

SESSION A – Youth and Intangible Heritage: Museums as Connectors**Date:** 12 November 2025**Time:** 14:30–16:00**Format:** Conference (Panel + Discussion)**Organiser:** ICOM SEE**Session Overview**

In rapidly transforming societies, museums serve as key platforms for connecting younger generations with intangible cultural heritage—rituals, oral traditions, performing arts, craftsmanship, and oral history. This stand-alone session organized by ICOM SEE will explore the growing role of museums in Southeast Europe and beyond as spaces where youth actively engage as cultural carriers, co-creators, and advocates.

Presenters are invited to share innovative models of youth involvement in safeguarding and reinterpreting living heritage. Contributions may highlight educational programs, youth-led initiatives, participatory (especially digital) platforms, or institutional strategies that promote intergenerational dialogue and cultural sustainability.

The session will foster critical dialogue on the practical and conceptual challenges in engaging youth in intangible heritage processes and identify opportunities for museums to strengthen their role as inclusive, participatory, and forward-looking institutions.

Programme**14:30-14:35****Greetings**, Alenka Černelič Krošelj, ICOM SEE Chair**14:35-14:50****Museums as Connectors in Times of Change: Fostering Youth Engagement in Intangible Heritage in South-East Europe**, Alenka Černelič Krošelj (ICOM SEE Chair, Posavje Museum Brežice, Director) and Urška Purg (ICOM SEE Secretary and Treasurer, MUZA, Curator)**14:50-15:00****Museums can significantly enhance the mental well-being of children and young people**, Jurica Sabol (Museums of the Croatian Zagorje, Director)**15:00-15:10****Innovating Tradition: Youth Involvement in Safeguarding and Reinterpreting Living Heritage in Albania**, Edlira Andoni (National Archaeological Museum at Tirana, Head of collections)**15:10-15:20****Forum – An Empty Space for Youth**, Lili Šturm (MGLC - International Centre of Graphic Arts, Museum Counsellor)

15:20-15:30

Museums in Motion - Heritage in the hands of Young People: New approaches to cooperation in the museums of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Isidora Banjac (Museum of Contemporary Art of Republic of Srpska, Curator) and Sarita Vujković (Museum of Contemporary Art of Republic of Srpska, Director)

15:30-15:40

Transmitting Maritime Intangible Cultural Heritage: The “Al Terzo – Youth Sailing Ambassador” Program of the Ecomuseum Batana (UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices), Tamara Nikolić Djerić (Ecomuseum House of Batana)

15:40-16:00

Q&A and discussion

Abstracts

Museums as Connectors in Times of Change: Fostering Youth Engagement in Intangible Heritage in South-East Europe

Alenka Černelič Krošelj (ICOM SEE Chair, Posavje Museum Brežice) and Urška Purg (ICOM SEE Secretary and Treasurer, MUZA)

Abstract:

Intangible cultural heritage—encompassing oral traditions, performing arts, craftsmanship, rituals, and community knowledge—is a living, evolving resource that depends on intergenerational transmission and active cultural carriers to remain vital. Museums in South-East Europe increasingly recognize their responsibility not only to safeguard these forms of heritage but also to motivate and enable younger generations to become co-stewards, interpreters, and advocates.

Grounded in participatory museology and UNESCO’s framing of intangible heritage as “living heritage,” this presentation explores how museums in the region are developing youth-oriented strategies through ICOM SEE consultations and capacity-building dialogues. Drawing on insights from the ICOM Solidarity Project on Effective Museum Leadership in Mitigating Risks in Conflict and Crisis, the paper highlights how resilient leadership and trust-building are critical in uncertain contexts where youth inclusion is both challenging and essential.

Emerging approaches include cross-border dialogues between youth and tradition-bearers, collaborative documentation giving youth a voice in preserving memory, and digital storytelling as a tool for co-creation. The discussion also reflects on tensions between authenticity and reinterpretation, and the balance between digital and embodied forms of knowledge. Ultimately, it argues that museums in South-East Europe are positioning themselves as connectors—spaces where knowledge, generations, and cultural resilience intersect to ensure that intangible heritage has a future shaped *with*, not just *for*, young people.

Museums Can Significantly Enhance the Mental Well-being of Children and Young People

Jurica Sabol (Museums of the Croatian Zagorje)

Abstract:

The Museums of the Croatian Zagorje are the largest heritage institution in Croatia, comprising five thematic museums that together attract over 300,000 visitors annually, including 75,000 children and young people. Their educational programs are led by experienced museum educators and have consistently ranked first in Croatia for youth engagement.

A highlight is the project *Creative Reflection: Art, Mental Health and Tradition in the Heart of Zagorje*, developed with the Institute of Public Health of Krapina-Zagorje County. The project integrates psychological education with creative art therapy, offering workshops in ceramics and sculpture for children facing social and emotional challenges. These workshops encourage self-confidence, empathy, and social integration through creativity and connection to local heritage.

By merging artistic creation and mental health education, the project provides a safe, non-institutional environment that empowers children to express themselves freely while connecting with cultural heritage—demonstrating how museums can play a vital role in supporting youth well-being and inclusion.

Innovating Tradition: Youth Involvement in Safeguarding and Reinterpreting Living Heritage in Albania

Edlira Andoni (National Archaeological Museum of Tirana)

Abstract:

This paper examines new models of youth engagement in safeguarding and reinterpreting living heritage in Albania, including educational programs, youth-led initiatives, digital heritage projects, and institutional collaborations. Practices such as *iso-polyphony*, *xhubleta* weaving, and oral storytelling form a vital part of Albania's identity but depend on active transmission to remain vibrant.

Youth participation has grown through school programs, heritage clubs, and UNESCO-supported workshops where young people learn directly from elder artisans. Digital initiatives—like the *My Tradition* campaign, student-created oral history archives, and augmented reality heritage tours—illustrate how technology enhances cultural learning and co-creation.

Institutional programs such as the Ministry of Culture's *Heritage Guardians* initiative and *Living Heritage Days* promote intergenerational exchange. Despite challenges such as urban migration and limited resources, Albanian youth are emerging as creative agents of cultural sustainability, bridging traditional knowledge with digital innovation.

Forum – An Empty Space for Youth

Lili Šturm (MGLC – International Centre of Graphic Arts)

Abstract:

The International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC) is a contemporary art museum rooted in the legacy of the world's oldest graphic arts biennale and the heritage of 20th-century printmaking. Through its educational practice, MGLC creates "the forum" —a dynamic space for creative exploration, dialogue, and shared experience.

Examples include *The Forum as a Transgressive Sensory Space*, which introduces meditative environments engaging smell and touch to deepen art perception; *The Forum as Movement Intervention*, where yoga and dance foster embodied understanding of art and architectural heritage; and *The Forum as a Youth Residency*, offering young people immersive creative experiences.

These programs embody a responsive, inclusive, and experiential educational approach where art, emotion, and heritage converge to nurture creativity and reflection among youth.

Museums in Motion – Heritage in the Hands of Young People: New Approaches to Cooperation in the Museums of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Isidora Banjac and Sarita Vujković (Museum of Contemporary Art of Republic of Srpska)

Abstract:

This presentation explores how museums in Bosnia and Herzegovina are engaging youth through collaborative programs that connect contemporary creativity with traditional heritage. Initiatives include youth-curated exhibitions, mentorships, and joint projects with schools and cultural NGOs. By fostering intergenerational collaboration and empowering youth to reinterpret cultural heritage through artistic expression, these programs contribute to stronger community ties and inclusive cultural participation.

Transmitting Maritime Intangible Cultural Heritage: The "Al Terzo – Youth Sailing Ambassador" Program of the Ecomuseum Batana

Tamara Nikolić Djerić (Ecomuseum House of Batana, UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices)

Abstract:

The *Al Terzo – Youth Sailing Ambassador* program engages young people in preserving maritime traditions of Rovinj's Batana community. Combining experiential learning, storytelling, and sailing practice, the initiative enables youth to become ambassadors of maritime heritage while developing environmental awareness and intercultural dialogue. Recognized by UNESCO for its exemplary approach, the program illustrates how community museums can sustain intangible heritage through active youth participation and cultural pride.