cultural landscape through visits to institutions that have successfully integrated accessibility into their operations. The National Archaeological Museum of Athens offered guided exploration of permanent collections,

while the Tactual Museum of the Lighthouse for the Blind provided a unique tactile approach to art, deepening understanding of inclusive methodologies and fostering empathy among sighted participants.

The program also included visits to landmark locations such as the National Garden and the Zappeion. These experiences connected the cultural content of the workshops with the urban environment, allowing participants to gain a holistic understanding of Athens as both a historical and contemporary cultural space.

Conclusion and Reflections

Across all activities, a consistent theme emerged: accessibility is not merely a technical adjustment, but a cultural philosophy and conscious choice. Through this workshop, the museum demonstrated how integrating accessibility into the core mission enriches the experience for all visitors, empowering them to engage with knowledge, culture, and history in meaningful ways.

Hosting the partners was not simply a series of scheduled activities. It became a process of exchange, reflection, and collaboration, providing insights into the museum’s practices and highlighting opportunities for growth. Most importantly, it reaffirmed that accessibility is a continuous journey—an integral part of the museum’s identity, mission, and commitment to creating spaces that are genuinely open and inclusive for everyone.



PRESENTATION OF THE KOTSANAS MUSEUM WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE InSEVE PROJECT

Constantina Varela, Eleni Papastergiou

The Kotsanas Museum of Ancient Greek Technology stands today as a unique cultural institution that, for more than fifteen years, has consistently highlighted one of the most intriguing yet underexplored aspects of Greek civilization: the technological ingenuity of antiquity. Operating as a non-profit cultural organization without public or private funding, the museum has achieved international recognition through its dedication to scientific accuracy, educational outreach and the preservation of technological heritage. Its work underscores the idea that technology has always been a defining feature of advanced societies, including that of Ancient Greece. Technology profoundly shaped the development of the ancient Greek world. From the Antikythera Calculating Mechanism to the engineering mastery behind the Acropolis and the Parthenon, ancient Greek civilization cultivated systematic thinking, mathematics and engineering on a level that foreshadowed the origins of modern technological progress. The museum's mission is to showcase how, in the late antiquity period, Greek technology





had reached a sophistication remarkably close to what we consider modern mechanical and scientific innovation.

The institution's history began in 2003 in Katakolon, Peloponnese, with the establishment of the first permanent exhibition space. This was followed in 2014 by the founding of the Archimedes Museum in Ancient Olympia, dedicated to the greatest polymath of the ancient world, and in 2018 by the opening of a third space in Athens. Together, these sites offer visitors a comprehensive panorama of ancient Greek engineering creativity, featuring functional reconstructions of mechanisms, musical instruments and toys—all built with meticulous scientific methodology.

The museum's work has travelled widely. Its itinerant exhibitions have been hosted by major museums, universities and cultural institutions across Europe, America, Asia, Australia and Africa. Prestigious organizations such as the European Patent Office, the National Library of France, the École Polytechnique of Lyon, the Basel Archaeological Museum and leading universities have presented its collections, reaffirming the museum's global reach and cultural significance.

In Athens, visitors encounter more than 150 interactive exhibits across 24 thematic units, each illuminating the creativity and skill of ancient engineers

and craftsmen. The displays include a reconstructed Antikythera Mechanism, Heron's automatic theatre, Archimedes' planetarium, astronomical instruments developed by Hipparchus and Ptolemy, and various mechanical and hydraulic automata. Equally captivating are the reproductions of ancient musical instruments - such as the hydraulis of Ktesibios, the lyre, the pan flute and Apollo's kithara - as well as authentic reconstructions of toys that shed light on everyday life in antiquity.

A central aspect of the museum's philosophy is accessibility. Within the framework of the InSeve program, the Kotsanas Museum has developed specialized initiatives for visitors with visual impairments, carefully tailored to individuals with partial or complete loss of vision. These include tactile exploration, detailed verbal interpretation and hands-on engagement with selected exhibits. Braille materials in Greek and English were also produced through the program, ensuring equitable access to knowledge for all visitors. This approach reflects the belief that cultural heritage and technological history must be accessible to everyone, without exception.

The exhibits are further supported by rich audiovisual material, explanatory panels, diagrams, videos and documentary resources that clarify the function and context of each mechanism. These elements enhance the learning experience and make the content accessible and engaging for audiences of all ages.

Through this holistic and inclusive interpretive framework, visitors discover that the ancient Greeks devised technologies often assumed to belong solely to the modern world: automated storytelling systems, self-propelled vehicles with programmable features, functional robotic constructs, advanced astronomical tools, lifting mechanisms and early forms of automatic clocks. Such achievements reveal a civilization with technological capabilities far ahead of its time - so advanced, in fact, that under different historical circumstances it might have witnessed an early industrial revolution during the Hellenistic era.

The Kotsanas Museum continues to pursue its work with consistency, vision and a strong dedication to accessibility and educational enrichment. Its exhibitions and outreach initiatives reaffirm Greece's enduring legacy as a civilization of innovation, creativity and technological brilliance.

THE KOTSANAS MUSEUM'S EXPERIENCE IN BUCHAREST: ACCESSIBILITY, CULTURAL EXCHANGE, AND THE InSEVE PROGRAMME

Constantina Varela, Eleni Papastergiou

The participation of the Kotsanas Museum of Ancient Greek Technology in the InSEVE project in Bucharest, hosted by the National History Museum of Romania, proved to be an exceptionally meaningful journey. More than an institutional collaboration, it became an encounter with new ideas, new people, and new approaches to accessibility and cultural inclusion - an experience that broadened our perspectives and enriched our work.

A Well-Structured Program with Real Impact

From the very first day, the INSEVE project stood out for its strong organization and thoughtfully curated content. Conversations with colleagues from participating countries created a dynamic space for exchanging ideas on accessible cultural heritage. These discussions introduced us to diverse practices, challenges, and solutions, helping us re-evaluate our own methods and identify new approaches we can adopt. Our introduction to Bucharest - previously unfamiliar to us - was equally engaging and insightful, revealing a city rich in history and cultural depth.

Inclusive Workshops and Hands-On Learning

During our week-long stay, we took part in two workshops that placed inclusion and experiential learning at their core. The first brought us together with individuals living with Parkinson's disease, who openly shared aspects of their daily life and the challenges they encounter in cultural spaces. Their perspectives served as a valuable reminder of the importance of empathy, sensitivity, and thoughtful design. The second workshop, centered on ceramics, invited participants to recreate clay objects inspired by the museum's collections - a creative, tactile exercise that highlighted the educational value of hands-on engagement.

Exploring Romania's Cultural Heritage

Our guided visits to the permanent exhibitions of the National History Museum of Romania offered a substantial journey through major chapters of the country's past. The exhibition of prehistoric jew-

ely impressed with its originality, the section on the Second World War provided a compelling historical narrative, and the Historical Treasury revealed iconic artefacts of Romania's cultural heritage. Outside the museum, visits to the Dimitrie Gusti National Village Museum and the monumental Palace of the Parliament further enriched our understanding of Romanian history and offered a broader cultural context to the program.

Dialogue with Accessibility and Inclusion Organizations

A key component of our participation involved meetings with Motivation Romania and Special Olympics Romania. Specialists from both organizations shared their extensive experience in promoting accessibility and social inclusion, encouraging an open dialogue on the practical and structural challenges faced by cultural institutions - particularly when adapting historical buildings. Together, we explored realistic strategies, intervention models, and long-term approaches aimed at ensuring equitable access to cultural experiences.

Contributing to the Tactile Exhibition "... At Hand"

Perhaps the most inspiring aspect of our stay was our active involvement in the creation of the tactile exhibition "... At Hand". Working closely with the museum team on accurate replicas of selected objects, we gained first-hand insight into the development of an exhibition designed specifically for visitors with visual impairments. Being present throughout the setup and opening offered a rare perspective on how inclusive exhibitions come to life. The immediate and positive responses from visitors reaffirmed our belief in the importance of expanding tactile and accessible initiatives - especially those that support vulnerable groups.

A Meaningful Journey with Lasting Value

Our experience in Bucharest, within the framework of the InSEVE project, was remarkable in every respect. It provided new knowledge, strengthened international collaborations, and deepened our understanding of accessibility as a core principle rather than an obligation. Above all, it renewed our commitment to ensuring that culture remains a shared, open, and inclusive space - one that welcomes every visitor, regardless of ability.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED VISITORS AT THE KOTSANAS MUSEUM OF ANCIENT GREEK TECHNOLOGY

Constantina Varela, Eleni Papastergiou, Panagiotis Kotsanas

The Kotsanas Museum of Ancient Greek Technology has developed an educational approach designed to offer blind and visually impaired participants meaningful access to selected exhibits through touch and sound. The selection of artefacts from the museum's extensive collection of ancient Greek inventions was based on criteria of safety, tactile clarity, and interpretative potential for audiences with low or no vision. The structured visit is organized into four distinct parts, with a total duration of approximately three hours.

Part I – Tactile Exploration

The first stage introduces participants to a series of ancient Greek inventions through direct tactile engagement. Working in small groups, participants explore each object individually, using touch to understand its size, material characteristics, and functional components. To support comprehension, tactile diagrams in Braille accompany each exhibit, allowing visitors to follow the structure and mechanism of every invention as it is being described. After receiving historical and technical explanations from trained museum staff, participants also have the opportunity to operate the mechanisms themselves where appropriate. The inventions included in this tactile section are:





1. Magic automatic fountain
2. Philon's intelligent wine jug
3. Archimedes' screw (model)
4. Heron's pantograph
5. Aeneas' cryptographic disc
6. Diptychs
7. Archytas' flying dove
8. Astronomical "plinthion"
9. Pythagorean cup
10. Ostomachion

Part II – Acoustic Interpretation

The second part focuses on inventions that can be perceived and understood primarily through sound. Participants listen to the auditory properties and operational principles of a curated selection of ancient Greek musical instruments, as well as acoustic mechanisms from ancient technological devices. This segment emphasizes the distinct tonal qualities and sound-based signals that reveal each object's purpose and construction.

The items presented include:

1. Drum (Tympanon)
2. Roontron
3. Kymbals



4. Sistrum
5. Kroupezion
6. Musical bells
7. Plato's water-clock alarm
8. Aristotle's alarm mechanism

Part III – “History Through History”

In the third part, participants experience an acoustic narration of the program of Philo of Byzantium's fixed automatic theatre - the earliest known example of an automated storytelling device, often described as the “first cinema” of antiquity. Through detailed verbal description, visitors follow the sequence of seven scenes that unfold automatically, including the myth of Nauplius avenging the death of his son Palamedes after the Trojan War. This interpretative method enables blind and visually impaired audiences to access a complex ancient narrative machine through sound alone.

Part IV – Interactive Engagement with Ancient Games

The final section involves hands-on interaction with tactile adaptations of ancient Greek games. These specially constructed versions, produced by the Kotsanas Museum, are designed for easy handling and full accessibility for blind and visually impaired users. The activities include:

- Archimedes' Ostomachion
- Aeneas' Cryptographic Disc
- Trias
- Enneas

Through these interactive games, participants engage directly with mathematical reasoning, strategic thinking, and cryptographic practices of the ancient world, concluding the program with an experiential and playful dimension.

THE CONTEMPORARY MUSEUM AS A SPACE OF CULTURAL INCLUSION. CASE STUDY – KOTSANAS MUSEUM (ATHENS, GREECE)

Alin-Victor Popa

In recent decades, museums have undergone significant transformations, evolving from institutions primarily focused on the conservation and display of heritage into dynamic entities oriented toward society, education, and inclusion. This paradigm shift responds to the demands of increasingly diverse societies, in which access to culture and participation in museum life can no longer be reserved exclusively for privileged audiences. In this context, the concept of the contemporary museum implies a redefinition of its traditional role through the integration of practices that facilitate access to and participation in cultural heritage for all individuals.

International reference organizations in the field of cultural heritage have reflected these transformations through updated definitions and guidelines. Thus, in the new definition adopted at the 2022 General Assembly of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), museums are described as institutions that are “open to the public, accessible and inclusive, fostering diversity and sustainability,” emphasizing their responsibility to function as centers of cultural inclusion and community participation in an ethical and professional manner (ICOM 2022).

At the same time, the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums explicitly affirms the obligation of museum institutions to guarantee accessibility for all and to promote social inclusion by eliminating access barriers and creating a safe environment that enables the free expression of diverse communities (ICOM n.d.).

At a global level, this approach is also supported by UNESCO through recommendations and normative instruments that encourage equal access to and participation in cultural life for all social groups, in line with the values promoted by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda emphasizes the principle of “leaving no one behind,” promoting inclusion, solidarity, and the fight against discrimination across all social and cultural domains (United Nations 2015).



In light of these international institutional frameworks, the present article aims to analyze the contemporary museum as a space of cultural inclusion, with a focus on concrete accessibility practices. The selected case study—the experience gained within the project InSEVE – Inclusion and Education for Vulnerable Persons, implemented by the The National History Museum of Romania in partnership with DOM Spain (Reus, Spain) and the Kotsanas Museum of Ancient Greek Technology—seeks to highlight how museum institutions can implement effective strategies for accessibility and inclusive participation, adapted to the diversity of contemporary audiences.

The study examines the experience of a professional mobility carried out in Athens between 3 and 8 March 2025, within the framework of the European project InSEVE. The primary objective of the mobility was to become familiar with methods and practices of museum accessibility dedicated to vulnerable groups, with a particular focus on persons with sensory, cognitive, and mobility impairments.

The activities were hosted by the Kotsanas Museum of Ancient Greek Technology, a museum institution recognized for its interactive and educational approach to the valorization of ancient technological heritage. The experience involved both direct observation of existing museum programs and active participation in educational workshops and training sessions focused on accessibility.

A defining element of the museum is the use of functional replicas of ancient machines and mechanisms, which can be activated and manipulated by visitors. This approach transforms the museum experience into a participatory one, in which learning occurs through direct interaction and experimentation. Participation in educational activities allowed for the observation of how these replicas are integrated into programs designed for diverse audiences, including persons with disabilities. The opportunity to touch, activate, and explore objects contributes to the elimination of cognitive and sensory barriers, facilitating an understanding of museum content beyond traditional visual support.

A significant educational impact is generated by the high level of visitor engagement, as visitors are encouraged to actively participate, experiment, and interact with the exhibits. This dynamic supports the concept of the museum as a space of experience and dialogue rather than merely a place of passive contemplation.

A relevant example of good practice is represented by the section dedicated to ancient musical instruments, where replicas that can be touched and tested are displayed. Each display case is accompanied by audio buttons that



allow visitors to hear the sounds produced by the instruments, offering a fully multisensory experience.

This mode of presentation facilitates access to information for visitors with visual impairments while simultaneously enriching the experience of all visitors. The integration of sound, tactility, and verbal explanations constitutes an accessibility model that can be adapted and implemented in other museum institutions as well.

The mobility also included a study visit to the Tactile Museum of Athens, an institution dedicated to people with visual impairments. The museum provides access to heritage through tactile replicas of ancient monuments, statuettes, architectural models, and sculptural fragments designed to be explored through touch.

This approach demonstrates how cultural heritage can be reinterpreted to become accessible to audience groups that are often excluded from conventional museum experiences. Tactile exploration is complemented by verbal explanations and specialized guidance, creating a safe and coherent framework for visitors.

An essential component of the mobility was professional training conducted in collaboration with museum staff. Training sessions addressed guiding visitors with visual impairments, the use of appropriate and inclusive language, and the creation of accessible museum routes.

In this context, an immersive “in the dark” visit was organized, during which participants navigated the museum space with their eyes covered, guided exclusively through verbal explanations and human assistance. This experience enabled a direct understanding of the real challenges faced by people with visual impairments and facilitated the identification of concrete accessibility solutions.

The analysis of the case study highlights the fact that museum accessibility involves more than isolated technical adaptations, requiring a transformation in the way museum experiences are conceived. The observed practices demonstrate that inclusion can be coherently integrated into exhibition discourse, educational activities, and the museum’s relationship with its audiences. Multisensory approaches contribute to the creation of experiences that are accessible to all visitors, while the training of museum staff plays a crucial role in the success of this process. Immersive experiences prove to be effective tools for awareness-raising and professional development.

From the perspective of the InSEVE project, the exchange of good practices at the European level confirms the importance of interinstitutional cooperation and the adaptation of successful models to different cultural contexts.

The article has analyzed the contemporary museum as a space of cultural inclusion, starting from the international theoretical framework and continuing with a case study based on a professional mobility carried out in Greece. The analysis highlights that accessibility is a complex process that requires museums to assume an active role in contemporary society.

The experiences presented demonstrate the potential of museums to become authentic spaces of inclusion through participatory, multisensory strategies centered on the needs of diverse audiences. European projects such as InSEVE provide a valuable framework for the development of sustainable models of museum inclusion and for strengthening the social role of museums.

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THE “...AT HAND” EXHIBITION

**Cristina Barbu, Andreea Bîrzu, Căţalin Burtea, Cornel-Constantin Ilie,
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During the 3rd activity of the project “Inclusion and Education for Vulnerable Persons” (InSEVE), ref. no. 2024-1-RO01-KA210-ADU-000252410 (A2 - Piloting educational activities in Bucharest, Romania, 12th-17th of May 2025) the partners’ representatives from Romania, Spain and Greece, altogether with local partners in Romania, have decided to initiate, as a main output of the activity, a tactile exhibition at the National History Museum of Romania (MNIR) in Bucharest.

Designed to engage visitors through a tactile experience, the exhibition highlights representative artifacts from various historical periods, providing a multisensory journey through the Romanian past. Thus, the exhibition offers the public an opportunity to explore fragments of the past and categories of cultural heritage through replicas of artifacts from the museum’s collection. These elements invite personal discovery, unrestricted by typological



boundaries. The exhibition encourages visitors to engage directly with the museum's heritage, allowing for both tactile interaction and individual interpretation, also representing a first step towards making the NHMR's cultural offer accessible to people with visual impairments / blindness.

The chosen space was in the middle of the main hall at the museum's HQ, with easy access from the entrance. The exhibition was organized in a space of approximately 20 m² (L = 4.9 m; w = 4.1 m; h = 2.7 m), covered (in order that full darkness to be assured).

In order to make the exhibition accessible and to ensure immersion for people with visual and mobility difficulties, the following measures were taken:

- a tactile carpet was installed at the entrance to the museum and on the exhibition circuit.
- the objects in the exhibition were arranged at a height of approximately 120 centimeters, towards the edge of the pedestals.
- each exhibited artifact was accompanied by written explanations in Romanian and English, in the Braille alphabet (RO-EN) and QR codes for the audioguide (RO-EN).
- phosphorescent tape was applied to the bases of the pedestals and on the route to facilitate the tour in the dark for people with sight.
- subsequently, following the transferability activities (A3.3), the team decided to install an audio speaker, 4 listening devices with headphones and a video system to provide explanations in sign language.

The exhibition starts from the story of the renowned anthropomorphic statues discovered at Cernavodă, The Thinker and his pair, emblematic symbols from the collection of the National History Museum of Romania. This initial section continues with a selection of artifacts that reconstruct the complexity of the material culture during the Neolithic period. The journey continues with exhibits relevant to the history of the Dacians and Romans, emphasizing the cultural, military, and social interactions of Classical Antiquity.

The Medieval Period is illustrated through religious objects, while the 20th century is brought into focus through military artifacts, such as an Adrian-type helmet, and everyday items that document daily life.

Through this chronological and thematic structure, the exhibition seeks not only to convey historical information but also to foster an authentic connection between the public and cultural heritage. Presented in an accessible format, it promotes an inclusive and empathetic understanding of the past.

Opened to the public on 16th of May 2025, the exhibition registered a number of 43,457 visitors only until 1st of November 2025. In the future, the team

will look to expand the exhibition (perhaps to another, more generous space), promote it, and use the experience for the museum's future permanent exhibition.

Artifacts and their descriptions (according with audioguide):

1. A-B. "The Thinker" and its pair, "Seated Woman" (replica) – anthropomorphic figurines, Hamangia culture, Neolithic period, 5th millennium BCE

Masterpieces of prehistoric art, these figurines were discovered in 1956 during archaeological excavations led by Professor Dumitru Berciu in the necropolis of the Hamangia culture near Cernavodă, Constanța County - the first major Neolithic cemetery identified in Romania.

The artifacts are made of fired clay and measure 11.5 cm in height.

Exceptional anthropomorphic representations, they reflect the existence of two essential figures, likely symbolizing the belief in the dual principles of masculinity and femininity. Over time, the two figurines have been published and promoted under the names "The Thinker and Seated Woman" or "The Thinkers of Cernavodă."

"The Thinker"

The artifact depicts a figure, likely male, seated on a four-legged stool. The human silhouette is stylized. The torso is arched, and the head—approximately rhomboidal in shape - with a long, conical neck, is slightly bent forward. The arms are bent, with the elbows resting on the knees, and the palms raised to the cheeks, supporting the head and giving the figure a contemplative posture. The legs are parted and flexed at the knees.



The piece has been published and widely promoted under the name “The Thinker of Cernavodă,” and, together with its female counterpart, is often referred to as “The Thinker and Seated Woman.”

“Seated Woman”

The figurine represents a seated female figure, with both arms resting on the left knee. The human form is stylized. The face is oval, with oblique eyes and a prominently modeled nose. The neck is long and conical. The chest, abdomen, and hips are prominently shaped. The legs are separated, with the left leg bent at the knee, and the right - fragmentary - appears to have been extended forward.

2. A. Anthropomorphic Figurine – model inspired by the artifact discovered at Vânători–Rufeni, Iași County, Cucuteni Culture, Eneolithic Period, First Half of the 4th Millennium BCE. Schematic, fusiform anthropomorphic figurine modeled from clay, representing a standing female figure. The upper part is rendered with a small head, a thick neck, and a narrow, flat torso. Two lateral extensions represent the arms. The breasts are indicated by two small protrusions, while the abdomen is slightly rounded. The hips are emphasized. The lower section is elongated, with a thickening at the knees and a tapered bottom. The legs are only partially separated at the top, marked by a shallow incision. The surface of the figurine features an elaborate painted decoration composed of geometric motifs, suggesting elements of clothing, adornment, and/or body tattoos.

These miniature representations of the female silhouette – more or less abstracted and exhibiting considerable diversity in shape, decoration, and artistic execution - reflect the aesthetic canons and spiritual beliefs of the Neo-Eneolithic world.

Expressive, and laden with emotional and symbolic content, many of these anthropomorphic renderings are considered true masterpieces of prehistoric art.

They are interpreted as expressions of daily life, female identity, divine representations, or cultic objects. Their existence is intimately linked to the spiritual life of prehistoric societies, conveying through symbolic imagery the values and principles of femininity. These artifacts provide insight into the development of the community, as well as into the beliefs, interests -artistic or otherwise – and ideals of ancient peoples. Femininity and motherhood were undoubtedly sources of complex meanings for prehistoric humans and remain deeply rooted in the modern collective consciousness. Delicate and seemingly fragile, these clay figures still provoke reflection today, inviting questions such as: What defines womanhood? What is its role in the broader process of human evolution?

B. Zoomorphic Figurine – Aurochs (Replica), Cucuteni Culture, Eneolithic Period, First Half of the 4th Millennium BCE, Discovered at Mihoveni–Cahla Morii, Suceava County

*The artifact was discovered, along with five similar objects, in a ritual pit, placed above a human skull. The figurine realistically portrays a quadruped in a standing position, with a massive body. It features a short, thick neck, a pointed snout, and incised lines indicating the mouth and eyes. The prominent horns suggest that the animal depicted is an aurochs (*Bos primigenius*).*



Belonging to the broader category of Neo-Eneolithic zoomorphic figurines – an artifact group that has received particular attention in the scholarly literature due to its presumed ritual significance – the object is likely associated with the spiritual life of prehistoric communities and with magico-religious practices tied to fertility, fecundity or hunting cults. The aurochs cult, in particular, is well-documented and widely recognized.

At the same time, the study of such zoomorphic representations contributes to our understanding of animal husbandry and aspects of daily life in prehistoric societies. Ultimately, artifacts of this type further underscore the originality and complexity of the spiritual worldview of the Neo-Eneolithic world.

3. Spectacle-type fibula, contemporary jewelry (Paul Popa donation)

The spectacle-type fibula is a contemporary piece of jewelry crafted from 3 mm diameter brass wire (a yellow-colored metal), inspired by the spectacle fibulae discovered in the bronze and iron hoards unearthed at Tărtăria–Podul Tărtăriei Vest, along the route of the A1 motorway, Orăștie–Sibiu segment.

4. Replica - Getian princely helmet made of gilded silver, discovered in the tumular tomb of Agighiol (Tulcea county) in 1931, second half of the 4th century BC (ca. 340-330 BC).

In 1931, on the territory of Agighiol commune (Tulcea County), at a site known as Movila lui Uță, treasure hunters uncovered a remarkable hoard, which was subsequently recovered by the authorities. The find proved to be a tumulus measuring 32 meters in diameter and

2 meters in height, forming part of a funerary complex constructed from stone and wood. The entrance corridor (dromos) led to a first structure consisting of two chambers with a funerary function, followed by a second structure referred to as the "horse chamber," where the remains of three ritually sacrificed horses were discovered.

The exceptionally rich grave goods include objects made of gold, silver, iron, bronze, and ceramics, dating to the late 4th century BCE. Among the most notable items are a helmet, two greaves, two goblets, and five phialai (libation bowls). The assemblage also comprises appliquéés, ornamental buttons, beads, arrowheads, weapons, ceramic vessels, and horse harness fittings.

5. Roman Coins – replicas

A. Denarius, silver, BC 40

Obverse: Deified Julius Caesar, wearing a laurel wreath

Reverse: calf

B. Denarius, silver, A D 37–38

Obverse: Caligula

Reverse: Deified Augustus, wearing a radiate crown

C. Dupondius (bronze), promoting both the victory over the Dacians and civic patronage (construction of public monuments), A D 113-116 Obverse: Trajan, wearing a laurel wreath and military attire

Reverse: Trajan's Column

6. Unguentaria created by students of The National University of Arts in Bucharest

A. Unguentarium made by free-blowing semi-transparent, orange glass. It has a pear-shaped body, a tall and narrow neck ending in a flared, ring-shaped rim, and a slightly concave base. The vessel features a raised spiral decoration made of brown glass.

B. Unguentarium made by free-blowing transparent glass. It also has a pear-shaped body, with a tall, narrow neck ending in a flared, ring-shaped rim and a slightly concave base.

7. Replica - Metope (scene), The Triumphal Monument "Tropaeum Traiani" from Adamclisi, AD 109

Metope 28 is part of the triumphal monument inaugurated in 109. The monument had 54 limestone metopes, a trophy on the roof, and, according to the fragmentary inscription, it was dedicated to the god Mars. The construction was shaped like a cylindrical drum, with a diameter and total height of 40 meters.

The bas-relief depicts two soldiers with weapons at their feet (with spears and shields), turned to the left. The exact context in which the metope was found is unknown, but in 1874, it was in Istanbul, transported by the order of the Ottoman authorities.

8. Replica - The Biertan Donarium, 4th century AD

Dated to the 4th century, the donarium is a rectangular bronze artifact featuring an attached disc inscribed with the monogram of Christ. The Latin inscription, arranged in three



lines — *EGO ZENO / VIUS VOT / UM POSUI*, translated as *I, Zenovius, have placed this offering* — together with the Christogram, constitutes a valuable source for studying early Christianity.

Discovered in 1775 near Biertan, in present-day Sibiu County, the artifact was once part of the Brukenthal Collection. Alongside other inscriptions and early Christian basilicas uncovered within the territory of modern Romania, the Donarium contributes to the reconstruction of the Christian history of the 4th to 6th centuries.

9. Replica – “The Gospel of Humor” (1473), and two parchment folios made of kidskin
Written on parchment at the Monastery of Putna by the order of Stephen the Great in 1473. It was later donated to the Monastery of Humor, where it was bound in gilt silver. It contains a miniature depicting a portrait of Stephen the Great, executed during his reign.

10. Replica - French helmet ‘Adrian’ md. 1915
French helmet ‘Adrian’ md. 1915 was produced in over 20.000.000 units and used by the Romanian Army from 1917 during the First World War.
The helmet has in the frontal area the cipher of King Ferdinand I.

11. A platter-type dish crafted by master potter Cornel Sitaru (donated by Sergiu Popescu)
A utilitarian piece crafted by master potter Cornel Sitaru from Baia Mare, Maramureș



County. Specifically, it is a platter-type dish featuring two symmetrically placed handles on the left and right sides of the rim.

These handles are applied in relief to the edge of the dish, rising to a height of approximately 2 cm. The decoration is executed on a white background and consists centrally of four petals, four leaves, and four branches. The handles are also ornamented in the same shades of brick red and green.

The piece is glazed on both the front and back, except for the base, which bears the handwritten name of the craftsman, "Sitaru," along with the name of the country, "Romania." The decorative paint is applied in relief, while the background and glaze are uniformly applied. The piece underwent two firings.

12. Rotary Dial Landline Telephone, Electromagnetica Factory (Uzina Electromagnetica – UEM) in Bucharest, model EM-72, serial number RS 72492. Dated: 1970s–1980s

In the United States, the first patent for a rotary dial telephone was granted to Almon Brown Strowger on November 29, 1892. However, the familiar form featuring finger adaptations in the dial was not introduced until the early 20th century. Rotary dial telephones, such as the one presented here, were commercially launched by the Bell System with the introduction of the Western Electric Model 50AL in 1919.

The type of telephone featured in this exhibition was widely used in Romania during the second half of the 20th century, both in private households and in state institutions.

ENSURING EUROPE'S CULTURAL HERITAGE IS TRULY OPEN TO ALL

Carla María Ardiana Pérez

The capacity for every individual, regardless of their ability, to engage fully with cultural institutions is a matter of increasing institutional focus. Europe's cultural spaces hold our collective history and artistic wealth, yet historical design and operational models have unintentionally limited access for a significant portion of the population. The cultural sector is currently undergoing a pivotal transformation, recognising that accessibility is not a discretionary feature; it constitutes a **fundamental human right** and an essential commitment to enriching the entire community.

Current Provisions and Innovations in Discovery

Cultural institutions are making remarkable progress by adopting multi-sensory and cognitive approaches to accessibility. Many museums now offer sophisticated resources designed to enhance the experience for all visitors:

Multi-Sensory Exhibits: Institutions are implementing specialised panels with features that facilitate use by visitors who are sight or hearing impaired, allowing all users to access comprehensive information on the paintings.

Tactile Learning Resources: Accessible guides, such as **tactile-visual books**, are becoming standard practice. These guides, originally designed for blind or low-vision visitors, are fully accessible, combining text in **macro-characters** and **Braille** with colour reproductions and **relief images**. This technique ensures that touch supplements or replaces visual engagement .

Enhanced Tour Support: Guided tours frequently incorporate **tactile readings** of three-dimensional models. Furthermore, many sites offer **multimedia guides** with synchronised audio, visual, and text components, which significantly aids those with hearing and visual impairments in navigating and enjoying exhibits autonomously.



Preparatory Information: To minimise anxiety and increase predictability, resources like **social stories** can be downloaded and printed prior to a visit. These materials effectively prepare individuals, particularly those with cognitive or developmental disabilities, for the museum environment by describing the forthcoming experience step-by-step.

These provisions are shifting cultural experiences from being merely accommodating to being intrinsically more engaging for all participants.



The Imperative for Comprehensive Inclusion

Despite these significant advancements, the objective of achieving full inclusion requires ongoing, sustained effort. Physical barriers, antiquated information systems, and inconsistent staff training remain key challenges that must be addressed systemically. This institutional drive is strongly reinforced by international legal and strategic frameworks:

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD):

This international treaty mandates that nations ensure persons with disabilities can enjoy cultural life on an equal basis with others, requiring the removal of systemic barriers.

The EU's Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030:

This high-level strategy directly supports the UNCRPD goals across Europe, compelling member states and institutions to accelerate the creation of truly accessible cultural environments.

These foundational documents confirm that advancing cultural accessibility is not merely an optional initiative but a matter of **legal obligation** and **ethical necessity**.

Collective Responsibility for Change

Ultimately, the successful creation of truly inclusive cultural spaces requires more than institutional investment; it necessitates **broad public support and active solidarity**. Citizens are encouraged to acknowledge the progress made, inquire about existing accessible features, and support policies that prioritise universal design principles. Every measured step taken today—from implementing a new tactile exhibit to investing in staff competency—represents an investment in a future where our rich shared heritage is demonstrably available to every individual. We must continue to support our cultural sector in achieving this vital and comprehensive goal.

BEYOND THE COLLECTION: MUSEUMS AS ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY ASSETS

Laia Montero Loriente

The role of the museum in contemporary society extends far beyond the traditional function of collection preservation and display. Today, cultural institutions are increasingly recognised as vital community assets, holding a core responsibility to ensure that the rich heritage they safeguard is genuinely accessible to all. This imperative is anchored in the foundational principle that access to culture, regardless of ability, constitutes a **fundamental human right**.

The Imperative of Universal Access

The drive towards universal access is not merely an ethical choice but a strategic necessity. A truly inclusive approach enables museums to serve their entire community, fulfilling mandates like those established by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD)**. To meet this high standard, institutions must view accessibility not as a checklist, but as a continuous, holistic process.

A key framework for this transformation is the **Chain of Accessibility**. This concept emphasises that accessibility is not a singular fix, but a journey that begins well before a visitor arrives at the physical site. It is a continuous sequence, spanning from the moment a potential visitor searches for dig-



ital information, through physical navigation, and extending to post-visit engagement. If any single link in this chain is broken—whether due to an inaccessible website or a lack of trained staff—the entire cultural experience is compromised.

Embracing the Experience Economy

To effectively serve diverse communities, museums must adapt their programming to meet modern visitor expectations, particularly those aligned with the **Experience Economy**. Today's audiences seek active engagement and personalised value rather than passive observation.

This trend requires a fundamental shift in how cultural content is presented. Instead of visitors merely looking at an artefact, museums should integrate interactive elements to deepen understanding. For instance, rather than a simple label, an exhibit might challenge the visitor: "Solve this ancient puzzle to understand the artefact's function." This transformation moves the visitor from being a passive recipient to an **active participant**.

To facilitate this crucial design shift, professionals can utilise tools like the **Tourism Journey Map**. This strategic framework helps institutions plot the visitor's entire emotional and logistical journey, starting from initial awareness (e.g., seeing an advertisement online) right through to their experience sharing upon returning home. By systematically mapping these points, museums can identify and eliminate barriers, thereby ensuring the experience is seamless, personalised, and fully engaging for individuals with varied needs.

A Collective Responsibility

The evolution toward a comprehensive, multi-dimensional approach to inclusion—addressing physical, sensory, cognitive, and social barriers—is an **institutional commitment** that spans every department. It requires a sustained focus on staff training, technological investment, and partnership with local disability communities.

Ultimately, cultural institutions must serve their communities by recognising that true relevance is achieved when every citizen feels welcomed, respected, and able to fully participate in their shared heritage. By embracing the **Chain of Accessibility** and adopting **Experience Economy** principles, museums can cement their role as dynamic, inclusive, and indispensable assets for societal well-being.

MOMENTS IN TIME INCLUSIVE WORKSHOP IMPLEMENTED WITHIN THE InSEVE PROJECT

Cristina Barbu



The National History Museum of Romania, together with its partners DOMSPAIN SLU from Reus, Spain, and the Kotsanas Museum of Ancient Greek Technology in Athens, Greece, initiated activities within the project *Inclusion and Education for Vulnerable Persons* (InSEVE), ref. no. 2024-1-RO01-KA210-ADU-000252410. The project is funded through the European Union's Erasmus Plus programme, Adult Education, Small-Scale Partnerships, and part of the project, inclusive educational workshops were implemented in the Na-

tional History Museum of Romania in May and September 2025.

The definition that outlines the principles guiding museum education includes the guidelines used in creating the *Moments in Time* pilot workshops. Although it was written nine years ago, it remains highly relevant today: 'heritage education in museums is about creating the ideal conditions for the generation of heritage assets through teaching/learning processes. Every individual can find his/her place in this fluid, flexible medium that makes it possible to generate ties as well as threads that bind us to assets, places, museums, stories¹.

The *Moments in Time* workshop aimed to recreate key points from history, starting from museum exhibits presented in the "...at Hand" exhibition, and

1. Merillas, Olaia & Marín-Cepeda, Sofia. (2016). *Heritage Education in Museums: An Inclusion-Focused Model*. International Journal of the Inclusive Museum. 9. 47-64. 10.18848/1835-2014/CGP/v09i04/47-64.

sought to explore history through storytelling by offering a sensory experience for participants. By discovering different textures and exploring museum replicas, participants were able to shape the described world not only narratively, but also through smell, touch, and sound. The pilot workshops were implemented in May and September with beneficiaries and volunteers in order to gather appropriate feedback for further development of the workshops.

The first workshop was based on a scene from Tropaeum Traiani and presented key references to the Dacian-Roman wars, as well as elements of Roman culture and heritage. Participants discovered the textures of clothing items and the weaponry used during the wars, as well as notes of perfumes associated with the Romans, sounds of battle, and narrated excerpts from ancient sources.

The workshop was created for persons with different abilities and mobility levels and was intended to involve participants collaboratively, immersing



them in the atmosphere of the Romans entering Dacian territory. Small bottles with scents based on archaeological and written sources (cinnamon, myrrh, patchouli) were created for the workshop. Replicas of Roman army attire were also used so that participants could feel the textures and observe the weight of the materials. To enhance immersion, written Roman sources describing perceptions of the territory were read aloud. These sources included fragments from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Cassius Dio's *Roman History*. Alongside these texts, the inscription from Tropaeum Traiani was discussed, coin replicas could be explored by participants, and prior to the workshop, a replica of one of the monument's scenes could be explored in the exhibition. The second part of the workshop involved exploring the three-dimensional elements of the international museum symbol. Afterwards, each participant explored a magnetic puzzle depicting the two-dimensional version of the symbol, as it was understood in the ancient world, in the form of a temple. The puzzle was designed to be enjoyable to assemble, starting from architectural volumes that could be touched and associated with shapes to be put together. The puzzle elements were created with careful consideration of appropriate dimensions and the sensory qualities of the materials.

The first workshop was attended by beneficiaries from *Mai Puternici Decât Boala Parkinson* and *Învingătorii Sclerozei Multiple*, who provided structured feedback at the conclusion of the session. The workshop concept was subsequently presented to the project partners, facilitating discussions on good practices within their respective organisations and contributing to the refinement and further development of the initiative.

The second workshop engaged museum volunteers and collaborators, with the aim of collecting additional feedback and exploring the potential for the future development of similar activities within the museum. This phase also focused on identifying opportunities for future workshops and training sessions, enabling the Museum Education Department to implement the activity independently in the future.

In order to create museum workshops that are truly inclusive, further research and collaborations need to be part of the strategy, in order to achieve a proper understanding of museums as inclusive educational spaces. Therefore, through pilot workshops, steps can be taken to adapt the museum and transform it into a space where heritage becomes increasingly accessible to the public.

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INSEVE PROJECT: LOCAL ACTIVITY IN ROMANIA—INCLUSIVE WORKSHOPS AT THE NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF ROMANIA. BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE FOR VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

Andreea Birzu

The **National History Museum of Romania (NHMR)** is proudly implementing the European project “**Inclusion and Education for Vulnerable Persons**” (InSEVE), running from **October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2026**. This initiative, carried out in collaboration with its partners **DOMSPAIN SLU** from Reus, Spain, and **Kotsanas Museum of Ancient Greek Technology** from Athens, Greece, aims to promote cultural inclusion and empower marginalized communities through creative educational activities. The project is funded by the **Erasmus Plus Program**, under the Adult Education, Small-Scale Partnerships initiative.



Local Activity in Romania: Workshops at NHMR

As part of the InSEVE project, **NHMR** is hosting a series of **inclusive workshops** in Bucharest, Romania, to bring cultural education closer to adults and seniors with motor and cognitive disabilities, including those living with conditions such as Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis.

Two workshops stand out in this initiative:

1. **The Story of the ‚Thinker‘ from Cernavodă and Its Pair: Masterpieces of Prehistoric Art**

Facilitated by **Andreea Bîrzu**, this creative workshop combines **storytelling** and **clay modeling**

to explore the iconic **Cernavodă figurines**, one of the most famous prehistoric artifacts in Romania. Participants will be guided through the history of these **anthropomorphic clay figurines**, learning their significance, before shaping their own artistic creations.

2. **Moments in Time**

Facilitated by **Cristina Barbu**, this workshop provides a **sensory exploration** of historical moments, starting with the **Tropaeum Traiani** metope. Participants will engage in discovering textures, sounds, and scents tied to the Dacian-Roman wars, deepening their understanding of ancient history through sensory experiences and storytelling.



Main Objectives of the Workshops:

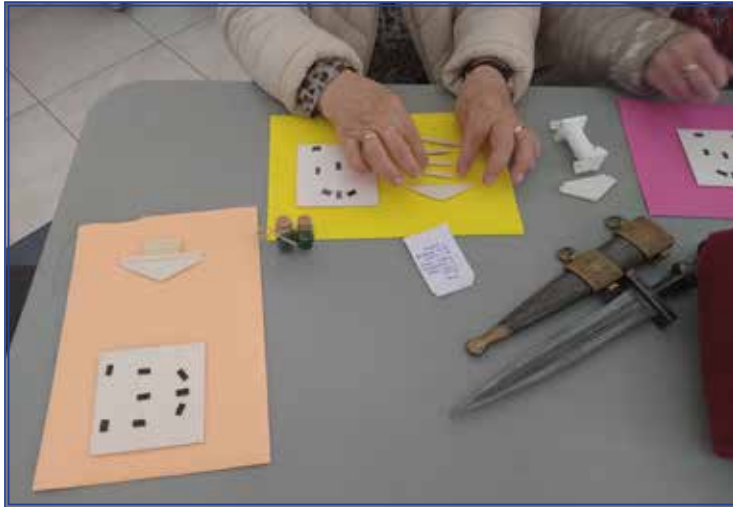
- **Cultural Inclusion:** Foster an environment where participants, regardless of ability, feel accepted and part of the community.
- **Skill Development:** Enhance both **motor and cognitive skills** through hands-on activities, such as clay modeling, which encourages fine motor control and creative thinking.
- **Reducing Communication Barriers:** Use storytelling to support self-expression, especially for participants with verbal communication challenges.
- **Building Confidence:** Equip participants with new skills, boosting their self-esteem and confidence in their abilities.

- **Physical Accessibility:** Ensure the workshops are adaptable to the needs of all participants, providing an inclusive experience.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Encourage interaction, teamwork, and the development of social and collaborative skills.
- **Access to Culture:** Provide an accessible gateway to Romania's rich history and cultural heritage, increasing opportunities for learning and personal growth.

The Impact

The workshops were designed to bridge the gap between the museum's rich artifacts and those with limited access to cultural education. Through **sensory experiences** — identifying textures, sounds, and even smells — participants were able to engage with the **history** and **art** on a more personal level. By exploring **museum replicas**, they not only learned about the past but were able to physically shape their own interpretation of it through touch and creativity.





What We Achieved

- **Engaged Participants:** We successfully brought people together through engaging, **interactive activities** that were accessible to everyone, regardless of their challenges.
- **Cultural Accessibility:** We made **cultural heritage** more accessible to vulnerable groups, offering them a tangible connection to history.
- **Inclusive Education:** By using **replicas** and sensory exploration, we made history **accessible** and relevant to the participants, providing an enriching educational experience.
- **Cultural Collaboration:** The project fostered a **collaborative appreciation** of history, promoting inclusion and respect for diverse abilities and backgrounds.

Looking Ahead:

The InSEVE project will continue its mission to break down barriers to cultural participation, with additional activities planned in **Bucharest, Reus, and Athens**. As we move forward, the goal remains clear: to **empower vulnerable individuals** by offering them opportunities to engage with their cultural heritage in an **inclusive, creative, and accessible** way.

By using cultural education as a tool for social inclusion, the project not only teaches history but also creates a community where everyone, no matter their challenges, can find their place in the shared story of humanity.

Join us in this exciting journey as we make cultural history accessible to all through innovative, inclusive education!

TACTILE MUSEUMS AND EXHIBITIONS – AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE

Adela Stan

As a member of the ongoing European Project called „Inclusion and Education for Vulnerable persons”, implemented by The National History Museum of Romania between 2024 and 2026, I had the opportunity to take part in mobility and transferability activities in Athens (Greece) and Bucharest (Romania) this year, this being a fulfilling experience for me. This very interesting and most of all, useful and impacting project gave me the chance to discover and learn about the concept of a tactile museum in general with some examples in particular.

Unfortunately, the traditional design of museums, often excludes people who are blind or visually impaired, or are offering a reduced accessibility to the collections for this segment of public. This is where tactile museums come in – promoting inclusion, accessibility and creating an unforgettable experience for all visitors.

This kind of museums are intentionally designed to make tactile exhibits accessible to everyone, regardless of visual ability. Tactile exhibits refer to



interactive displays or artifacts that are specifically designed to be experienced through touch, so it allow visitors to physically interact with replicas, sculptures, 3D models to gain a deeper understanding of their texture, shape or dimensions. It encourages the audience, not only the atypical persons, to come in contact with the exhibits, allowing them to touch the objects, to feel the fine details and textures, and reach out to artifacts that are usually displayed in showcases.

These types of museums allow people to be part of culture, are fostering equality, creating opportunities for all visitors, are improving learning, allowing them to experience a multisensory context, making it an experience to remember and are encouraging the public to participate, to touch, to explore. Therefore, the key features of tactile museums are: touch-friendly exhibits, multi-sensory experiences, accessible labeling and adapted navigation such as tactile maps, floor guides, and audio-guided pathways.

There are many tactile museums all over the world, private or state museums, in Europe especially. One of the most well-known and appreciated museums of this kind are in Italy such as Omero Museum (<https://museoomero.it/>) named after the Greek blind poet, Homer, and Varese Museum (<http://www.museotattilevarese.it/>), also in Spain, the Typhlological Museum (<https://museo.once.es/>).

“At the **Omero Museum** everything can be touched. Here there are no barriers for blind people, but we do not think only of them. All activities are designed to be accessible to any visitor. Inclusion is the primary objective: people with different needs can live a common experience together, each according to their possibilities: blind people touch, sighted people watch, children learn through play. But the possibility of touching is granted to everyone, even to those who see. And so, a new way of approaching art is experienced. The traditional prejudice that art is linked only to the function of seeing falls away, and the concreteness of the relationship with nature, which is based on all the senses and not only on sight, is rediscovered”. - Aldo Grassini, Founder and Museum President.

Inaugurated in April 2011, the **Varese Tactile Museum** today represents a substantially unique example in Europe, because it is exclusively dedicated to the display of tactile wooden models, therefore usable by both the sighted and the blind. The museum currently houses about sixty models (divided between architecture, monuments, landscape, archaeological sites, tactile maps,



etc.) and is a sort of three-dimensional encyclopedia to be browsed with the fingers, capable of stimulating not only the interest in tactile knowledge, but also and above all that for the artistic “world”. In the museum, sighted visitors (representing over 98% of users) visit blindfolded, thus experiencing tactile knowledge in its most essential form and above all experiencing how tactile knowledge can be an added value and an emotion “for everyone”.

The function of the tactile models of the archaeological, artistic and architectural brand is twofold, as they are artifacts that if on the one hand are the only tool capable of allowing the use and knowledge of monuments and / or archaeological sites to people without sight, on the other hand they

have a much wider value as they produce in sighted visitors an extraordinary emotional and cognitive involvement, collaborating to increase interest in cultural heritage and works of art. This mechanism develops through a simplification of the knowledge of the nature of monuments and sites, added to an



emotional component, which stimulates interest in the subject and facilitates its deepening. Finally, the function of tactile models is also to be extended to their nature and didactic value, because the provision of the opportunity to schools to show students a series of cultural assets in a more understandable and light form than the traditional book of text, allows to achieve absolutely extraordinary educational results and involvement of young people.

Spain's main **Typhlological Museum (Museo Tiflológico)** is in Madrid, run by ONCE (National Organization of the Blind), offering a unique tactile and auditory experience with 3D models of monuments (Alhambra, Sagrada Familia), art by blind artists, and Braille history, designed for all visitors, especially those with visual impairments, to touch and feel world wonders. The Typhlological Museum was created in 1992 and it is defined as a museum to be seen and touched. It takes its name from the greek word typhlós that means blind.

I haven't had the occasion to visit these museums yet, instead I had the opportunity and the joy to explore a wonderful tactile museum in Greece – **The Tactual Museum of Athens** (<https://tactualmuseum.gr/>) – an open, accessible, inclusive, collaborative and friendly museum of its kind. The Tactual Museum, unique in Greece and one of the 5 Museums of its kind in the world, offers equal opportunities to blind or partially sighted visitors from Greece or abroad to perceive the magnitude and richness of our cultural heritage, through the sense of Touch. At the same time, it is a cultural and educational destination for sighted people, adults and children, since through its special interactive programs visitors can explore the Ancient Greek civilization, as well as get informed and activated for the welfare of the visually impaired people. The Tactual Museum was created in 1984. Over the years its exhibits - exact copies of the original ones, exhibited in other museums in Greece and abroad - have been enriched, while at the same time significant thematic-informational programs have been implemented. As a result the Tactual Museum has evolved into a modern cultural destination, completely accessible to the target population. In 2004, the Tactual Museum opened its doors to the wider public, offering the visitors a new way of approaching the ancient Greek culture and at the same time informing and raising awareness about issues related to





the field of disability, especially blindness. Ever since, thousands of visitors from all over Greece and abroad, of all ages, with and without visual impairments, have been visiting the Museum per year, experiencing this way what

it has to offer. The unique opportunity of tactile contact with the exhibits, which is not offered anywhere else, allows the visitor to capture the depth and essence of art and culture and thus come into substantial interaction with history.

Along with my colleagues I had the chance, not only to visit it, but also to discuss with the team of the museum and to share valuable information and examples of good practices. They shared with us their experience, expertise, tools and methods used in matters of accessibility of the visually impaired people. We learned a lot from them during that visit and we hope



that in the future we will have, in our museum, the necessary resources in order to apply at least some of the practices and tools they implement.

A first step has been taken through a pilot tactile exhibition suggestively called **...at Hand**. The exhibition presents the heritage through a museographic approach focused on accessibility and inclusion. Designed to stimulate visitors' experience through the sense of touch, the exhibition showcases representative objects from different historical periods, offering a multisensory journey into Romania's past. The exhibition encourages discovery through direct experience, providing an accessible and inclusive setting for exploring the past through replicas of artifacts from the collection. Visitors are invited to construct their own dialogue with the objects, starting from shapes, textures, and details that stimulate curiosity and personal reflection.

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LOCAL InSEVE WORKSHOP IN REUS: ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Izan Coronciuc

In September 2025, Reus, Spain, hosted a local event as part of the **InSEVE Project**. Organised by Dom Spain, the workshops engaged local museums and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) with the mission of enhancing the transferability of successful practices and tools related to accessibility and inclusion. The core goal was to share programmes, techniques, and tools that could utilise cultural heritage as a resource for the inclusion of persons with fewer opportunities. The workshop highlights provided participants with a clear, **holistic framework** for creating inclusive and engaging cultural experiences.

Strategies for Multi-Dimensional Inclusion

The central theme guiding the Reus workshops was **Strategies for Multi-Dimensional Inclusion**. The sessions stressed that true accessibility goes beyond physical access; it must address sensory, cognitive, and psychological barriers. Specific strategies were presented for supporting diverse audiences: **Sensory Disabilities:** Recommendations included offering **tactile models**, audio descriptions, and ensuring high contrast in visual materials and lighting.

Intellectual Disabilities: The use of **Easy-to-Read language**, visual schedules, and clear pictograms was advocated, along with the necessity of breaking down complex ideas into simple concepts.



Psychosocial Needs: Addressing these requires cultural staff to be trained to be **supportive and attentive**, not merely informative.

This framework demonstrates that enhancing the inclusivity of cultural spaces requires a comprehensive approach to broaden their appeal and attract a diverse community.

Designing for Experience and Journey Mapping

A second critical element emphasised during the workshops was **Designing for Experience**. This concept promotes moving audiences from passive observers to active participants. This shift aligns with the “Experience Economy,” requiring cultural spaces to increase interactivity. Instead of visitors merely looking at an artefact, museums should integrate interactive elements—for example, “Solve this ancient puzzle to understand the artefact’s function.” The event also introduced tools to facilitate this design shift, notably the **Tourism Journey Map**. This tool helps professionals plot the emotional stages of a visitor’s entire interaction, starting from initial awareness (e.g., seeing an advertisement) right through to their return home.

The Necessity of Authentic Promotion

Coupled with experiential design, the workshops highlighted the necessity of **Authentic Promotion**. Participants learned that effective promotion moves beyond simply listing dates and facts; it must communicate the “why” behind an event. Authentic promotion requires cultural institutions to genuinely understand and engage diverse audiences. Professionals should focus on clearly communicating to potential visitors what they will **discover**, what curiosity the exhibition satisfies, and the lasting feeling they will carry when they leave.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The workshops in Reus successfully equipped cultural sector employees with specialised knowledge and practical steps, addressing the crucial professional question: “**How can I improve my service?**” By embracing multi-dimensional inclusion, designing for active experience, and committing to authentic promotion, cultural institutions can leverage these professional strategies to create spaces that are welcoming and appropriately adapted for all, particularly those facing fewer opportunities.



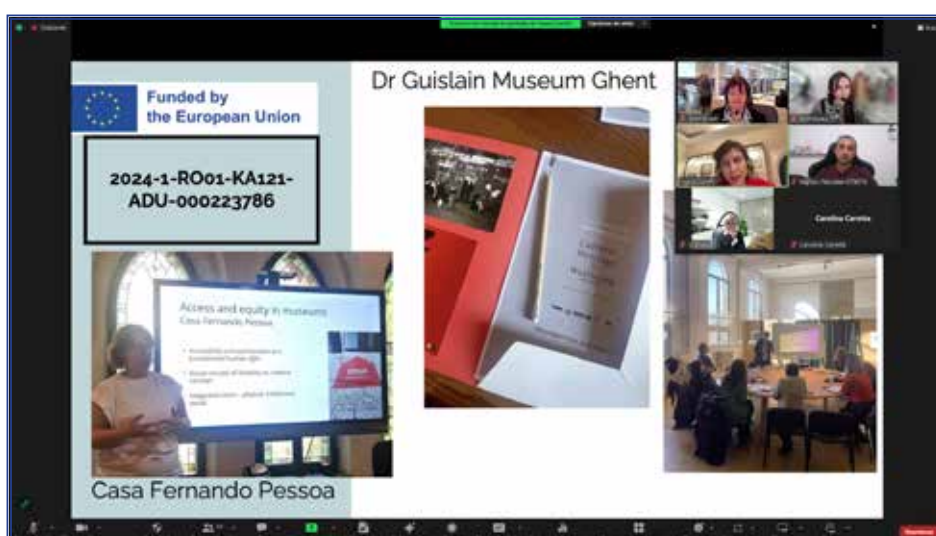
CULTURAL HERITAGE ONLINE CONFERENCE: KEY DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

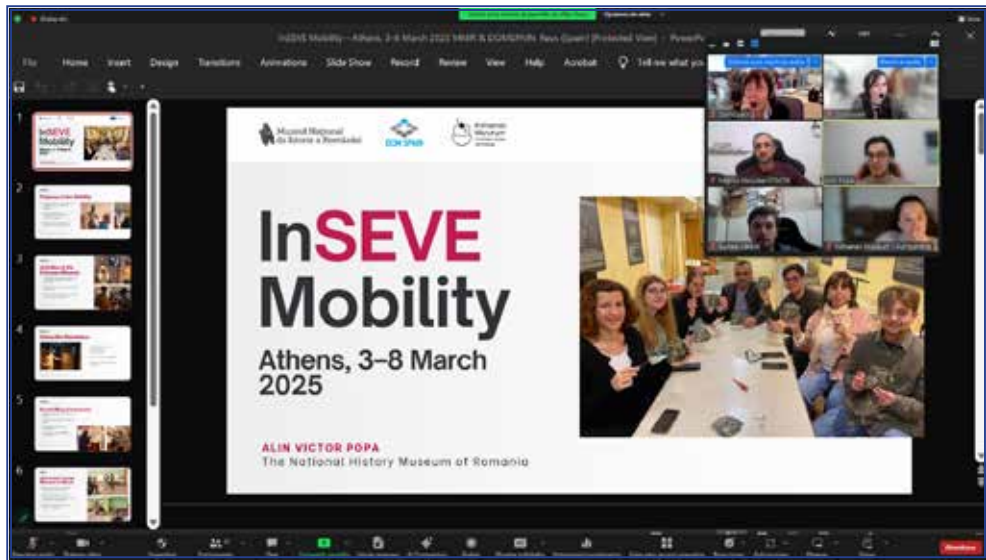
Ma. Elena Chapa de la Peña

The pursuit of truly accessible cultural environments, particularly for individuals confronting **fewer opportunities**, including those with visual impairments, was the critical focus of the **Online Cultural Heritage Conference** held within the framework of the **InSEVE Project**. This event was specifically designed to share the project's concrete results and successful models with cultural heritage actors. Co-funded by the European Union, this project aimed to facilitate the creation of welcoming and appropriately adapted museum spaces across **Romania, Spain, and Greece**. The two-day conference on November 18 and 19, 2025, culminated in a national debate, offering clear conclusions for cultural sector employees dedicated to enhancing inclusivity and broadening their appeal to a diverse community. The insights gained from this focused professional exchange offer immediate guidance on strategies for driving institutional change.

Shared Lessons and Professional Best Practices

The first day of the conference, held on November 18, focused on sharing the vital **lessons learned** throughout the project's activities and international





study visits. Special guests were invited to share established best practices. These included addressing accessibility challenges faced by blind people in museums, presented by Theodora Fardela and Elisavet Kouvarou, and exploring insights on museum accessibility in **sign language**, led by Carolina Carotta. The session also highlighted the potential of **Professional Training for Inclusion** through existing EU programmes like Erasmus+ (Ioana Zamfir). This content was complemented by **testimonials** from project participants in different InSEVE events, which provided real-world examples. This set the stage for the interactive debate on November 19, which aimed at networking and defining practical ways to advance accessibility in culture and education.

Accessible Programme Design: A Foundational Commitment

General conclusions drawn from the November 19 debate, with a focus on **Accessible Programme Design**, underscored that accessibility must be a **foundational element** of programme conceptualisation, not merely an afterthought or an add-on. A key takeaway is the insufficiency of relying solely on standard accommodations like Braille handouts or sign language interpreters. Instead, programmes must be **personalised** for different disabilities and individual visitor needs to ensure true autonomy. Successful programmes were identified as those featuring **clear, concise information**, predictable structures, and carefully controlled sensory environments, including designated **quiet zones** for visitors with sensory sensitivities. The commitment



to accessibility and inclusion requires cultural spaces to establish **coherent internal operating procedures** and provide **continuous, mandatory staff training**, signalling clearly that accessibility is an institutional commitment that surpasses the mandate of a single department.

The Non-Negotiable Role of Community Involvement

In addition to structural and programme design, the debate conclusions stressed that **effective community involvement is non-negotiable** for achieving genuine inclusivity. Feedback from visitors with disabilities is the true metric that defines successful accessibility. Involving users with disabilities in testing new services is one of the most effective ways to improve both relevance and quality before a public launch. For long-term, sustainable progress, cultural institutions must establish stable cooperation with **disability organisations (DPOs)**, who offer invaluable, lived expertise regarding physical layouts, visitor itineraries, and appropriate materials. The success of these initiatives can be measured by **key indicators** such as sustained, repeat engagement, measurably reduced anxiety during visits, and a clear sense of **autonomy and independent navigation** among visitors with **fewer opportunities**.

ACCESSIBILITY STATUS AND SOLUTIONS AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF ROMANIA

Marius Neculae

In July 2025, as a result of the activities in Romania related to the “Inclusion and Education for Vulnerable persons” (InSEVE) project, it was completed and delivered an Accessibility Report for the headquarters of the National History Museum of Romania (NHMR), which “explores the perspective of a person with a disability who would visit the museum”. The basic idea is that people with disabilities should be able to reach the MNIR headquarters, approach, enter the building and benefit from museum services just like anyone else.

This report brought a series of conclusions, which showed the actual state of accessibility at the NHMR headquarters:

1. External access

- Parking: the museum does not have its own parking lot or spaces reserved for people with disabilities. The report recommends collaboration with the local authorities to mark accessible spaces on the nearby street.

- Access path: the main entrance has many steps. The existing mobile platform is outdated and difficult to use. It is recommended to be replaced with a modern, compliant version.

2. Museum interior

- Access control: the lack of a dedicated gate makes access difficult without assistance. It is recommended to install an automated, easy-to-use system.

- Reception: the area is spacious, but the furniture makes it difficult to maneuver wheelchairs. This area needs to be reconfigured.

- Interior doors: heavy and equipped with a return spring, difficult for users with reduced mobility. Adaptation or replacement with automatic doors is recommended.

- Stairs and elevators: access to the lower levels is limited (Trajan’s Column Replica, Lapidarium, the Historical Treasure). A fully accessible vertical route is required (elevator or platforms).

- Bathrooms: there are no accessible toilets. It is recommended to install one, with an adapted alarm system.

3. Exhibition spaces and interaction

- Routes: uneven floors, poor lighting, limited space between displays.

Accessible routes and rest areas are proposed.

- Signage: inadequate for people with visual or hearing impairments.

Tactile panels, audio guides, clear visual signage are required.

- Lighting: sensor systems do not provide effective orientation. Full lighting from the beginning of the route is recommended.

4. Other observations

- Blind people: lack of tactile maps, Braille signs, sensory trails.

- Hearing impaired people: lack of clear visual information and directional markings.

As can be seen, the accessibility situation at the NHMR headquarters is far from ideal, not even satisfactory. This situation arose for reasons beyond the control of the NHMR management and staff, with most of the building having been closed (due to deterioration/need for rehabilitation) since the early 2000s. Moreover, until the headquarters is completely restored, no in-



terventions can be made on the structures, nor expenses can be made in order to improve elements that will be replaced with the restoration. However, regardless of the conditions, in accordance with European directives and Romanian legislation, the National History Museum of Romania should give full attention to the accessibility of basic services offered to the public, according to its functions.

The aim is to be ensured a normal / natural experience for the beneficiaries of the services offered by the museum who face various physical (blindness, deafness, reduced mobility) or intellectual (Down Syndrome, low IQ) barriers, gradually and realistically intervening on a series of components identified in the accessibility report, starting with visibility and information, continuing with the access, visit and departure and finishing with the possibilities of feedback.

1. Accessibility of the spaces at the NHMR headquarters, which should include:

- ramp with easy access inside the museum for people with reduced mobility (in wheelchairs, with canes, people accompanied by children who require transportation) – possible using the entrance “C”, being installed a door with an opening of at least 81 cm;
- signage to be made correctly outside and inside;
- adjustment of the tactile carpet inside the museum;
- at least a bathroom according to accessibility standards;
- delimitation of accessible routes and integration of 2-3 rest stations;
- installation of elevators in the “Lapidarium” and the “Lapidarium” - “Treasury” section in order to allow people with mobility problems to access the “Treasury”. If not possible, until the rehabilitation a virtual 3D space can be conceived on the ground floor of the museum, in such a way as to provide people who cannot reach the “Tezaur” area with an immersive experience;
- reconditioning of the existing ramps in the “Trajan’s Column Replica” section;
- training of staff for contact with beneficiaries who face various barriers, with the support of professional associations and through training courses on non-refundable funds (without costs from the state budget).

2. Accessible exhibitions:

- maintaining, diversifying and improving the tactile exhibition “...at Hand”;
- audio guides with access via QR codes;
- screens with explanations in sign language;
- arrangement within the basic exhibitions of replicas of representative objects and other tactile elements (in relief).

3. Accessible online services:

- accessibility of the website <https://www.mnir.ro/> and of NHMR video products posted on social media (contrast, magnification, introduction of audio function/component, subtitles);
- signaling the accessibility of platforms and products.

4. Dedicated educational programs:

- educational workshops dedicated to beneficiaries facing barriers related to mobility and vision problems;
- design and introduction into the museum's offer of workshops for people facing problems related to slow learning / low intellect;
- maintaining partnerships in European projects on accessibility, participation in new projects and local partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

Of course, the problems revealed in the report regarding accessibility can be solved in the context of restoring the building and redeveloping the spaces in their entirety. A major disadvantage, besides the fact that this is not up to the management or staff of NHMR (due to the huge costs), is the fact that the restoration and redevelopment process would take quite a long time (minimum 3-5 years), but it would bring an adequate alignment of the services offered by NHMR with European directives and Romanian legislation and last but not least with the principles of inclusion and equity.



AUDARA: STRUCTURED ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT IN THE MUSEUM CONTEXT*

Cristina Căluianu, Irina Schvab

Introduction: From Accessibility Commitments to Structured Practice

Museums play a key role in ensuring equitable access to culture, education, and heritage. In recent years, accessibility and inclusion have increasingly become part of museum policies and public discourse. However, many institutions continue to face difficulties in translating these commitments into concrete and coherent practice.

A central challenge lies in the absence of structured tools that allow museums to identify and document accessibility barriers in a systematic and realistic manner. While heritage buildings often present the most visible constraints, accessibility challenges affect museums of all types. These challenges extend beyond physical access to include circulation and orientation, exhibition design, visitor services, educational activities, and digital communication.

In this context, structured accessibility assessment represents an essential starting point. It enables museums to gain a clear understanding of their current situation, to prioritise actions, and to plan inclusive measures based on real user needs rather than assumptions. Without such assessment tools, accessibility efforts risk remaining fragmented, isolated, or anecdotal.

Audara was developed as a response to this gap, offering a structured framework for accessibility assessment applicable to the museum context as a whole, including but not limited to heritage environments.

* Contribution by Asociația CED România – Centrul de Excelență prin Diversitate (Association CED Romania – Centre of Excellence through Diversity)

CED is a Romanian non-governmental organisation operating at the intersection of accessibility, inclusion, culture, and sustainable tourism.

CED develops practical tools, training programmes, and pilot projects aimed at reducing physical, sensory, cognitive, and digital barriers in public spaces, with a particular focus on museums, heritage environments, and cultural and tourist sites.

The organisation's work is grounded in co-creation with persons with disabilities and in the application of accessibility standards and good practices to real-life contexts.

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What Audara Is - and What It Is Not

Audara is a digital application designed for structured accessibility mapping and documentation in public buildings, with a particular focus on museums, cultural

spaces, and venues with a cultural or touristic function. Its initial development in 2022 focused on museums, while in 2023 the application was extended to cover a broader range of cultural sites.

Audara supports the systematic identification and recording of accessibility-related elements, organising findings in a standardised and comparable format. The information collected through Audara provides a factual and structured basis for professional accessibility audits and subsequent expert interpretation.

Audara does not assign scores, grades, or ratings, nor does it assess legal compliance, generate recommendations independently, or compare institutions. In line with its methodology, Audara produces descriptive findings rather than evaluations. Analysis, compliance assessment, and recommendations are developed in subsequent accessibility audit stages by specialised teams.

Development Background and Methodological Framework

The initial development of Audara took place between 2022 and 2023, grounded primarily in Romanian physical accessibility legislation and standards applicable to public and cultural buildings, including heritage environments. From the outset, this framework was designed to support structured documentation rather than evaluation, reflecting the need for a factual basis for subsequent accessibility audits.

Audara was developed through a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, bringing together persons with disabilities, accessibility experts, and professionals in architecture and the built environment. This composition ensured that the tool addresses both technical requirements and real user experience, integrating regulatory criteria with practical insights derived from lived experience.

The initial framework was further strengthened through the inclusion of:





- key elements of web and digital accessibility, relevant to museum communication and visitor information;
- international good practices identified in museum and cultural accessibility;
- the professional expertise of the development team in accessibility, architecture, and inclusive tourism.

From its earliest stages, Audara was conceived from the beginning not as a scoring or certification tool, but as a practical support instrument for structures accessibility mapping across the museum experience, from arrival and circulation to interpretation and communication.

Following extensive field application and refinement, Audara evolved into version 1.0 in 2025, released in a bilingual Romanian–English (RO–EN) format, enabling consistent use at both national and international level. This development phase included the extension of assessment parameters and methodological refinements informed by national and international use, supporting applicability across different museum typologies and institutional contexts.

Criteria and Parameters Analysed by Audara

Audara 1.0 is built around over 300 structured criteria, covering the full visitor journey and the activities taking place within museums and cultural buildings. These criteria are grouped into four main accessibility dimensions.

Physical Accessibility

Parameters address access routes and entrances, doors, ramps, stairs, elevators, internal circulation, exhibition areas and functional zones, sanitary facilities, as well as emergency evacuation routes and procedures. Data collection relies on measurements, visual inspection, and photographic documentation to record factual conditions on site.

Sensory Accessibility

Parameters relate to lighting levels and visual contrast, acoustic conditions and noise levels, tactile and audio-tactile information, warning systems, and multisensory cues.



and performance halls, open-air structures such as a water tower, and outdoor sculpture sites.

Audara enabled the use of a consistent assessment framework across a diverse set of cultural spaces, supporting systematic documentation of accessibility conditions, identification of re-

curring barriers, and comparability of findings while respecting the specific context of each site.

The structured mapping produced through Audara formed the basis for accessibility audits carried out by mixed teams, contributing to increased institutional awareness and informed prioritisation of interventions.

International Use: The Open Buildings of Europe (OBLIGE) Project

Audara 1.0 was also applied at international level within the Erasmus+ project The Open Buildings of Europe: Good Practices Collection as Tools for Accessibility Audits (OBLIGE), that was implemented in:

- Romania (Bucharest),
- Austria (Vienna), and
- Türkiye (Ankara).

The international English-language pilot, conducted in Vienna and Ankara, enabled comparative testing of the tool in different museum and heritage contexts and supported the refinement of assessment parameters through the inclusion of relevant local practices.

Structured Assessment and Non-Formal Learning in Museums

An important component of Audara's application is its integration with on-site, non-formal learning activities. Accessibility assessments are carried out during field visits accompanied by museum staff, enabling real-time observation, discussion, and reflection.

This approach supports practical understanding of accessibility barriers from the visitor's perspective, informal capacity-building for museum professionals, and stronger institutional ownership of accessibility outcomes. By combining structured assessment with learning-by-doing, Audara contributes both to evaluation processes and to professional development within museums.



Conclusion

The experience gained through the local development and international testing of Audara demonstrates that accessibility assessment is not merely a technical exercise, but a learning process embedded in everyday museum practice. By focusing on structured findings rather than numerical scoring, Audara supports a realistic and context-sensitive understanding of accessibility, particularly relevant for museums operating under architectural, regulatory, or resource constraints. Its design with a team bringing together persons with disabilities, accessibility experts and architects, and its use by mixed teams to deliver accessibility reports

highlights the value of collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches. This model ensures that accessibility is examined both from a technical perspective and through lived user experience, leading to more balanced and informed conclusions.

When combined with on-site, non-formal learning activities, structured accessibility assessment contributes to increased awareness, shared responsibility, and more informed decision-making within museums.

Through its application in projects such as Timisoara4all, as well as its international use within the Open Buildings of Europe (OBLIGE) project, Audara demonstrates its role as a practical foundation for accessibility audits, inclusive planning, and professional learning in museums and cultural spaces.

FEEL THE CITY: MULTISENSORY INTERPRETATION AND INCLUSIVE EXHIBITION DESIGN AT CITY SCALE

Cristina Căluianu, Irina Schvab

Project Context: “Cultural Timișoara – European City, a City for All” (Timisoara4all)

Feel the City was developed within the framework of the project “Cultural Timișoara – European City, a City for All” (Timisoara4all), implemented in 2023, the year when Timișoara held the title of European Capital of Culture. The Timisoara4all project aimed to ensure that accessibility and inclusion were embedded across the cultural programme of the city, addressing both physical access and access to cultural meaning. Cultural participation was approached as a shared right, requiring solutions that respond to diverse ways of experiencing and understanding culture.

Within this context, Feel the City was conceived as a pilot for multisensory interpretation and inclusive exhibition design, applicable at city scale and designed to be transferable to different cultural settings.

A National First: Multisensory Access Across 25 Cultural Sites

Feel the City marked the first time in Romania that 25 cultural sites across a city were equipped with tactile 3D reproductions and multisensory interpretation tools. The participating sites included museums, exhibition and performance venues, places of worship, outdoor cultural landmarks, and other spaces with a cultural function.

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The exhibition also included the display of tactile boards that reproduced in two-dimensional tactile format the same subjects represented by the tactile 3D models. This allowed visitors to explore the content through different tactile modalities within the exhibition space, supporting comparative tactile exploration and facilitating shared engagement for visitors with and without disabilities.

Rather than concentrating accessibility measures in a single location, the initiative adopted a distributed, city-wide approach, reflecting the logic of the European Capital of Culture programme, where the city itself becomes an exhibition space. This represented a shift from isolated accessibility interventions to a coherent urban strategy for inclusive cultural interpretation.

Contemporary Tactile Artworks and Urban Narratives

In addition to site-specific tactile kits, *Feel the City* included five contemporary tactile artworks, conceived as artistic interpretations of selected places and urban situations in

Timișoara. Rather than reproducing heritage objects directly, these works reflected the visual artist's personal perspective on the city, continuing the broader approach of representing cultural heritage through alternative, multisensory means. The tactile artworks translated urban landmarks, spatial relationships, and everyday city experiences into tactile form, offering a different way of engaging with the

city as a cultural landscape. In this sense, they complemented the heritage-focused tactile reproductions by extending the concept of cultural heritage to include contemporary urban narratives and lived experiences.

Each tactile artwork was accompanied by audio interpretation delivered through the ArtEcho platform, providing the narrative context, artistic intent, and background. The audio content conveyed the story behind each artwork, allowing visitors to understand not only what was represented, but also why it was represented in that particular way.

By combining tactile exploration with audio storytelling, the contemporary artworks reinforced the idea that cultural heritage is not limited to historical objects, but also includes contemporary interpretations and personal perspectives on the city.

From Objects to Tactile Kits: A Structured and Mobile Interpretation Model

A defining feature of Feel the City was the development of tactile kits, conceived as an innovative alternative to static tactile displays. Rather than relying exclusively on large-scale tactile models integrated into exhibitions, the initiative introduced smaller-scale tactile reproductions and tactile booklets, designed to be used in a mobile format.

These tactile kits were specifically developed to support inclusive participation in guided walking tours and outdoor cultur-



al routes, enabling blind and partially sighted visitors to actively engage with the city's cultural content alongside other participants. The reduced size of the tactile models allows them to be easily transported and handled, facilitating use in different locations and contexts.

Each tactile kit combines:

- compact tactile 3D reproductions, conveying essential form and spatial information;
- tactile brochures, reproducing in two-dimensional tactile format the same subjects represented by the 3D models, supporting complementary exploration through touch;
- QR codes and NFC tags, linking the tactile elements to digital content via the ArtEcho platform.

By moving beyond fixed exhibition formats, the tactile kits support a flexible and inclusive interpretation model, where accessibility accompanies the visitor rather than being confined to a single space. This approach encourages the full inclusion of blind and partially sighted visitors in walking tours and city-wide cultural experiences, reinforcing the idea of accessibility as an integral part of shared cultural participation.

Participatory Development and User Involvement

The development and implementation of Feel the City were carried out with the continuous consultation and active participation of blind and partially sighted persons, with diverse personal experiences and access needs. Their involvement was permanent throughout the process and extended beyond testing completed solutions.

Persons with visual impairments contributed directly to the design, refinement, and validation of tactile 3D reproductions, tactile brochures and boards, mobile tactile kits, exhibition layouts, and digital interpretation components delivered through the ArtEcho platform. This sustained collaboration ensured that tactile readability, scale, handling, placement, and narrative structure reflected real user experiences rather than assumed needs.

In addition, the musical background accompanying the audio interpretations was created by a young blind musician, adding an artistic layer developed from within the community addressed by the project. This contribution reinforced the multisensory character of the experience and strengthened the authenticity of the interpretative content.

The participatory approach played a key role in shaping Feel the City as a practical, usable, and inclusive multisensory model, strengthening both the

quality of the solutions developed and their acceptance by the intended users.

ArtEcho as a Digital Interpretation Infrastructure

All tactile elements and interpretative components were connected to the ArtEcho platform, which functioned as the digital backbone of the Feel the City exhibition.

At the time of the exhibition, access to the ArtEcho platform was provided through a dedicated mobile application, which enabled visitors to connect to the digital content associated with the tactile elements. NFC and QR technologies were used as physical–digital connectors: by scanning a QR code or tapping an NFC tag integrated into the tactile elements, visitors could access the corresponding content on their personal devices.

Through this system, visitors could access audio interpretation in eight languages, supporting independent exploration for both local and international audiences. The multilingual content was produced through a combination of human-curated source material and AI-supported multilingual transposition, allowing consistent dissemination of interpretative content across languages while preserving the original meaning and structure.

The audio content provided descriptive and contextual information linked to each tactile element, complementing tactile exploration and enabling a coherent multi-sensory experience. At that stage, video interpretation in sign language was not yet available within the Feel the City frame-



work. The focus was placed on tactile and audio-based access, addressing a significant gap in cultural participation for blind and partially sighted visitors. Subsequent developments of the ArtEcho platform led to an upgraded version that allows direct connection to the digital content via NFC and QR technologies, without the need for a dedicated mobile application. This evolution simplifies access, reduces technological barriers for users, and supports wider adoption in future implementations of Feel the City and related initiatives. The use of AI-supported multilingual transposition plays a key role in the scalability of the model, allowing interpretative content to be efficiently adapted and extended to new languages, sites, and cultural contexts without compromising consistency or quality.

Pilot Exhibition Design: Accessibility Beyond Content

Feel the City was not only a content-based initiative, but also a pilot of inclusive exhibition design.

The exhibits were displayed in an accessible location, selected to allow step-free access and sufficient circulation space.

The mode of exhibition was carefully designed and tested, including:

- rotating supports for the 3D tactile models, allowing comfortable exploration from different positions, at accessible display heights, suitable for seated and standing visitors;
- accessible display of the 2D tactile boards, presented both on vertical panels at a suitable height for standing visitors and in brochure format for seated visitors or persons of short stature;

- clear spatial organisation, supporting independent navigation.



Interpretative materials included easy-to-read texts and large-print panels, ensuring cognitive and visual accessibility for a broader audience. This integrated approach allowed the pilot to test how multisensory content, exhibition furniture, and communication formats work together in practice.

Why a City-Wide Multisensory Approach Was Needed

Accessibility assessments carried out within Timisoara4all showed that, while physical access to buildings was slightly improving, access to interpretation and meaning remained uneven. For visitors with visual impairments, participation in the European Capital of Culture programme risked being limited to presence without understanding.

By combining tactile kits, accessible exhibition design solutions, and multilingual audio interpretation across 25 cultural sites, Feel the City addressed this gap in a systematic and inclusive way.

From Pilot to Scalable Model

Although developed as a pilot within Timisoara4all, Feel the City was conceived from the outset as a scalable model. Its components - tactile kits, digital interpretation via ArtEcho, inclusive exhibition design principles, and modular content - can be adapted to:

- permanent or temporary exhibitions;
- museums of different sizes and typologies;
- indoor and outdoor cultural spaces.

This scalability allows the concept to be transferred to any exhibition space, regardless of architectural constraints, supporting wider adoption of multisensory and inclusive interpretation.

From City-Scale Pilot to National Scaling: The Feel Brâncuși Initiative

The scalability of the Feel the City concept was further demonstrated through its continuation and expansion in the Feel Brâncuși initiative. Building on the multisensory interpretation model piloted in Timișoara, Feel Brâncuși applies the same core principles: tactile exploration, accessible interpretation, and digital content delivery to a national cultural reference. Feel Brâncuși focuses on the creation of tactile 3D reproductions of works by Constantin Brâncuși in Romania, enabling access to sculptural form, scale, and artistic intent through touch. This represents a significant step in improving access to one of Romania's most important cultural legacies for blind and partially sighted visitors, while also offering multisensory engagement for wider audiences.

Through the ArtEcho platform, Feel Brâncuși expands the digital interpretation component to include:

- multilingual audio content,
- video interpretation in Romanian Sign Language (LSR),
- video interpretation in International Sign Language (ISL).

By applying this model to Brâncuși's work, which is an essential part of Romania's cultural heritage, Feel Brâncuși demonstrates how the Feel the City methodology can be scaled from an urban, multi-site context to a thematic, nationally relevant cultural programme.

Continuity and Further Development of Feel the City

Following the initial implementation in the context of Timișoara 2023 – European Capital of Culture, the Feel the City concept continues to evolve. An updated edition of the Feel the City exhibition, integrating the enhanced functionalities of the ArtEcho platform, is planned to take place in the first half of 2026 in Timișoara.

This new iteration will build on the original pilot by incorporating:

- extended multilingual audio content,
- video interpretation in Romanian Sign Language (LSR) via ArtEcho,
- refined digital access through NFC technology,
- lessons learned from the initial city-wide implementation.

The planned 2026 edition reflects the transition of Feel the City from a pilot initiative to a sustainable and updatable practice, capable of evolving alongside technological developments and user needs.

Final Perspective: From Pilot to Sustainable Practice

Developed in the context of Timișoara 2023 – European Capital of Culture, Feel the City represents a national reference point in multisensory cultural accessibility. By implementing tactile kits connected to a multilingual digital platform, piloting inclusive exhibition design solutions, and integrating contemporary tactile art, the initiative demonstrated how accessibility can be embedded into cultural practice at city scale.

Together with its national scaling through Feel Brâncuși and its continued development planned for 2026, Feel the City illustrates how multisensory interpretation can evolve from a pilot initiative into a transferable, scalable, and sustainable practice of inclusive cultural participation.

A MEANINGFUL ERASMUS+ EXPERIENCE AT THE MOESGAARD MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN DENMARK

Burtea Mihai-Cătălin

As part of an Erasmus+ professional mobility programme, me and my colleague Mădălina Dimache had the opportunity to do a six days job-shadowing stage at the Moesgaard Museum of Archaeology located near Aarhus, Denmark. Approaching this visit as a museum conservator-restorer, I was particularly attentive to how artifacts are treated, preserved, and presented. From the moment I arrived, I felt that Moesgaard is not just a museum but a dynamic space where history, science, and people converge. Walking through the exhibitions, I immediately noticed that Moesgaard tells stories rather than simply displaying objects, using sound, light, spatial design, and interactive elements to create immersive experiences. Each exhibition area was thoughtfully designed to guide visitors naturally through the narratives, encouraging engagement, reflection, and curiosity. The use of multisensory cues - light, sound, and tactile opportunities - demonstrated that the museum seeks to connect with visitors on multiple levels, not only visually.





One of the highlights of my visit and the main focus of my job-shadowing was exploring the **conservation and restoration laboratories**, normally hidden from the public. Guide and mentor was Helle Strelle the coordinator of the Department of Conservation, who prepared a very professional program for us to experience in her department. I observed how conservators work meticulously with metals, ceramics, bones, and organic materials. One of the most interesting was learning about the methods of preserving waterlogged material, especially wood. I was struck by the precision, patience, and ethical responsibility required to preserve fragile artifacts. By visiting the laboratories for heritage investigation in the museum, I also observed the major importance of integration of scientific methods, such as material analysis, digital documentation, and interdisciplinary collaboration, which allow restorers and archaeologists to make informed decisions about treatment and display. From my perspective, seeing how research, restoration, and exhibition design are interconnected emphasized that conservation is not just technical work - it is also about communicating heritage responsibly to the public.

A particularly moving aspect of my experience was seeing how Moesgaard actively includes visitors with disabilities, especially those with visual impairments. Inclusion is fully integrated into the exhibition design rather than being treated as a separate feature. In the Prehistoric Exhibition, I explored tactile replicas of stone tools, weapons, and pottery, which allowed visitors to feel the size, weight, and texture of artifacts. Audio guides provided detailed explanations of each object's use, historical context, and cultural significance, enabling visitors to understand the stories behind the artifacts without relying solely on vision. In the Viking Exhibition, interactive touch tables with raised maps and diagrams allowed visitors to explore settlement patterns and trade routes tactually, complemented by descriptive audio narratives. The Human Origins exhibition included reconstructed skulls, bones, and anthropological artifacts, offering tactile exploration with accompanying explanations. Braille labels and guided paths ensured independent navigation. Experiencing these features from a conservator's perspective, I appreciated how inclusive design allows all visitors to engage with objects safely while respecting the integrity of the originals. Although not always on permanent display at Moesgaard,





a special tactile accessibility installation of the Gundestrup Vessel exists in museum-focused accessibility practice documents. This installation was designed so that visitors can touch the expanded relief surfaces and explore the sculpted myths and figures by feel, with additional audio narration via headphones that immerses visitors in the stories depicted on the vessel. The experience intentionally engages hearing and touch rather than sight alone, making a complex heritage object accessible for visually impaired visitors. Observing the integration of inclusion with conservation reinforced my understanding that accessibility and preservation can coexist. The use of replicas and tactile materials provides meaningful experiences without compromising fragile originals. From my professional viewpoint, this demonstrates a thoughtful balance between protecting artifacts and allowing multisensory interaction.

I also observed the significant role of volunteers at Moesgaard Museum. Volunteers assist visitors, support workshops, and facilitate special events, at the Moesgaard museum. Some are focusing specifically on helping visitors with disabilities navigate the museum and interact with tactile or audio features. In the field of conservation, volunteers assist conservators with cleaning

and stabilizing archaeological objects, such as ceramics, metal fragments, bones, or wooden artifacts, under professional supervision.

Volunteers take part in preventive conservation activities, such as monitoring temperature and humidity in storage areas and helping prepare objects for safe storage or transport. They support the preparation of exhibitions by handling and packing objects, creating basic mounts, or assisting during the installation process. In some cases, volunteers contribute to research projects, for example by sorting finds from archaeological excavations or assisting in material analysis and comparisons.

Their presence highlighted the human-centered philosophy that complements the technical and scientific work of conservation. During the interaction with volunteers from the conservation and archeology department we could observe and experiment parts of the work they do at this department. For example a volunteer from the flotation laboratory (a method used in archaeology to recover small and fragile remains from soil samples, such as seeds, charcoal, and tiny bone fragments) walked as threw the whole process.

By the end of my Erasmus+ experience, I felt that this visit had deeply influenced my professional perspective. Witnessing conservation work, inclusive exhibition design, and volunteer participation firsthand helped me reflect on the responsibilities and opportunities of a museum conservator. I returned home inspired to implement approaches that balance scientific rigor, ethical preservation, accessibility, and community engagement. This experience reinforced my commitment to safeguarding cultural heritage while making it meaningful and accessible for all audiences



A VISITING CURATOR'S EXPERIENCE EXPLORING VOLUNTEER PROGRAMMES AT THE MUSEUM OF ANCIENT GREEK TECHNOLOGY "KOSTAS KOTSANAS", ATHENS

Andreea Ștefan

Visiting the Museum of Ancient Greek Technology "Kostas Kotsanas" in Athens - during an Erasmus+-funded job-shadowing exchange this May - offered me a valuable opportunity to observe how a cultural institution deeply rooted in history engages contemporary audiences through volunteer-based initiatives. As a curator accustomed to working with professional teams in established museum environments, I approached the museum's volunteer programmes with both curiosity and enthusiasm. Throughout my visit, I examined the structure, impact, and guiding philosophy behind their volunteer engagement, and the experience provided meaningful insights into how community participation can enrich the interpretation and preservation of ancient heritage.



Immersing in the Museum's Mission

The Museum of Ancient Greek Technology "Kostas Kotsanas" is dedicated to showcasing the remarkable scientific and mechanical innovations developed in ancient Greece. Its mission goes beyond displaying artifacts; it seeks to demonstrate the intellectual sophistication and technical ingenuity of historical societies, in this precise case the Ancient Greek civilisation. What struck me most was how the volunteer programmes were seamlessly integrated into this mission. Volunteers were not merely assistants but active participants in communicating complex historical concepts and explaining intricate technical inventions to diverse audiences.



Upon arrival, I joined an orientation session designed to provide an overview of the museum's outreach philosophy. The volunteers - ranging from university students to graduates looking to improve their chances of finding work in the cultural sector - were trained to interpret ancient mechanisms, reconstruct historical narratives, and guide visitors through hands-on exhibits. Their passion for ancient technology was immediately evident, and I observed how their diverse backgrounds enriched the museum's educational environment.

Observing Volunteer Engagement

During my visit, I shadowed several volunteer-led tours and workshops. The museum's emphasis on experiential learning was particularly powerful. Volunteers demonstrated ancient devices such as early hydraulic systems, automata, and navigational tools, encouraging visitors to interact with replicas and explore the underlying principles behind each invention. Their ability to convey both the sophistication and the simplicity of these mechanisms was impressive and highlighted the effectiveness of peer-to-peer teaching models.

What stood out was the emotional connection volunteers created with visitors. Their enthusiasm transformed technical explanations into engaging stories, which helped cultivate a sense of wonder about ancient Greek innova-

tion. This type of interpersonal engagement is something that cannot always be replicated through traditional curator-led programmes. It reminded me that museums thrive when they incorporate multiple voices and approaches into their interpretive strategies.

Evaluating Programme Structure and Training

From a professional standpoint, I was particularly interested in how the museum supported its volunteers. The training programme was thorough, combining historical knowledge, interpretive techniques, and communication skills. Volunteers attended regular workshops where specialists introduced new research findings and updated exhibition content. The museum displayed a strong commitment to ensuring that volunteers had the confidence and accuracy required to represent its collections.

Furthermore, volunteers were encouraged to collaborate with staff in developing new educational activities based on ongoing research. This collaborative model struck me as both progressive and empowering; it allowed volunteers to feel a sense of ownership and creative investment in the museum's evolution.

Reflecting on the Impact of Volunteerism

My experience at the Museum of Ancient Greek Technology "Kostas Kotsanas" in Athens deepened my appreciation for how volunteer programmes can transform the dynamics of heritage institutions. Volunteers provide a bridge between the museum and its community, making the institution more accessible, participatory, and vibrant. The programme demonstrated that when volunteers are well-trained and genuinely valued, they contribute not only labour but creativity, insight, and emotional energy.

As a visiting curator, I left with a renewed belief in the importance of community engagement. Volunteer-driven initiatives, when thoughtfully developed, can expand a museum's capacity to educate, inspire,



and innovate. The Museum of Ancient Greek Technology “Kostas Kotsanas” stands as a strong example of how ancient heritage can be preserved not only through artifacts, but also through enthusiastic individuals committed to breathing life into history.

Implementation for a Volunteer-Based Guided Tour Programme at the National History Museum of Romania

Following my job-shadowing experience at the Museum of Ancient Greek Technology “Kostas Kotsanas” in Athens, I gained a deep appreciation for how volunteer engagement can transform a museum’s educational sector. Observing how volunteers were trained, supported, and integrated into the daily life of the museum inspired me to reflect on how similar practices could be adopted at the National Museum of Romanian History. The Athens model demonstrated that when volunteers are empowered with structured training and meaningful responsibilities, they can significantly enhance visitor engagement and broaden a museum’s educational impact.

One of the most striking elements of the Kotsanas Museum’s approach was the volunteers’ role in guiding visitors through complex exhibits. Their ability to deliver clear, engaging, and well-researched explanations brought ancient mechanisms to life for audiences of all ages. This experience highlighted the potential for volunteers to complement professional museum staff and extend the institution’s educational reach. Inspired by this model, I sought to explore how a similar approach could be adapted to the Romanian context, particularly in areas requiring language-specific guidance.

Building directly on these insights, I implemented a pilot project with a Greek university student doing a two-month internship at the National Museum of Romanian History. The intern received comprehensive training to develop and deliver a guided tour in Greek as part of an initiative aimed at expanding the museum’s volunteer base. The internship focused on strengthening the student’s knowledge of the Treasury Room’s collections, improving interpretive and communication skills, and cultivating confidence in presenting Romanian cultural heritage to Greek-speaking visitors. This pilot project not only enhanced the museum’s capacity to offer multilingual tours but also laid the groundwork for a broader volunteer programme designed to engage members of the local Greek-speaking community, fostering cultural exchange and increasing accessibility for international audiences.

In continuity with the goals of this pilot, a priority initiative resulting from my job-shadowing experience at the Museum of Ancient Greek Technol-

ogy “Kostas Kotsanas” in Athens would be the full implementation of volunteer-led guided tours in Greek within the Treasury Room at the National Museum of Romanian History. The museum receives a significant number of Greek-speaking visitors, yet the availability of interpretation in their native language remains limited. By recruiting and training Greek-speaking volunteers—such as students in Modern Greek Studies, diaspora members, or individuals with cultural ties to Greece - the museum can offer tailored tours that enhance accessibility and visitor satisfaction. This approach aligns with broader European objectives of cultural cooperation and multilingual inclusivity.

Developing this programme would require a structured training curriculum inspired by the Kotsanas model. Volunteers would receive instruction in museum communication, object interpretation, Romanian cultural history, and Treasury Room-specific content. Additionally, they would be trained in public speaking and visitor engagement techniques to ensure consistent, high-quality tours. Regular workshops and evaluation sessions would help maintain accuracy and professionalism while allowing volunteers to feel valued and supported in their roles.

Ultimately, implementing a volunteer-led guided tour programme in Greek represents more than an operational expansion - it is a step toward building

a more inclusive, dynamic, and community-centered museum environment. My experience in Athens demonstrated the transformative power of volunteerism in heritage education, and its potential application in Bucharest is both promising and timely. Through thoughtful planning and collaboration, the National Museum of Romanian History can enrich its educational offerings, strengthen international cultural dialogue, and create a more welcoming experience for Greek-speaking visitors.

O CĂLĂTORIE ÎN TIMP
DIN PREISTORIE PÂNĂ ÎN ROMÂNIA SECOLULUI XX

Ταξίδι στην Ιστορία
Από την προϊστορία στην Ρουμανία του 20ου αιώνα

VIZITĂ GHIDATĂ ÎN LIMBA NEOGRECĂ

- DE JOK PÂNĂ SĂMBĂTĂ, 11:00-14:00
- INCLUSĂ ÎN PREȚUL BIETULUI

ΞΕΝΑΓΗΣΗ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΓΛΩΣΣΑ

- ΠΕΜΠΤΗ-ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟ 11:00-14:00
- ΣΥΜΠΕΡΙΛΑΜΒΑΝΕΤΑΙ ΣΤΗΝ ΤΙΜΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΙΣΙΤΗΡΙΟΥ

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PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY THE NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF ROMANIA FUNDED THROUGH THE EUROPEAN UNION PROGRAMMES (2020-2025)

Marius Neculae

Starting with 2020, the National History Museum of Romania (MNIR) has taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the European Union funding programmes, applying, receiving funds and implementing a series of projects* in total value of almost 1,000,000 euros.

1. "Education for Heritage Plus" (HEP), ref. no. 2020-1-RO01-KA104-079079, implementation period 15.08.2020-14.11.2021, funded by the EU through the Erasmus Plus programme with the sum of 19.280,00 €. Training course on non-formal education for MNIR employees and volunteers.

2. "Solidarity through museum education" (SolidEM), ref. no. 2020-3-RO01-ESC11-094846, implementation period 01.02.2021-31.07.2022, funded by the EU through the European Solidarity Corps programme / volunteering with the sum of 38.520,00 €. Five individual volunteering stages for volunteers from Georgia, Spain and Italy at the MNIR headquarters. Topics: solidarity, inclusion, museum education.

3. Erasmus Plus for Adult Education (EAE1), ref. no. 2021-1-RO01-KA121-ADU-000008680, implementation period 01.10.2021-30.09.2022, funded by the EU through the Erasmus Plus programme (accredited organizations) with the sum of 57.830,00 €. Training courses and job shadowing stages on museum education and digital tools for MNIR employees and volunteers.

4. "Solidarity Through History" (SolThi), ref. no. 2021-2-RO01-ESC30-SOL-000040541, implementation period 01.02.2022 – 31.01.2023, funded by the EU through the European Solidarity Corps programme / solidarity projects with the sum of 6.888 €. Areas: inclusion, education through culture,

* In addition to these, the National History Museum of Romania has also carried out a series of projects funded through Interreg, EEA and Norway Grants and national programmes (AFCN, Limes).

with beneficiaries with fewer opportunities (prisoners, institutionalized adolescents).

5. Erasmus Plus for Adult Education, the 2nd year (EAE2), ref. no. 2022-1-RO01-KA121-ADU-000057092, implementation period 01.06.2022 – 31.08.2023, funded by the EU through the Erasmus Plus programme (accredited organizations) with the sum of 33.700,00 €. Training courses and job shadowing stages on digital tools and studying the behavior of beneficiaries.

6. "Sharing Cultural Heritage and Knowledge" – ESC1, ref. no. 2021-2-RO01-ESC51-VTJ-000045008, implementation period 01.01.2022 – 31.08.2023, funded by the EU through the European Solidarity Corps programme / volunteering with the sum of 96.972,00 €. Two volunteering team activities (30 days each) involving 20 ESC volunteers and four individual volunteering stages of 6 months each. Topics: culture and education, inclusion and solidarity, interculturality, cultural marketing.

7. "Inclusion and solidarity through heritage and education" (ISTHE) – ESC2, ref. no. 2022-1-RO01-ESC51-VTJ-000080289, implementation period 01.11.2022-31.05.2024, funded by the EU through the European Solidarity Corps programme / volunteering with the sum of 83.310,00 €. Eight individual volunteering stages of 6 months each and a 4-week team activity for 20 volunteers from the EU and Romania. Topics: culture and education, inclusion and solidarity, interculturality, cultural marketing.

8. "The Heritage and Adult Education" (HAEd), ref. no. 2021-2-RO01-KA210-ADU-000048413, implementation period 01.02.2022-30.06.2023, funded by the EU through the Erasmus Plus programme / small scale projects in the domain of Adult Education with the sum of 30.000,00 €. Developing museum audiences through conferences and museum education workshops.

9. Erasmus Plus for Adult Education, the 3rd year (EA3), ref. no. 2023-1-RO01-KA121-ADU000126616, implementation period 01.06.2023-31.08.2024, funded by the EU through the Erasmus Plus programme (accredited organizations) with the sum of 52.510,00 €. Training courses and job shadowing stages on the topics: behavior of beneficiaries and volunteer management for MNIR employees and volunteers.

10. "Cultures and Heritage through Museum Education" (CULTMUSE) – ESC3, ref. no. 2023-1-RO01-ESC51-VTJ-000126627, implementation period 01.11.2023-31.08.2025, funded by the EU through the European Solidarity Corps programme / volunteering with the sum of 120.433,17 €. Ten individual volunteering stages of 6 months each and three team activities of 4 weeks for a total of 40 volunteers from the EU and Romania. Topics: culture and education, inclusion and solidarity, interculturality, cultural marketing.

11. Erasmus Plus for Adult Education, the 4th year (EAE4), ref. no. 2024-1-RO01-KA121-ADU-000208124, implementation period 01.07.2024-31.05.2026, funded by the EU through the Erasmus Plus programme (accredited organizations) with the sum of 42.326,00 €. Job shadowing stages in the domain of coordination of adult volunteers and interns, in the context of museum education, and structured courses in the field of intercultural and inclusive educational activities, in a museum context (in progress).

12. "Building Inclusion and Solidarity through Culture and Heritage" – BisCult (ESC4), ref. no. 2024-1-RO01-ESC51-VTJ-000214404, implementation period 01.11.2023-31.08.2025, funded by the EU through the European Solidarity Corps programme / volunteering with the sum of 51,614.86 €. Six individual volunteering stages of 6 months each and a 4-week team activity for 20 volunteers from the EU and Romania. Topics: culture and education, inclusion and solidarity, interculturality, cultural marketing (in progress).

13. "Inclusion and Education for Vulnerable persons" (InSEVE), ref. no. 2024-1-RO01-KA210-ADU-000252410, implementation period 01.10.2024-30.09.2026, funded by the EU through the Erasmus Plus programme / small scale projects in the domain of Adult Education with the sum of 60.000,00 €. Accessibility of the cultural heritage and exhibitions through workshops, exhibition, catalog (in progress).

14. "Fight Against Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Goods: Monitoring and Preventive Measures to Secure Museums and Document Collections", implementation period 01.07.2025 - 30.11.2027, funded by the EU through the Creative Europe programme, the project leader being the International Council of Museums (ICOM), budget related to MNIR (as partner)– 66.725,20 €. Conference, workshops, catalog in the field of combating trafficking of cultural artifacts (in progress).

15. Erasmus Plus for Adult Education, the 5th year (EAE5), ref. no. 2025-1-RO01-KA121-ADU-000326919, implementation period 01.10.2025-31.08.2026, funded by the EU through the Erasmus Plus programme (accredited organizations) with the amount of 57.006,00 €. Training courses, job shadowing stages and guest lecturers in the areas of inclusion and communication in the museum field (ongoing).

16. Proiect ESC5 ref. no. 2025-1-RO01-ESC51-VTJ-000346062, implementation period 01.11.2025-31.12.2026, funded by the EU through the European Solidarity Corps programme / volunteering with the sum of 40.639,89 €. Four individual volunteering stages of 6 months each and a 4-week team activity for 20 volunteers from the EU and Romania. Topics: culture and education, inclusion and solidarity, interculturality, cultural marketing (ongoing).

17. "SenseAble Culture: Empowering Participation of Persons with Sensory Disabilities in Culture", ref. no. 2025-1-RO01-KA220-ADU-000350475, implementation period 01.11.2025-31.10.2027, funded by the EU through the Erasmus Plus programme / cooperation partnerships in Adult Education with the amount of 120.000,00 €. Promotion of best practices, networking and staff training in order to make cultural heritage and exhibitions accessible for sensory disabled people (in progress).

As results of these projects, we can count until date 58 participations of the volunteers and employees of MNIR at structured training courses organized by 7 adult education providers, 33 participations in job shadowing stages at 19 partners from 9 European countries. Also, 150 European volunteers from 15 countries participated in 8 team activities and 33 volunteers carried out individual volunteering stages at the MNIR headquarters. In addition to these learning activities that led to the development of the participants' professional skills, into the projects were developed new and innovative cultural activities, published articles and testimonials, and designed a series of procedures, instructions, tools and forms in the areas of participant recruitment and selection, accesibility and inclusion, financial management and reporting, knowledge of the behavior of beneficiaries, evaluation and occupational health and safety.

As impact, these projects led to an increased organizational capacity, visibility and prestige of the MNIR, greater trust in EU funding programs, participation and collaboration, increased satisfaction among beneficiaries of cultural services and of the degree of cohesion and inclusion in the community.





THE HERITAGE AND ADULT EDUCATION [HAEd]

Implementation period:
1st of March 2022 - 30th of April 2023

„Funded through Erasmus + programme,
KA210-ADU, with the lump sum of 30.000 Euro”

Mobility one in Zagreb:
27th of June - 2nd of July 2022
10-15 hrs

„Galerija Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu”
(Galery of the Archaeological museum in Zagreb)
Adress: Pavla Hatza 6m Zagreb

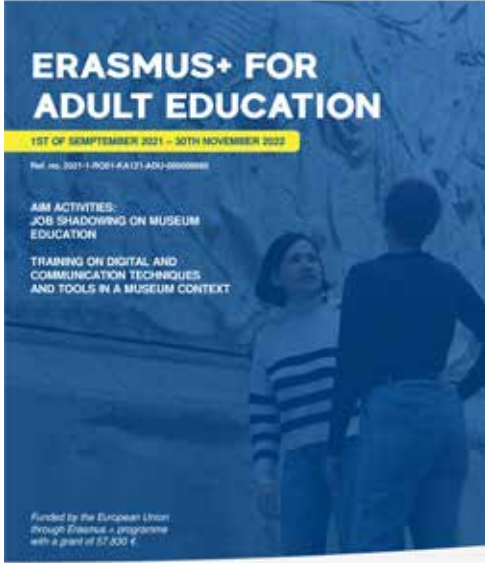
Muzeul Național de Istorie a României   Funded by the European Union

ERASMUS+ FOR ADULT EDUCATION



1ST OF SEPTEMBER 2021 – 30TH NOVEMBER 2023

Ref. no. 2021-1-RD01-KA121-ADU-00009888

AIM ACTIVITIES:
JOB SHADOWING ON MUSEUM EDUCATION
TRAINING ON DIGITAL AND COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS IN A MUSEUM CONTEXT

Funded by the European Union through Erasmus+ programme with a grant of 57,200 €. 

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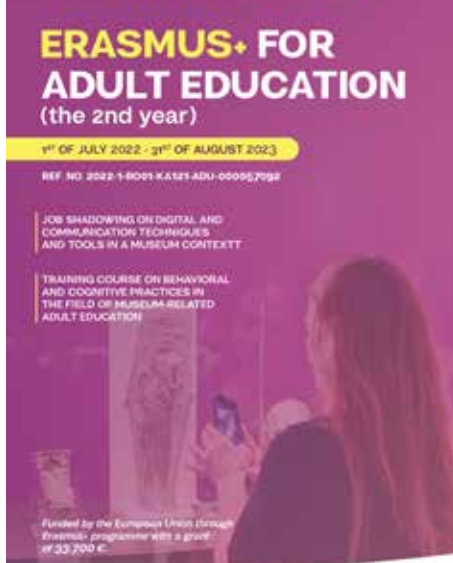
Muzeul Național de Istorie a României   Funded by the European Union

ERASMUS+ FOR ADULT EDUCATION (the 2nd year)



1st OF JULY 2022 – 31st OF AUGUST 2023

REF. NO. 2022-1-RD01-KA121-ADU-00092702z

JOB SHADOWING ON DIGITAL AND COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS IN A MUSEUM CONTEXT
TRAINING COURSE ON BEHAVIORAL AND COGNITIVE PRACTICES IN THE FIELD OF MUSEUM-RELATED ADULT EDUCATION

Funded by the European Union through Erasmus+ programme with a grant of 53,700 €. 

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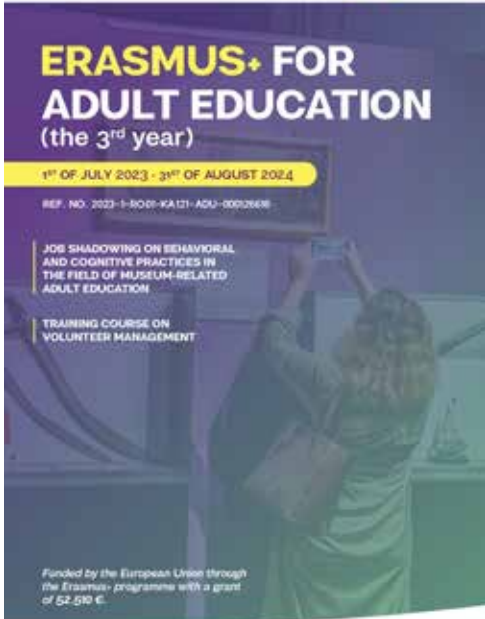
Muzeul Național de Istorie a României   Funded by the European Union

ERASMUS+ FOR ADULT EDUCATION (the 3rd year)



1st OF JULY 2023 – 31st OF AUGUST 2024

REF. NO. 2023-1-RD01-KA121-ADU-00026698

JOB SHADOWING ON BEHAVIORAL AND COGNITIVE PRACTICES IN THE FIELD OF MUSEUM-RELATED ADULT EDUCATION
TRAINING COURSE ON VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ programme with a grant of 52,010 €. 

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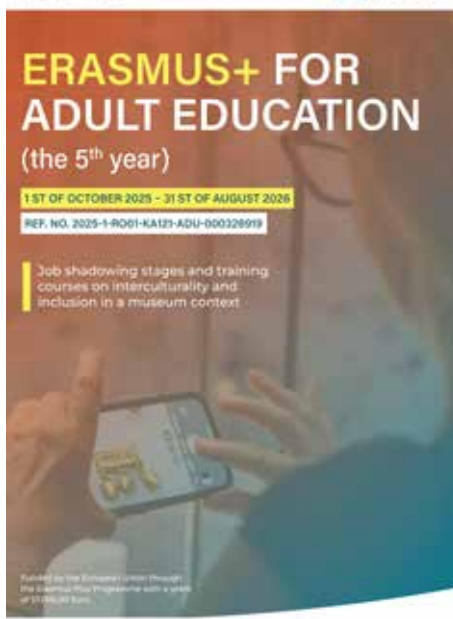
Muzeul Național de Istorie a României   Funded by the European Union

ERASMUS+ FOR ADULT EDUCATION (the 5th year)

1ST OF OCTOBER 2025 – 31ST OF AUGUST 2026

REF. NO. 2025-1-RD01-KA121-ADU-000328919

Job shadowing stages and training courses on interculturality and inclusion in a museum context

Funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme with a grant of 57,000 Euro. 

www.mn.ro

ERASMUS+ FOR ADULT EDUCATION (the 4th year)

1ST OF JUNE 2024 - 31ST OF AUGUST 2026

REF. NO. 2024-1-RO01-KA121-ADU-000208124

JOB SHADOWING STAGES ON
MANAGEMENT OF THE ADULT
VOLUNTEERS AND BENEFICIARIES

TRAINING COURSE ON
INTERCULTURAL AND
INCLUSIVE ACTIVITIES IN
A MUSEUM CONTEXT

*Funded by the European Union
through the Erasmus Plus Programme
with a grant of 42.325 €.*

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Building Inclusion and Solidarity through Culture and Heritage – *BisCult*

REF. NO. 2024-1-RO01-ESC51-VTJ-000214404



A project funded by the European Union through
the European Solidarity Corps program with the sum
of 51,614.86 euro.

mnir.ro

Cultures and Heritage through Museum Education – cultmuse

REF. NO. 2023-1-RO01-ESC51-VTJ-000126627

- **Team activity – 20 volunteers:**

24th of June – 21st of July 2024

NHMR headquarters, Bucharest, Romania

- **Team activity – 20 volunteers:**

19th of August – 15th of September 2024

Micia, Hunedoara County, Romania

- **Individual volunteering stages:**

6 months

NHMR headquarters, Bucharest, Romania



A project funded by the EU through the European
Solidarity Corps Programme with the sum of 120,433.17 EUR.

mnir.ro

Solidaritate prin Istorie - Solidarity Through History

Perioada de implementare:
01.02.2022-31.01.2023

„Proiectul este finanțat de către
Uniunea Europeană, prin programul
Corpul European de Solidaritate, cu
suma de 6888 euro.”



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ

Cod acreditare: 2020-1-R001-KA120-ADU-095354

Acreditare Erasmus

în domeniul Educației Adulților

se acordă pentru

Muzeul Național de Istorie a României

București

Valabilitate: 01.03.2021 – 31.12.2027

Agencia Națională pentru Programe Comunitare în Domeniul
Educației și Formării Profesionale – ANPCDEFP

Monica Calotă, Director

Semnătura:

Monica-Ileana-Alexandra Calota

Digitally signed by Monica-Ileana-
Alexandra Calota
Date: 2021.10.07 12:17:49 +03'00'

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

2021-2027



Inclusion and solidarity through heritage and education - „ISTHE”

NO. REF. 2022-1-RO01-ESC51-VTJ-000080289

8 individual volunteering stages

- 6 months

1 volunteering team activity

- 30 participants
- 3rd – 30th July 2023



A project funded by EU through
ESC programme with the sum of
83.310,00 EUR.

The National History Museum of Romania / Muzeul Național de Istorie a României (MNIR) is a national public body, a cultural and research organization (museum), with interest in the preservation and the research of the cultural heritage, also in the field of education, according with its functions.

MNIR was established in 1970 and opened to the public in 1972 and is one of the representative institutions of the Romanian culture, the biggest organization of this kind in Romania and one of the most important in South-Eastern and Central Europe.

In the last decades MNIR has cooperated with the majority of the national and county history and art museums in Romania, with cultural and research institutes, municipalities, embassies and foreign cultural institutes in Romania and dozens of museums across the World, in order to organize exhibitions and major cultural events. Since 2017, MNIR has extended its attention to activities dedicated beneficiaries belonging to disadvantaged / marginalized areas, minorities and convicts and from 2020 museum started to apply for and to implement projects in the Adult Education domain (Erasmus Plus) and inclusive projects based on volunteering (European Solidarity Corps).

Address: Calea Victoriei, 12, Sector 3, 030026, Bucharest, Romania.

Website: <https://www.mnir.ro/>

Contact: relatiipublice@mnir.ro; +40 21 313 1925

OID: E10243865



DomSpain SLU is an education and training centre active on national and international levels. Launched in 2008 by a group of teachers and educators who believed that education and learning is a much more experiential process than one offered by the formal educational sys-

tem, it has now become a hub and network of trainers, teachers, learners, entrepreneurs and, in general, professionals who consider education as a continuous, life-long process, accessible to all.

DomSpain offers a variety of services not only to the local community but also to national and international public and private sectors; always with a vision of empowering individuals and organisations to gain the necessary skills, competences and know how to find the resources needed to fulfil their personal or professional aspirations.

To that end, DomSpain has established a local training centre offering face-to-face and online training courses. The team consists of more than 40 educators, psychologists, social and youth workers, translators, ICT experts. Annually DomSpain involves in its teaching and training activities over 1400 students all over the province and around 200 international learners.

Address: Carrer de Boule, 3, 43201 Reus, Tarragona Province, Spain.

Website: <https://domspain.eu/>

Contact: info@domspain.eu; +34 877 441 444

OID: E10104312



Kotsanas Museum of Ancient Greek Technology is a Non-profit Organization with branches in Athens, Heraklion, Ancient Olympia and Katakolo. The aim of the museum is to highlight this relatively unknown aspect of ancient Greek civilization and to prove that the technology of the ancient Greeks, just before the end of the ancient Greek world, was shockingly similar to the beginning of our modern technology. In order to showcase the ancient Greek Technology through an experiential approach organizes a series of interactive guided tours, workshops and education programs and events based on the permanent and periodic collections.

Address: Pindarou 6 & Akademias St., Athens, Greece.

Website: <https://kotsanas.com/>

Contact: info@kotsanas.com; +30 211 411 0044

OID: E10247665




Building Inclusion and Solidarity through Culture and Heritage - *BisCult*

NO. 101-1-2019-1-UK01-KA201-0000001



A project funded by the Erasmus+ KA2 through the European Solidarity Corps program with the aim of 11.2 million euros.

ERASMUS




Cultures and Heritage through Museum Education - *cultimuse*

NO. 101-1-2019-1-UK01-KA201-0000001

- **Team activity - 20 volunteers:**
20th of June - 21st of July 2019
10000 (London, UK, France, Romania)
- **Team activity - 20 volunteers:**
1st of August - 31st of September 2019
10000 (London, UK, France, Romania)
- **Individual volunteering stages:**
1 month
10000 (London, UK, France, Romania)



Project funded by the Erasmus+ KA2 through the European Solidarity Corps program with the aim of 11.2 million euros.

ERASMUS




Inclusion and solidarity through heritage and education - „ISTHE”



NO. 101-1-2019-1-UK01-KA201-0000001

- 8 individual volunteering stages
+ 0 months
- 1 volunteering team activity
+ 20 points (Spain)
- 1 trip + 20th July 2019



A project funded by the Erasmus+ KA2 through the European Solidarity Corps program with the aim of 11.2 million euros.

ERASMUS





ERASMUS+ FOR ADULT EDUCATION

1st OF SEPTEMBER 2019 - 31st OF NOVEMBER 2020



NO. 101-1-2019-1-UK01-KA201-0000001

AIM ACTIVITIES: JOB SHADOWING IN MUSEUM EDUCATION
 TRAINING ON DIGITAL AND COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS IN A MUSEUM CONTEXT



Funded by the Erasmus+ KA2 through the European Solidarity Corps program with the aim of 11.2 million euros.

ERASMUS





ERASMUS+ FOR ADULT EDUCATION (the 3rd year)

1st OF JULY 2020 - 31st OF AUGUST 2021

NO. 101-1-2019-1-UK01-KA201-0000001

JOB SHADOWING ON MUSEUM, MUSEUM EDUCATION AND THE FIELD OF MUSEUM RELATED ADULT EDUCATION
 TRAINING COURSE ON VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT



Funded by the Erasmus+ KA2 through the European Solidarity Corps program with the aim of 11.2 million euros.

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THE HERITAGE ADULT EDUCATION (HAEd)



Funded by the Erasmus+ KA2 through the European Solidarity Corps program with the aim of 11.2 million euros.

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