

# Newsletter

Spring 2015

## Europe is calling – and here we are!

At its Foundation Assembly in 2010, *Interpret Europe* transformed from an informal group of enthusiasts into the professional organisation that it now is. It has a membership from more than 30 countries across Europe and beyond. Its annual conferences have developed into meeting places for people who care passionately about heritage interpretation and that want to further its cause. It produces an attractive quarterly newsletter and is involved in important Europe-wide projects. *Interpret Europe's* progress and status is largely due to the pioneering work of Patrick and Bettina Lehnies.

We are very grateful to Patrick and Bettina that we are able to take over the Management of Interpret Europe in an orderly transition to continue their dedication to advocating heritage interpretation in Europe.

During these five years, the political context in Europe – in relation to heritage has changed significantly and this is creating exciting opportunities for *Interpret Europe* and its future role on the international heritage scene. In May 2014, the Council of the European Union, for the first time, explicitly and unequivocally asserted that sustainable management of cultural heritage constitutes a strategic choice for the 21st century and that heritage is an integral component of the European project. Two months later, the European Commission echoed this sentiment. It went one step further by proclaiming Europe as a laboratory for heritage-based innovation. This calls for experts – such as us interpreters – that are dedicated to connecting our extensive and diverse heritage with Europe's citizens and communities.

*Interpret Europe* needs to grasp this opportunity. It is heritage interpretation that allows us to tap deeply into the rich reservoir of Europe's natural and cultural diversity, provoking thinking and reflection and turning heritage into a fountain of inspiration and creativity. Heritage interpretation can support the development of a conscious citizenship and can further integration by acknowledging, embracing and celebrating the exciting diversity of Europe as a whole. If the European institutions are asking how they might bridge the gap between a past steeped in history and a sustainable future, we can point out that we have an answer. That answer is heritage interpretation.

We know that the ambition connected with this claim is huge. It can be met only if we get full support from our members. Only through a significant growth of our membership will we be taken seriously by European decision-makers, and only if we can illustrate the suggested solutions for some of the European challenges in our own organisation can we claim to contribute to a collective European development.

We will soon start initiatives that will encourage the growth as well as the active involvement of our membership. All of you are warmly invited to contribute to this process with your ideas as well as with your action. We are convinced that *Interpret Europe* will secure a memorable place in the shaping of our shared European future. For that reason, we are looking forward to meeting the challenges, together with you, that are essential in reaching that goal in the months and years to come.



### The new management

Thorsten Ludwig, Germany & Willem Derde, Belgium

# Projects

## InHerit

by Guy Tilkin, Belgium  
and Patrick Lehnés, Germany



This project has been  
funded with support from the  
European Commission

## Linking heritage interpretation with the European Qualifications Framework

“What do heritage interpreters offer and what qualifications do they need in order to offer it in a professional way?”

This is one of the main questions InHerit tries to answer in the context of the EU's educational programmes. For this context 'heritage interpretation' can be defined as a non-formal approach to place-based learning for heritage site visitors.

InHerit is a Grundtvig Multilateral Project targeting managers, guides, developers of interpretive media etc. in heritage organisations willing to invest in better interpretation for better outcomes in terms of connecting with the audience in a meaningful way. It wants to contribute to the development of the interpretation competences of all relevant professionals at heritage sites and museums. In order to raise recognition of 'heritage interpretation' in Europe, the project systematically identifies heritage interpretation competences and links them with the European Qualifications Framework.

Furthermore it develops a competence-oriented approach to training of volunteers and staff in the field of interpretation. This implies active learning through discovery in typical contexts where interpreters work.

Want to know more?

**The latest InHerit newsletter**

**The InHerit website**



## Heriq

by Valya Stergioti, Greece  
and Sandy Colvine, France



## Introducing a European training course

Can the same course on heritage interpretation be implemented in different European countries? Would it even be possible to go for a joint certificate?

These were just two of the challenging questions taken up by IE members, Valya Stergioti (Greece) and Sandy Colvine (France) when starting the field test courses for interpretive guides as part of the HeriQ project for Quality in Heritage Interpretation. The results were particularly revealing.

### Preparation

**VS:** I felt I was adequately prepared. The material produced within the HeriQ project covers interpretive theory and the exercises are key to make participants learn by doing (and by having fun!). However, I knew that I needed to adjust all these to my own audience in order to fulfill its specific needs and that kept me on my toes till the last minute.

**SC:** Exactly, but it is unrealistic to expect success when applying a standardized method in a European context with so much cultural diversity. So, in France we applied the basic framework combining practical exercises and theory while allowing leeway for more discussion (the French love debating!). However, practice makes perfect in any culture and giving more time to learn presentation techniques in the field was most appreciated by our participants. That way, they felt more and more comfortable in front of their audience each time they spoke.

### First day, first steps

**SC:** The course sparked curiosity right from the start so people were eager. The mix of backgrounds and experience plus learning methods used took people out of their comfort zone but everyone understood and actively contributed to a positive atmosphere for experimenting with HI techniques, even those with big personalities used to being the centre of attention!

**VS:** In Melivia, everyone was excited and a little anxious at the same time. You could sense that participants wanted to learn, so it was important to instill a climate of confidence within the group for a positive learning experience. This made me feel even more motivated in my capacity as their trainer to let them express themselves.



### Terminology – cultural differences

**SC:** The HeriQ HI guide succeeded in providing a solid basis for the workshop, but there were issues with certain terms translated into French from the original English text. “Phenomenon” (phénomène) sparked unease as did the French equivalent of “stewardship” which we perhaps hastily translated as “gestion” in our manual. This evoked a sense of control over heritage which the participants felt was wrong. This was all valuable feedback.

**VS:** We too had difficulties, especially with the term “theme”, translated as “θέμα” in Greek, a word that is too closely related to the word “topic” – confusing the participants. To overcome this we did some extra exercises, using many examples from the participants’ own working environment and trying to find themes for them. Furthermore, this difficulty was one of the group’s points in final evaluation of the course with all of them agreeing that “θέμα” should be replaced by a new term in Greek.

### Final day

**VS:** I would have never believed how group dynamics could work so quickly! In just five days people became a team, strong bonding relationships were formed and everyone is asking for the next seminar or another chance to meet again.



**SC:** Team spirit came together quickly for us too. The practical exercises were key to this. There were the odd words of encouragement and advice between participants and most of all, applause after each presentation in the field. Critiquing was a bit of a challenge but with practice, participants could make constructive appraisals.

### Personal feelings after the completion of the course

**VS:** Overall, I am proud to be part of this project. We still have a long way to go before heritage interpretation becomes established in Greece. Nevertheless, I sense that this project and more specifically this course could be a solid base from where to begin.

**SC:** Further work needs to be done to tailor the methodology more closely to the French learning culture but this first experience was a positive start. Participants really took to the heritage interpretation methods used and said they gained a great deal from the



workshop. They talked to others about it too. It was a very rewarding experience for me and one that we must repeat and adapt to make constant improvements.

### What's next?

**SC:** APARE, the French partner in the HeriQ Project, will seek to develop the training workshop for a wide range of heritage professionals working with the public (guides or not), particularly those working with younger audiences which is its core business.

It will continue this grass-roots development approach as well as influencing a number of public organisations that may be receptive to adopting the ideas of heritage interpretation in the future.

**VS:** The Mediterranean Centre of Environment – the Greek partner of the HeriQ project – has already received proposals to repeat this course, in other parts of Greece. So it looks like the 16 guides who participated in the HeriQ course in Melivia could become the first in a longer line of guides, trained in heritage interpretation.

This is just a snapshot of the initial feedback from ourselves as HeriQ trainers. Meanwhile more courses took place in Bulgaria and in Spain, and one course in Germany is just about to start. We are working on the second edition of the course manual and adapting the course design. We are very excited about that process, and we are really looking forward to share our experiences with you during our HeriQ workshop in Krakow.

Meanwhile, you can find more information at [www.heriq.org](http://www.heriq.org) – and more pictures and comments from our courses at our HeriQ Facebook page.



### The HeriQ guide manual

by Evarist March

### Now available in ten languages

At HeriQ, some work has been done during winter. You might remember our manual for interpretive guides which had first been first published in English and introduced to Interpret Europe last summer by Michael Glen (Newsletter 3/14).

After successful testing, we intended to translate not only this manual but also our training and certification plan and all other training material in as many languages as we could, before our first certification courses for interpretive guides started in March.

Of course, we had a lot of talks around definitions and terms which we also felt was quite important for the further development of our profession in Europe. I was really delighted when I had finished not only the Spanish version but also the Catalan version which is the first publication on heritage interpretation in Catalan. The HeriQ project plan asked for five translations but we can already present everything in ten languages by now – and two more versions are expected to be completed before Kraków.

You can download all versions of our guide manual for free from [www.heriq.org](http://www.heriq.org) – and you will find a lot of pictures from our courses at our HeriQ site on Facebook.



## NAI conference 2015 in Montreal

by Michael Hamish Glen

### Spanning the world of interpretation

NAI's recent international conference in Montréal, organised jointly with Interpretation Canada, was not only a happy gathering, it was a productive assembly. Over 100 delegates from Africa, Asia, Australasia, the Americas and Europe enjoyed a series of inspiring and informative presentations in Canada's great francophone metropolis. Old friendships were renewed with vigour and new ones were eagerly established. The atmosphere was positive and collaborative. As at most convocations, talk 'off the pitch' was as important as formal sessions for sharing perceptions and experiences in heritage interpretation.

This was probably why the plenary, and highly participative, sessions on two overarching topics produced valuable opinions but – rightly – no decisions. NAI had put 'international standards' on the programme for the conference and this was of particular interest to us in Interpret Europe where quality criteria for interpretation have been on our agenda for some time. There was universal acknowledgement in Montréal that recognising personal achievement was essential for both interpreters and their employers and that NAI's certification programme, among others, was a valuable contributor to this. There was also interest in the InHerit project with which Interpret Europe is heavily involved and which is defining competence levels for those working within interpretation.

When it came to the question of international standards for implementing interpretation, in whatever guise, there were varied opinions. Few seemed to want regulatory systems with all the administration and sanctions involved but many saw a need for helping and encouraging good interpretation. 'Aspiration not regulation' was

the elegant phrase used by Chris Mathieson of Interpretation Canada and it met with widespread approval. How this might be achieved was left wide open.

However, a paper on 'achieving excellence in interpretation', that will be discussed in Kraków, elicited positive reactions from some, although only its overall approach was explained. One factor which was stressed was the need for whatever approach that might be adopted to be flexible enough to work in different countries and cultures.



The other 'international' topic which exercised conference delegates in Montréal – and which will be debated at a workshop in Kraków – was the question of a world 'federation' of interpretation associations. This has been raised informally for a number of years but it got an extended airing in Canada. Delegates worked in groups and collectively to determine what such a body might seek to achieve, how it might do it, how it could be created and organised and how would it help the world of interpretation in the wider world.



# News from our members

## News from Italy

by Vanessa Vaio

### The Educational Forest of Feleghée di Brunate, Lake of Como

Brunate is a small village on the top of a mountain, 700 m, directly above the Como basin, the two are connected, since 1894, with a funicular railway. The place is a well known touristic destination since XIX for its wonderful view on the Alps arc, the Eclectic Villas and the many and various hiking trails.

Since the immemorial, close to the old town centre, a special woodland area has been conserved: the forest of Feleghée. The toponym means 'the place of the Agreement' and it has always been the support policies of the time a collective forest where people could go and harvest chestnuts and healing plants, collect firewood, there where spaces where grow vegetables gardens, a limestone and a stone quarry for building materials. The project of its enhancement has started in 2001 when Professor Darko Pandakovic at the time Major of Brunate decided to buy it and return it to the community as an Educational Forest.

My commitment to this project started in 2004 when I was asked to organize the first Heritage Interpretation programs that are ongoing to date.

Two years ago the Municipality asked me to draft an Interpretive Master Plan that has been approved last Summer. The Interpretive Master Plan lays the groundwork of a

touristic plan that involves the whole district of Brunate and covers strategies and overriding actions that raise the aims and quality of the offered services.

The main Theme of both the Interpretive programs and the Master Plan is the toponym, the place of the agreement, developed into 'The place of agreement between generations: an heritage that comes from our ancestry to the future generation'.

All the interpretive programs are studied to lead children in a journey of personal growth on a well defined path of progressive responsibility and commitment to the place and to their companions. This Educational Forest is planned, thought, designed and created by children for

children. The aim is to enhance the place through children's eyes, not with what we, adults, think they might like: it is a peer group experience, a personal research of Nature, where kids can dare, use their creativity. The aim is that every 'school-generation' leaves to the following one a growing heritage of what has been, is and will be. The Master plan gives the direction, the strategy and the time schedule, but how it will be implemented is a matter of the kids that will work at it.

It is the opportunity that Nature gives to experience real adventures, well being, freedom and creativity all values that, we hope, will make these kids wiser and aware adults of tomorrow.



Over the years parents and families have felt committed and committed to the place and to the project, many elderly people, that used to come to the forest as children, are now helping creating new occasions of sharing: the memories become alive through children's interpretation.







## Interpretation concept is crossing the border of the former USSR

"The word 'interpretation'... refers to a public service that has so recently come into our cultural world that a resort to the dictionary for a competent definition is fruitless." This quote was written by Friman Tilden in his famous book "Interpreting Our Heritage" about 60 years ago. We are in the same situation right now in the countries of the former USSR. Interpretation concept is known only by very narrow range of professionals and the word "interpretation" is used very rarely. A Soviet style approach still dominates in most museums, national parks, guided tours and exhibitions in this part of the world. It usually consists of one-way hierarchic communications, which are reminiscent of academic lecturing, extracts from textbooks and commanded signs.

But the situation is changing. Experience economy and interpretation ideas are knocking at our doors. We already have some very good examples of heritage interpretation in Belarus, such as the private Museum of Rural Culture "Dudutki", some ecomuseums of new generations, several very creative festivals and events and a range of guided tours with animation. It is time for innovations, creativity and a professional approach. Until now, there has not been a decent book about interpretation in Russian. But it's going to happen very soon.

The presentation of a new book, Heritage Interpretation in Tourism: New Approaches in Experience Economy Era, is expected very soon. The author – Valeria Klitsounova, PhD, is working as an associate professor at the Belarusian State University's international tourism department and also leading National Association of Rural and Ecotourism (Belarusian Agro- and Ecotourism Association 'Country Escape'). She spent four months as a Fulbright scholar in George Mason University in 2013-2014 with the aim to complete research, meet experts, and write a book about heritage interpretation.

The book consists of three chapters, which describe the philosophy and ideology of interpretation, main principles, creative techniques and best international and local practices in this field. It is going to be presented to the public and the media at the end of May 2015 in an unusual manner – with animation and musicians' and actors' participation.

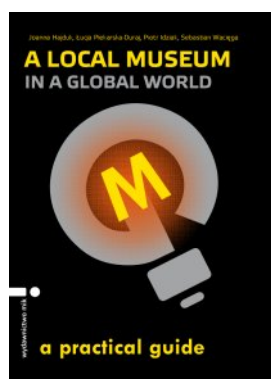
There are some changes in the education system as well. There is an innovative initiative in The Belarusian State University, where the new course Nature and Culture Heritage Interpretation has been launched on the International Tourism Department. This course combines theory, a lot of creative practical activity, presentation, and discussion, including some good case studies from and some teaching patterns from interpretation courses of Steven's Point University of Wisconsin and Michigan State University. There will also be a presentation of students' interpretation programs created in the frame of this new course with some visitors from other departments at the end of May.

It is the hope that these few steps would help interpretation become an ideology, philosophy, profession, art, craft, and discipline in Belarus and other countries in the nearest future. hips were renewed with vigour and new ones were eagerly established. The atmosphere was positive and collaborative. As at most convocations, talk 'off the pitch' was as important as formal sessions for sharing perceptions and experiences in heritage interpretation.



## News from Poland

by Katarzyna Barańska



## "A local museum in a global world"

We would like to draw your attention to the publication with the title "A Local Museum in a Global World". It was written by The Exhibition Dynamics team - programme led by MIK, the Malopolska Institute of Culture in Krakow. The volume describes the method of heritage interpretation and tools which were used during workshops with museums' workers. It is addressed to employees of the cultural institutions who are engaged in cultural heritage dissemination, not only in museums but also in libraries, galleries, archives or regional chambers.

This is how the authors narrate about their work:

"The basis for our method of heritage interpretation which is presented in this book is an assumption that a museum is like a story – it transfers contents to its receivers, illustrates them with an exhibition, and creates narrations around them. [...]

Interpretation helps a museum's team to find answers to questions which can be posed when preparing to create such a story - what story are we telling, for whom and why are we telling it, what means do we have to convey the content and how should our story be constructed?

What do we want to communicate with it to our receivers?

The interpretation method consists of three stages, which are the chapters of this book:

From resources to a theme;

From a theme to an essence;

From an essence to implementation."

The whole book can be found under the link:

[http://e-sklep.mik.krakow.pl/ebooks/lokalne\\_muzeum\\_w\\_globalnym\\_swiecie\\_EN.pdf](http://e-sklep.mik.krakow.pl/ebooks/lokalne_muzeum_w_globalnym_swiecie_EN.pdf)



# See you in Kraków!

Interpret Europe  
European Association  
for Heritage Interpretation e.V.

Am Rasen 23  
D-37214 Werleshausen  
+49 5542 505873  
mail@interpret-europe.net  
www.interpret-europe.net

Do you want to share your projects, experiences, thoughts or adventures with other interpreters?

Send us a short report and two to three photos (high resolution) to [newsletter@interpret-europe.net](mailto:newsletter@interpret-europe.net) and we'll put it in the next newsletter.

Deadline for contributions for our next newsletter:  
Tuesday 30 June 2015

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