

ICOM international
council
of museums

manual of reputation experience

GUIDELINES WITH
WORKBOOK SHEETS
AND SURVEY RESEARCH



**museum
reputation
as a leadership
tool**

INTERCOM

ICOM
international
committee for museum
management

manual of reputation experience

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WORKBOOK SHEETS
AND SURVEY RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

The project “Museum – Reputation as a Leadership Tool” addresses the growing need for museums to strengthen their institutional reputation as a foundation of leadership, trust, and sustainability. Developed under the co-ordination of ICOM INTERCOM and supported by several partners it was implemented in 2025 in three countries – Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Italy. Partners from the ICOM network were international committees INTERCOM and ICLCM, two national committees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the regional alliance ICOM SEE. Museum partners were the Museum of Ancient Glass and Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia with MUVE Academy. The project represents a pioneering initiative to explore how reputation can be used strategically to enhance the social role of museums in a rapidly changing world. The project was focused on exploring and applying the concept of reputation as a strategic instrument of museum leadership. Supported by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) with the Special Project Grant and the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia and local partners, the project brought together international experts and museum professionals to strengthen competencies in reputation management, communication, and public relations within the sector.

In the post-pandemic context, museums face the dual challenge of maintaining professional standards while adapting to economic pressures, political instability, mass tourism, and increasingly diverse communities. This project responds to those challenges by positioning museum reputation as both an ethical compass and a practical leadership tool that reinforces public trust and institutional relevance.

* Goranka Horjan is the Chair of INTERCOM.



Participants of the first panel of the Zadar workshop.

The project builds on insights from recent international ICOM INTERCOM forums that highlight institutional reputation as a foundation for trust and public support. In times of rapid social change and growing market and tourism pressures, museums face the challenge of maintaining professional standards while remaining socially relevant and inclusive. Reputation thus emerges as not merely a communication asset but a strategic indicator of institutional value and public legitimacy.

PROJECT GOALS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The project's overarching goal is to empower museums to strengthen their reputation by fostering leadership grounded in inclusivity, community relevance, and responsible engagement. It aims to train museum professionals to manage reputation-building processes that reflect transparency, sustainability, and human values.



Goranka Horjan during her address to the media during the workshop in Trebinje.

Three strategic objectives have guided the project's implementation:

1. Advocating sustainability in tourism-burdened areas – supporting museums located in over-touristed cities such as Zadar, Dubrovnik, Mostar, Florence and Venice to balance economic activity with social and cultural responsibility.
2. Creating bridges within diverse communities – enabling museums to act as facilitators of social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and inclusion, particularly in regions affected by migration and changing workforce patterns.
3. Managing reputation as a leadership asset – providing museums with concrete tools for ethical communication, audience engagement, and brand purpose that align with ICOM's Code of Ethics and UNESCO's 2015 Recommendations.

Through these goals, the project advances ICOM's strategic mission in promoting excellence, sustainability, diversity, and strong leadership across the museum sector.



Participants of the workshop in front of the Museum of Herzegovina in Trebinje.

BENEFITS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The project is designed to produce long-term professional and social benefits:

- Professional Capacity Building: Training at least 50 museum leaders, curators, and educators from South-East Europe in reputation management, communication strategy, and community leadership.
- Institutional Transformation: Empowering museums to create inclusive programs that address sensitive social issues—such as discrimination, depopulation, and cultural diversity—while maintaining credibility and public trust.
- Social Impact: Encouraging museums to function as “community platforms” that enhance citizens’ well-being, provide informal education, and contribute to sustainable urban and cultural development.
- Knowledge Production: Developing the Manual of Reputation Experience, a practical guide summarizing key findings, methods, and case studies from the training sessions in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Italy.



Goranka Horjan presents the results of the survey during the project meeting in Venice.

- Visibility and Dissemination: Strengthening ICOM’s global reputation as a leader in promoting ethical, inclusive, and sustainable museum practices through publications, media coverage, and conference presentations.

By integrating mentorship, interactive workshops, and analytical tools such as Mentimeter surveys, the project ensures active learning and the co-creation of innovative reputation models adaptable to different contexts.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE VALUE

A major strength of this initiative lies in its multi-layered partnership network. Each partner contributes complementary expertise to ensure a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach:

- INTERCOM provides overall project management, leadership expertise, and evaluation tools for analysing reputation frameworks.
- External experts contribute with their communication and branding experience, guiding museums on audience-centred reputation strategies. Their results are available as appendices in the publication.



Visuals of the Museum reputation as a leadership tool project (Zadar, Trebinje, Venice).

- ICLCM focuses on sustainable approaches to heritage management and the integration of cultural and natural assets into community life.
- ICOM Croatia and ICOM Bosnia and Herzegovina co-ordinate on-site training events and engage local museum professionals and media.
- ICOM SEE supports online dissemination of results.
- The Museum of Ancient Glass (Zadar) and Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia provide assistance in finding local venues, logistical support, and contextual case studies on the impact of tourism on heritage sites.

This collaborative structure embodies the principle of “leadership through cooperation”, strengthening cross-border professional networks and reinforcing ICOM’s mission of inclusivity and shared learning.

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE AND LEGACY

The project’s strategic significance extends beyond its immediate outcomes. It directly supports ICOM’s strategic goals by:

- Positioning museums as global leaders in sustainability and ethical governance;
- Enhancing institutional resilience through reputation and trust-building;
- Expanding intercultural dialogue and diversity; and
- Promoting leadership grounded in community relevance.

Ultimately, the project Museum Reputation as a Leadership Tool contributes to redefining museum leadership in the 21st century. It advocates for a museum model that is not only a guardian of heritage but

also an active agent of social change, capable of fostering empathy, cooperation, and a sustainable future for all communities.

The program consisted of two international training modules held in Zadar and Trebinje, and a wrap-up meeting in Venice, which, through interactive workshops, lectures, and mentoring sessions and consultations with experts, provided participants with practical tools for defining a museum's purpose, developing value-based branding, and building public trust. Special emphasis was placed on the role of reputation in sustaining museums in tourism-intensive environments and connecting diverse communities.

Workshops led by international experts James Heaton (Tronvig Group, New York) and Cecilia Martin (Cultural Connection, London) showed that reputation is not merely a communication instrument but a fundamental element of leadership and organizational culture. Participants developed practical skills in strategic thinking, emotional branding, and ethical engagement of museums within their communities.

The survey conducted during the three workshops and online had a purpose of mapping current trends in regions that are placed in tourist regions but distant from the capital city. This enables a better insight how middle-sized museums whose authorities are local and regional governments meet reputational challenges.

The project resulted not only in lasting professional networks but also with the publication "Manual of Reputation Experience", giving guidelines for a new model of reputation management that integrates purpose, authenticity, and trust. In this way, the project contributes to the international discourse on the role of museums as responsible, relevant, and socially engaged institutions of the 21st century.

/// Adriano RIGOLI*

REPUTATION IN MEMORY HOUSE MUSEUMS AND LITERARY AND MUSIC MUSEUMS

PROMOTING HOUSES OF MEMORY AND HISTORICAL HOUSES

This year for the first time during Spring, on April 5th and 6th 2025 ICLCM promoted the first edition of the International House Museum Days that our National Association of Houses of Memory in Italy (Associazione Nazionale Case della Memoria) organized to spread knowledge of the house museums around the world, in collaboration with ICOM International from Paris and ICOM's two international committees: DEMHIST which is explicitly dedicated to historical houses, and the international committee ICLCM which is addressed to literary and music museums and therefore also to the house museums of writers, poets, musicians, dancers and singers. Dealing with the variety of historical houses was an opportunity to launch the first national edition of the Days of Illustrious Personalities' Houses in April 2022 and it immediately resulted in a growing of membership and visitors, from 80 houses and 5,000 visitors in the first edition to 143 participating houses in Italy and 30,000 visitors a year later. In addition, the event was the first international one with the participation of 260 historical house museums in 27 countries around the world from the South America to the East Asia.

When the National Association of Houses of Memory was founded 20 years ago, on October 24th, 2005 by the first 13 founders, there was virtually no constructive dialogue of house museums in Italy. Historical houses with museums existed, they bore witness to the life of great cultural figures, but they were not perceived as a whole in the public eye. In other nations, such as France or the Russian Federation, the houses of writers and musicians were already in the focus of public attention.

* Adriano Rigoli is ICOM-ICLCM Chairman and the President of the National Association of Houses of Memory (Italy)



Adriano Rigoli delivers a presentation in Zadar.

Today the situation has completely changed because a lot of work has been done since the beginning, and Italian national museum network now includes 120 house museums in the whole country and is active on European and global level in promoting house museums. Today we have in Italy a constantly updated website, various social channels (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) and a Press Office that works both online and offline.

The National Association of Houses of Memory network brings together the homes where some of the most important personalities of Italian and foreign culture have lived. Just to name a few, from Giotto and Boccaccio to Niccolò Machiavelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti and Galileo Galilei to personalities closer to us in time such as Giosuè Carducci, Giovanni Pascoli, John Keats and Percy Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning, Giuseppe Verdi, Pellegrino Artusi, Giacomo Puccini, Maria Montessori, Enrico Caruso, Antonio Gramsci, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and to the protagonists of our own day, Enzo Ferrari, Primo Conti, Giorgio de Chirico, Carlo Levi, Salvatore Quasimodo, Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, Giorgio Morandi, Indro Montanelli, Ugo Tognazzi, and Luciano Pavarotti.

The Italian network of memory houses is also the lead partner of the European Network of Museum Houses of Illustrious Personalities, which is composed of museum houses and national networks of museum houses in 14 European countries, from the Iberian Peninsula to the Russian Federation. The first signing of the Memorandum of Understanding occurred in Florence, in 2015, on the occasion of Expo Milano 2015. Another meeting followed in 2019, in Vinci, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Leonardo's death and in May 2024, in Florence and Caprese Michelangelo, the birthplace of the divine sculptor.

The situation with the ICLCM Committee's online communication tools is completely different. When I became the chairman, in February 2023, I saw the need to update the website and social networks and the committee engaged a specialized engineer to help with the plan to restructure and update the communication strategy of ICLCM. But to implement it, we need support from the central office since ICLCM site is an ICOM International mini website.

BEING PRESENT ONLINE: REPUTATION STRATEGIES IN HOUSE AND LITERARY MUSEUMS

In today's cultural landscape, museums compete not only for visitors on site, but also for attention, relevance, and visibility in the digital public sphere. Audiences increasingly form their first impression of a museum online—through search results, social media, or recom-

mentations on platforms such as Google, TripAdvisor, or Instagram. For many visitors, especially younger generations and international tourists, the online encounter comes before the physical one. Hence, a strong digital presence becomes essential for museum's presence and accessibility, communicating a museum's mission and values, reaching audiences who may not visit in person, participating in public conversations, and shaping how the institution is perceived locally and globally. In this sense, digital reputation is not separate from the museum's public identity—it is one of its main expressions.

To illustrate how this works in practice, members of the ICLCM International Committee shared the ways in which their institutions monitor, evaluate, and strengthen their reputations.

Here are the three case-studies from the network:

1. GEELVINCK HINLOPEN HUIS, AMSTERDAM (NETHERLANDS)

This historic house museum evaluates its reputation through a combined qualitative and quantitative approach. Key indicators include:

- Visitor feedback (surveys, guestbook comments, Google & TripAdvisor reviews)
- Media presence (tone and frequency of press and broadcast coverage)
- Academic and professional recognition (citations, collaborations, conference invitations)
- Online visibility (website analytics, social media engagement levels)
- Public awards and nominations
- Community involvement and co-creative project participation

The museum is listed in the Netherlands Museum Register and is periodically evaluated according to ICOM professional standards.

2. MUSEUM OF THE WRITER ALEKSANDRS ČAKS, RIGA (LATVIA)

In this museum, reputation indicators are focused particularly on visitor sentiment and peer recognition, including:

- Number of visitors
- Guest book feedback
- Social media mentions and engagement
- Professional evaluations and awards



Workshop in Trebinje led by Cecilia Martin Abad.

3. MUSEO CERRALBO, MADRID (SPAIN)

As the former residence of the Marquis of Cerralbo, the museum monitors digital and visitor engagement through:

- Social media interactions and follower growth
- E-mail newsletter engagement metrics (Mailchimp)
- Cultural event participation and evaluations
- Ticketing data and visitor-study analysis
- Virtual visit analytics (Madapixel app)
- Mobile guide usage (CloudGuide)
- Google review sentiment monitoring

These examples show that museum reputation today is inseparable from digital visibility, audience engagement, and public relevance. Even when institutional resources differ, museums consistently seek ways to listen to their audiences, learn from feedback, and present themselves as credible, open, and culturally meaningful spaces—both offline and online.



Project members during a project meeting in Venice.

During the pandemic emergency, the activities of museums, archaeological parks and institutes moved to social media and this contributed to doubling their visibility on the web, and consequently their online reputation, compared to the pre-Covid period. That was shown by a study conducted on 100 state-owned cultural venues by Politecnico di Milano in May 2020 for the General Directorate of Museums of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage (now Ministry of Culture). “Italian museums continue to record an increase in their performance on the web in May 2020”, reads the text attached to the monitoring, which is a part of a periodic analysis service launched in 2018 by the Mibact to measure the public’s index of satisfaction with the museums’ online cultural content, and which has now highlighted significant trends.

MONITORING IMPACT

This year in February at the annual archaeological and cultural tourism fair in Florence, called Tourisma, the Cultural Tourism 2025 Report was presented. The Data Appeal Company, through proprietary algorithms based on artificial intelligence, machine learning and semantic analysis, measured and analyzed all the feedback published online during 2024, combining it

with geographic and contextual data, to offer a market analysis reflecting users’ online behavior.

The most reviewed museums were in focus for the purpose of this project. When museums exploit their online reputation and digital channels, the results are not long in coming. Clamorous in this sense is the case of the Leonardo da Vinci Museum in Florence, which is a private museum and obviously has nothing that belonged to Leonardo. However, in 2024 it registered more digital interest than much better-known cultural institutions such as the Uffizi Gallery. In fact, this private Florentine museum more than doubled its digital footprint online, gaining unprecedented visibility and taking the first place among the most reviewed museums in 2024. Following, from the second to the tenth position, are the Uffizi Gallery, the Egyptian Museum in Turin, Juliet’s House (obviously Juliet’s house is not the real home of the Shakespearean character), the Accademia Gallery in Florence, the Leonardo Interactive Museum in Florence, the Ferrari Museum in Maranello, the Reggia di Caserta, the Mole Antonelliana and the Sansevero Chapel Museum in Naples.

Although it does not hold the absolute record as the most reviewed museum, as the top 5 ranked museums remain firmly in the hands of the Uffizi Gallery, the Leonardo da Vinci Museum in Florence stands out for its ability to proactively exploit the potential of digital. This result highlights how private entrepreneurs show the ability to exploit technology and online visibility to strengthen their reputation and attract visitors. Mario Romanelli, sales director of the Data Appeal Company, comments: “These data show how crucial it is today to listen carefully to visitors and to exploit digital channels to gather opinions and encourage favorable word-of-mouth - also in the museum sector”.

Obviously, measuring the reputation of museums is easier for larger, structured museums that have the professional skills to do this work, while it is more difficult and complicated for small museums and historical house museums. In 2016, the National Association of Small Museums analyzed the reputation of 20 small museums in the national network in Italy. The characteristics that emerge from reading the reviews provide substantially different data between large and small museums. For the small museums, five prevailing data emerge: the professionalism of the staff, the size of the structure, the support for teaching, the building as a container and free admission.

In this regard, it is interesting to point out what many visitors have written, namely that they went to the museum without any particular expectations, only to be pleasantly impressed, so much so that they wrote a review to recommend the visit to others. This is in contrast to large museums where visitors’ expectations are sometimes disappointing, not by what is on display, but by organizational inconveniences, which reflect negatively on the visiting experience.

Many visitors, for example, emphasize that they appreciate being accompanied during the tour by a guide. As professionals, they share heritage stories with the wider public so they prefer guided tours for better insight and experience. In case of educational tools present in museum displays, almost all visitors notice them and report them as added value, especially if they are interactive or intended for the involvement of young children.

However, there are also critical issues. The reviews often give an inferior rating in terms of the opening hours (too restricted) and, although in rare cases, to the excessive cost of the ticket. It is significant that if a museum is small, they expect to have a low entry fee or free entrance. In this regard, it is interesting to point out an opposite trend. Some visitors are so enthusiastic about their visit that they urge other visitors to leave a financial contribution to help the museum.

The most significant difference that emerges from the comparison between large and small museums, concerns the importance of people. For large museums, services and other issues are reported, but hardly any mention is made of the people. On the contrary, for small museums, the people who work there are fundamental, and they become central for the visit, with their passion and their ability to transmit history and culture, through storytelling, creating that system of human relations that is difficult to establish in large museums. In this way the visitor to a small museum, including historical house museum, feels involved in the cultural process because he or she is placed at the center of the visiting experience.

I conclude with a citation from museologist Adalgisa Lugli who wrote a book entitled *Museology* in 1992: 'Whether one looks at it with sympathy or with vague unease, the museum is much more than a place where works and objects are kept [...]. In a world that believes it has seen it all, [the museum] has paradoxically remained as one of the last places in which one goes in search of wonder and the different. A place of curiosity, still, where one can find something that is not in the everyday world'.

/// Pietroluigi GENOVESI*

REIMAGINING MUSEUMS: RESPONSIBILITY, INNOVATION AND THE FUTURE OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Museums are redefining their role within society and if previously museums were focused on preserving and displaying collections, now they are increasingly recognized as they play an active role in education, research, training and social engagement. Cultural institutions are developing new strategies for audience engagement and social interaction in order to integrate cultural heritage in contemporary society and this transformation expands the traditional role and functions of cultural institutions. Museums facilitate the development of creativity, knowledge and participation, helping communities to understand social changes and future developments. In this context, the role of museums is both of custodian of memory and catalyst for understanding, innovation, and social responsibility. This new definition enables museums to connect generations, disciplines and cultures fostering dialogue and active participation.

Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia (MUVE) offers an example of how cultural heritage can be aligned with present-day needs. Through its research and training platform, MUVE Academy, the Foundation connects education, innovation, and community engagement. Its goal is to strengthen the role of museums within the civic and cultural context of Venice.

By developing partnerships with universities, businesses, and local organizations, MUVE promotes cultural heritage as a living resource for learning, collaboration, and development. This approach underlines that cultural heritage is not a static inheritance but a dynamic space of exchange where knowledge and creativity can generate new forms of social, educational, and even economic value. In this per-

* Pietroluigi Genovesi is the Head of MUVE Academy and MUVE Education at Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia



Pietroluigi Genovesi delivers a presentation in Zadar.

spective, the museum is not only a space for visitors but a context for active participation and professional growth, where each project contributes to the wider process of civic development.

MUVE Academy is based on the idea that museums can foster productive dialogue across disciplines as educational and training programs bring together curators, researchers, artisans, and students to share methods and expertise. Research on ancient glass, for instance, has led to collaboration with scientists investigating new materials and sustainable production methods. Developing new partnerships with schools of design and local craft workshops has enabled young professionals to reinterpret traditional Venetian techniques within contemporary artistic production. Through this interdisciplinary exchange, museums help create a link between scientific research and artistic creativity, creating the opportunity to develop innovative practices that respect both tradition and experimentation. These initiatives show how cultural institutions can safeguard traditional know-how while encouraging creativity and professional growth. They also show how museums can play an essential role in linking education with production, heritage with innovation, and theory with practice.



Discussion during a project meeting in Venice.

Venice provides a particularly relevant background for this work. The city hosts each year millions of visitors and faces important challenges linked with tourism and environmental fragility. MUVE approaches these circumstances not only as difficulties but as opportunities for reflection and renewal. In a city where every stone, canal, and square tells a story, museums can help promote more balanced forms of cultural participation by offering visitors and residents the chance to experience the city through knowledge-based, meaningful encounters. By combining artistic heritage, scientific research, and public education, museums become spaces of awareness and places that can explain the complexity of the identity of Venice while opening new perspectives on the future of the city. When museums implement programs that combine learning with critical thinking, they help people understand the city and the history of Venice not as a static monument, but as a living and evolving community, deeply connected to the world and yet profoundly rooted in its unique local culture.

MUVE Academy offers not only training for museum professionals, students, and citizens on topics such as cultural management, sustainability, and the social value of heritage, but these programs aim



Young professionals participating in the workshop in Zadar.



Participants of the workshop in Trebinje during a guided tour of the permanent exhibition at the Museum of Herzegovina.

to strengthen professional competencies while encouraging some considerations of Venice through cultural and economic dynamics. In this way, participants are encouraged to think on how artistic and historical heritage can be managed and communicated in ways that respect the authenticity and innovation. In this context, MUVE Academy valorizes skills that are relevant not only for museum work but also for the broader cultural and creative sectors. This educational activity has a long-term impact: it creates awareness, fosters critical thinking, and supports a new generation of professionals capable of connecting cultural practice with social responsibility.

MUVE also places strong emphasis on its relationship with local production systems. Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia manages 11 museums that support different forms of Venetian craftsmanship, including glass, textiles, and lace. Through exhibitions, workshops, and training initiatives, these museums make visible the link between material culture and contemporary creativity. Through collaborations with schools, artisans and research institutions, MUVE is trying to connect traditional expertise with design and innovation. This approach helps preserve artisanal knowledge while encouraging experimentation, positioning the museum as a bridge between research, production, and creative renewal. In the island of Murano,

for example, projects combining historical study and contemporary design have helped young artists rediscover the expressive potential of glass, while in the island of Burano, the Lace Museum offers opportunities to explore ancient skills through new educational perspectives. In these ways, the museum becomes a space of dialogue between heritage and innovation, strengthening both local identity and cultural diversity.

In addition to educational and cultural functions, museums can serve as places of community engagement. They provide settings where people meet, exchange ideas, and collaborate. MUVE collaborates with schools, associations, and universities to involve citizens in projects linked with heritage and culture and these initiatives strengthen the connection between institutions and communities, showing the museum's potential to foster social cohesion and civic awareness. Such engagement is critical in a city facing demographic, social, and environmental challenges: it allows residents to participate actively in Venice's cultural life and view museums as shared public resources.

Venice shows that a constructive, forward-looking approach can produce positive results even in complex contexts. The city's museums illustrate how it is possible to balance preservation with adaptability and to respond to the needs of both visitors and residents. Through research, education, and collaboration, MUVE advances a model of the museum as a center for learning, dialogue, and shared responsibility. This model is not theoretical but deeply practical, rooted in the daily work of museum professionals, educators, artisans, and citizens who together contribute to the vitality of the city.

Rethinking museums in this way reinforces their continuity with tradition while updating their social purpose. By caring for both collections and communities, MUVE shows that museums can help cultural continuity and contribute to the city. All these activities suggest that museums are not only places where the past is preserved but also where the future can be imagined collaboratively, and with a sense of shared responsibility toward culture and the community.

This experience shows that leadership in cultural fields is a collective process and through MUVE Academy, Venice shows that historical and artistic heritage can be both an anchor and a compass: an anchor that preserves identity and a compass that guides innovation. The civic museums have developed a shared vision that unites preservation with creation, learning with participation, and tradition with change.

/// Alenka ČERNELIČ KROŠELJ*

ICOM SOUTHEAST EUROPE: SHORT PERSPECTIVE AS A PROJECT PARTNER

“Museums have no borders, they have a network” – the statement of our umbrella organization, ICOM, shows and gives us important directions for cooperation between national and international committees and regional alliances. In ICOM SEE we are honored to be a part of the project Museum Reputation as a Leadership Tool, as it enriches us with new perspectives in our ongoing mission to enable the museum sector to develop according to the contemporary needs of heritage, society, and our communities.

Heritage is part of our identity; it is our anchor and our direction. It can be our compass, but it can also be our trap. Museums emerged from the need of communities or individuals to ensure the sustainability of the heritage they were custodians of, because they knew the value of what they held and wanted to share it with others. Museums have long ceased to be primarily collectors and guardians of the beautiful and unusual. We are a community – custodians of collective and individual identities, networks of the tangible and intangible, dynamic public and private institutions focused on accessibility, ethics, professionalism, innovation, inclusion, networking, sharing, cooperation, and sustainable development, which includes all contemporary topics such as climate change, digitalization, cross-sectoral cooperation, and more.

In ICOM SEE countries, we are dedicated to enabling museum professionals to gain knowledge and inspiration, as we ourselves are inspired by the museum definition, which calls for community participation in museum work, as well as by this year's International Museum Day theme, which invited us to reflect on “The Future of

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Alenka Černelič Krošelj delivers a presentation in Trebinje.

Museums in Constantly Changing Communities.” As we say, “Change is the only constant and stability,” and in ICOM SEE we know that we constantly face turbulent times.

We are diverse. For example, Greece is struggling to promote sustainability in tourism-burdened areas, while in several member countries we face large differences between popular destinations such as Dubrovnik, Bled, and Ohrid, and the “smaller,” less visible heritage sites and museums that nevertheless build strong and meaningful relationships with society at large.

Museums have numerous tasks, and at different times the most important ones for modernity emerge from this multitude. In addition to the comprehensive protection of movable heritage, which is inextricably linked with immovable and intangible heritage, the role of museums in the 21st century is primarily to serve the community. How do we build public and community trust? How do we lead and manage museums? What are our brand and reputation? How do we implement the principles of cooperation, inclusion, peace, tolerance, respect, understanding, dialogue, accessibility, and sustainable development? In all this, we remain committed to continuous reflection



Participants of the workshop in Trebinje during opening ceremony.



Workshop participants in Trebinje.

on the past and on our various roles in modernity. From our past, our activities, and our achievements, we predict the way forward and define our heritage, as well as what kind of ancestors we are.

In light of this constant rethinking, it is necessary that museums' missions, visions, and strategic plans are adapted to the "new times." We are grateful that this project, its activities, and its outcomes will give us the tools and opportunities not only to improve leadership and governance but also to build inclusive support for our communities. Together with our fellow citizens and within the cultural and museum landscape, we can shape conditions that ensure wellbeing and successfully mitigate the various risks that continually arise.

As stated in the publication Taking the Pulse: "Our task is choosing the paths to explore and those to avoid." We know that this project is offering a guidance in good direction.

/// Darko BABIĆ*

REFLECTION ON THE TRAINING PROGRAMME IN ZADAR

The project Museum – Reputation as a Leadership Tool was conceived as an international initiative dedicated to exploring and strengthening museum reputation as a key tool of leadership in the contemporary cultural sector. Led by Goranka Horjan, the President of ICOM INTERCOM, and supported by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) with a Special Grant and the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia, the training programme in Zadar brought together more than 50 participants mainly from the museum in the Middle Dalmatia region. Museums as important social infrastructure must nourish a community-centred approach in their work. It is a two-way corridor for mutual interaction taking into account current issues that should be addressed in museums. Besides providing informal education and cultural programs as a vital source for social and economic advancement, a museum's role is also to enhance well-being and individual enrichment. In a stressful environment of Anthropocene and time of great uncertainty, museums are more than ever requested to empower people and enrich communities.

The training programme was organised as a forum that offered presentations and panels with several distinguished speakers coming from the USA, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The special focus was given on discussions onsite. This enabled local museum professionals to discuss reputational issues with experts. The forum with the training program directly helps professionals who work in museums and interpretation centres to focus on the reputation of their institutions. The participants came from Zadar museums staff, leaders and curators and from the City of Zadar

* Darko Babić is an Executive Director of ICOM Croatia.



Darko Babić delivers a presentation during the workshop in Trebinje.

whose Head of Culture Department, Dina Bušić, opened the programme. The meeting venue was in the recently refurbished palace run by the Regional Museum of Zadar.

/// Alma LEKA*

MUSEUM REPUTATION TRAINING PROGRAMME AND CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The forum with training workshops was organized in the Museum of Herzegovina in Trebinje and coordinated by the director Ivana Grujić who is also the President of ICOM Bosnia and Herzegovina. The rich program consisted of presentations and panels with several distinguished speakers coming from the USA, Italy, Croatia, UK, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Egypt. Two interactive training workshops were the highlight of the meeting which brought together 45 participants coming mainly from regional museums in the vicinity including colleagues from Croatia and Montenegro.

The training addressed building reputation in museum institution within a sustainable framework which is a hot topic in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country presents a particularly complex environment for museum reputation-building due to its political structure, post-conflict memory landscape, and challenges in cultural governance. Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995), the country has been administered through multiple layers of governance divided among the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, and the Brčko District. Cultural institutions, including museums of national significance, do not fall under a single state-level cultural ministry but instead rely on fragmented and sometimes inconsistent support from entity, cantonal, or municipal authorities. This decentralized cultural governance model has had a direct impact on museums' sustainability and reputation.

Museums depend on their reputation as credible, neutral, and scholarly spaces. However, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where public memory is strongly tied to ethnic and historical narratives, museums often operate under public expectations to "tell our story." Communities may anticipate that exhibitions reflect their version of history,

* Alma Leka is ICOM Bosnia and Herzegovina Board Member.



Alma Leka delivers a presentation during the workshop in Trebinje.

sometimes resulting in pressure to privilege one narrative over another. This dynamic can challenge museums' perceived impartiality. When exhibitions appear to align with one group's identity narrative, some visitors may interpret museums as vehicles of nationalism rather than inclusive cultural institutions.

Despite these pressures, many museum professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina consciously work to build trust through transparency, dialogue, and evidence-based interpretation. Their role is not only to preserve heritage but also to provide space for multiple voices, encouraging visitors to understand history as layered, shared, and sometimes contested — rather than singular and absolute. In this sense, museums in Bosnia and Herzegovina hold a critical democratic responsibility: to remain reliable, truthful, and open to complexity, rather than instruments of daily politics.

Due to the absence of a stable state-level cultural funding system, many museums operate with minimal staffing, outdated infrastructure, and limited program funding. Museum professionals often describe the situation as an ongoing negotiation: "It feels like begging," as one curator put it, referring to the need to constantly seek grants, donations, or municipal support simply to stay open. To maintain



Participants of the workshop in Trebinje during a guided tour of the town.

operations, institutions increasingly rely on international cultural programs, embassies, and NGOs. While such support enables important projects, it can also divert energy away from core museum work toward grant writing and reporting.

Yet, within these constraints, museum staff repeatedly show creativity and commitment. They build community partnerships, develop educational programs, collaborate with schools, and curate exhibitions that engage the public meaningfully. Their efforts show that reputation is not built only through resources, but through integrity, professionalism, and continuity of mission. The meeting venue Museum of Herzegovina in Trebinje is an excellent good practice example.

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1

James HEATON

**workshop
contents:
managing
museum
reputation**

MUSEUM REPA

TH PURPOSE, TREBINJE, BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA

questions:

- Give
- What
- What
- Who is your purpose?
- What is your customer?
- What does your customer want?
- What are the results?
- What is your plan?

mer value?

essential

TRONVING

managing museum reputation

Museums are subject to the same rules as all other brands. The dramatic disparity between **SYSTEM 1** and **SYSTEM 2** is hard to overstate and museums often falsely assume **SYSTEM 2** is operating when it is not. **SYSTEM 1** dominates audience cognition at all times except when they are physically in the museum and engaged with an exhibition or program.

BRAIN SCIENCE



Source (adapted): Kahneman, D., 2011. Thinking, fast and slow. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

SYSTEM 1

95%

- Fast
- Unconscious
- Automatic
- Everyday decisions
- Error-prone

PRE & POST VISIT

- Advertising
- Website
- Social media
- Post visit comms
- Your context, such as location

SYSTEM 2

5%

- Slow
- Conscious
- Effortful
- Complex decisions
- Reliable

DURING A VISIT

- Exhibitions
- In-person events
- Seminars

ALSO...

- Research
- Planning

Peter Drucker's five essential questions apply to museums:

what is your
purpose?

who is your
core audience?

what does your
core audience value?

what are your
results?

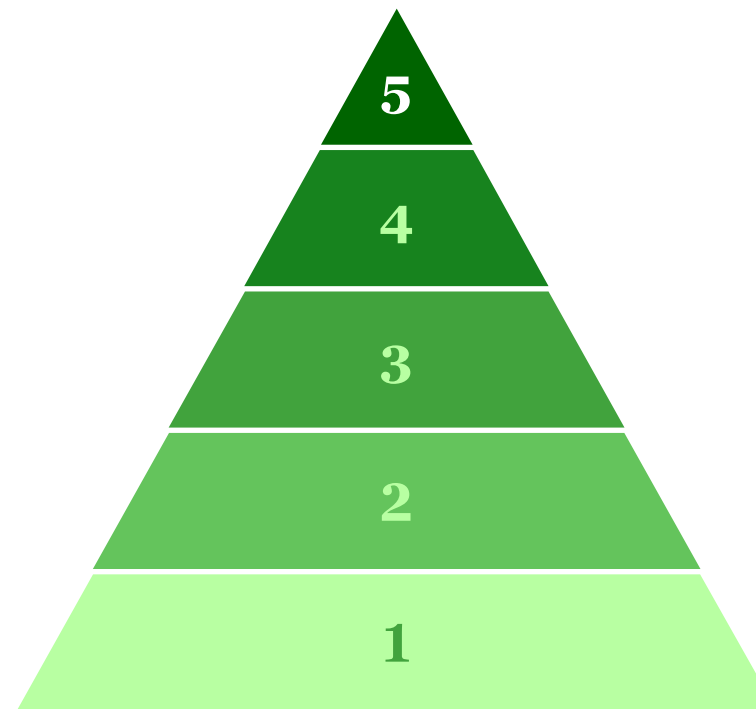
what is your **plan?**

Source (adapted): Drucker, P.F., 2008. The five most important questions you will ever ask about your organization. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

what is your purpose?

Why do you exist? How do you coordinate your resources and activities to carry out your purpose? Your brand should operate in support of your purpose. To align your brand and purpose, have a clearly defined Brand Pyramid.

TOOL: BRAND PYRAMID



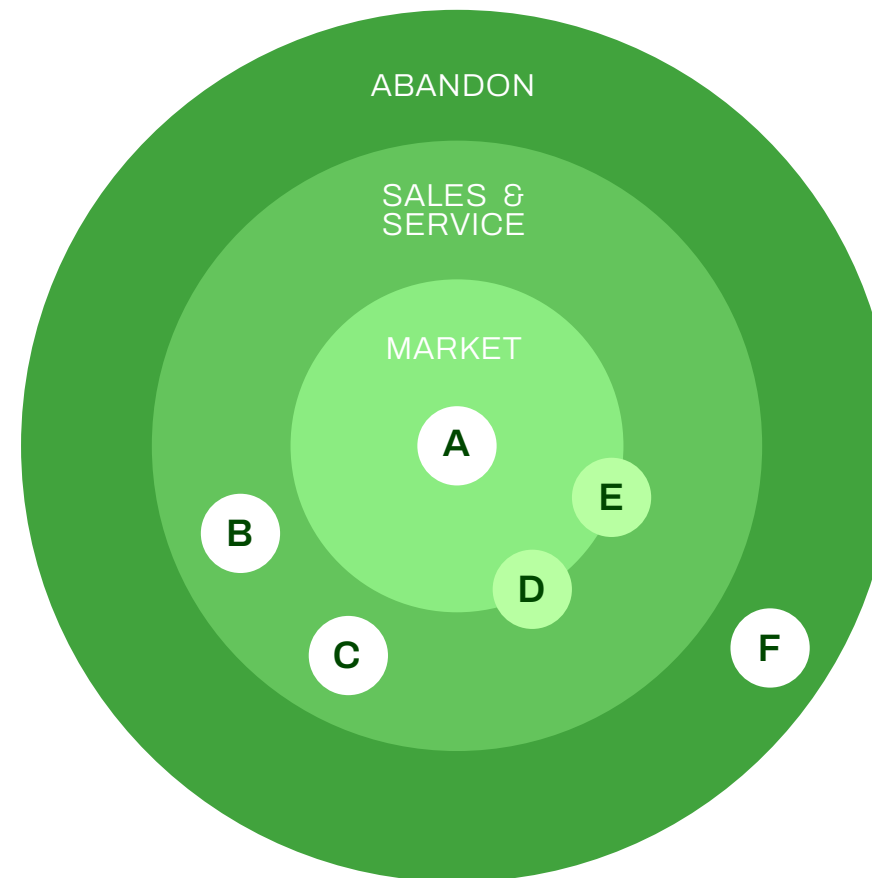
- 5.
 - 4.
 - 3.
 - 2.
 - 1.
- brand idea**
values
why
how
what

5. What is your museum's **BRAND** expressed as a single, simple, easily graspable idea? Does your Brand Idea support your purpose?
4. How does your museum's behavior and culture align with its **CORE VALUES**?
(note: if you have too many core values they are nearly impossible to align to)
3. **WHO** is the most important audiences for your museum & Why do they choose you?
2. How does your museum deliver value **DIFFERENTLY** from its competitors?
(note: competitors are everything from other museums to Netflix)
1. **WHAT** is your museum expressed in a single easily graspable sentence?

who is your **core** audience?

Organizing your operations to deeply satisfy your core audience is critical in building reputation. You can serve all who come, but you must optimize for those who you have chosen as essential to your purpose.

TOOL: MARKETING TARGETS **DIAGRAM**



market

Who you market to should not be confused with who you serve. You can serve a much broader audience that you can effectively market to. Marketing is only effective when focused. Generally, the more focused, the more effective. That said, even highly targeted marketing will sometimes speak to a broader audiences, but some audiences will require their own separate marketing efforts.

sales & service

Who are you able to serve effectively? You cannot be optimized to serve everyone. Your reputation is dependent on **DEEPLY SATISFYING** those who you have chosen to serve. Only selectivity makes this deep satisfaction possible.

abandon

Because you cannot optimize for everyone, the strategic (and harsh) choice is to abandon the effort to attract extraneous audiences.

what do they value?

It is very hard to see oneself as others do. Museums must make a concerted and sustained effort to collect and understand what thier audiences see as of value. This applies not only to the audiences you have already, but also those you wish to have.

TOOL: COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE DIAGRAM



A Competitive Advantage Diagram helps visualize an organization's strengths and weaknesses relative to its competitors.

The list of emotional and practical drivers are plotted to better understand perception of the organization's offer in the context of the competitive landscape as seen from the perspective of the audience.

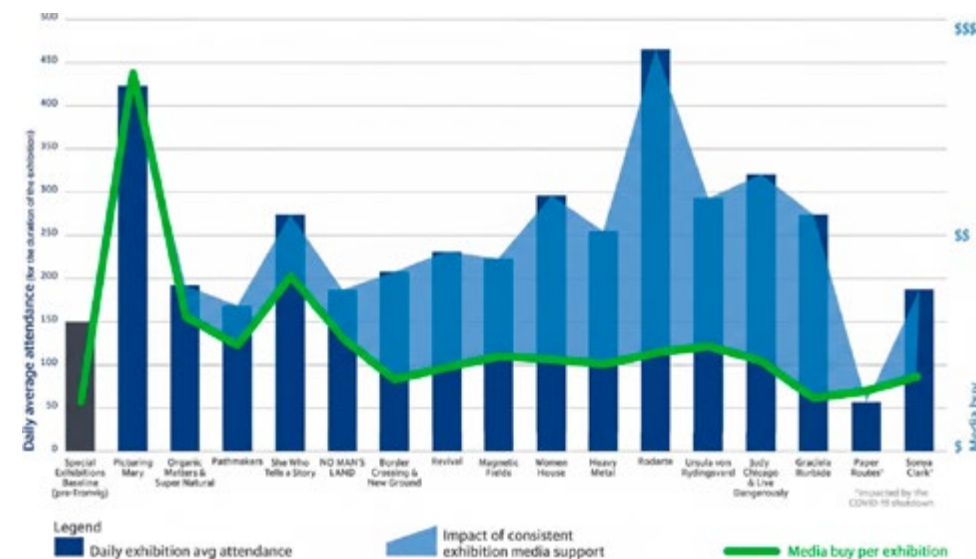
The map is built entirely from the audience's perspective, with no specialknowledge about the museum, it's aspirations, or inner workings assumed.

what are the results?

Measurement is a weakness for all nonprofit organizations. To measure is to see the results of your work and to understand the deviations from what you expected. Rigorous measurement is easier to do if the organization has a constructive and nuanced understanding of failure. All projects are both a success and a failure, but the failure part has more to teach if examined closely.

MEASUREMENT EXAMPLE: EXHIBITION CAMPAIGN ROI

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS



TOOL: SEE **FAILURE** CLEARLY

Failure should be seen as a opportunity to learn and as such praised whenever surfaced and closely examined. There are three general categories of failure: basic, complex, and intelligent. Managers should build a culture of comfort with respect to failure.

BASIC FAILURES can and should be minimized with standard procedures, adequate training and rigorous attention to detail.

COMPLEX FAILURES should be prevented where possible through vigilance and an openness to exposure before they escalate. They should also be subjected to close analysis and open discussion after they occur.

INTELLIGENT FAILURES should be actively encouraged and seen as positive learning opportunities.

what is the plan?

The plan must be strategic. This means that the first element of the plan is abandonment. Without the discipline of abandonment a plan is easily reduced to a laundry list of half measures. Abandonment clears the way for concentration on what is truly important.

TOOL: FIVE ELEMENTS OF A GOOD PLAN

1. **Abandonment**
2. **Concentration**
3. **Innovation**
4. **Risk-taking**
5. **Analysis**

This is a cycle of learning and continuous improvement that begins with what you are **NOT** going to do.

Source: Edmondson, A.C., 2023. Right kind of wrong: The science of failing well. New York: Atria Books.

TOOL: ABANDONMENT CRITERIA

It is difficult to abandon anything. Here are the things that all organizations following a plan that is genuinely strategic should learn to abandon.

the clutter

There is always a natural build up of processes, programs, and activities. These need to be periodically revisited and purged of the non essential.

the misaligned

Purpose and Core Values are highly effective guidance for the systematic reassessment of all processes, programs and activities. The museum must fix, abandon, or not initiate what is out of sync.

the good but ineffective

Hard to see without rigorous measurement, but being demonstrably “good” is not enough. All processes, programs, and activities should also be required to prove effectiveness.

the good but not great

This is the hardest category to abandon, but is essential to examine what is performing as expected because these things are consuming resources that could be applied to the truly extraordinary.

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2

Cecilia MARTIN ABAD

workbook
—
**training
toolkit**

New times,
new ways to connect
with culture



branding with purpose

A PRACTICAL WORKBOOK TO HELP YOU DEFINE YOUR
MUSEUM BRAND'S PURPOSE TO PROPEL YOUR REPUTATION

Name

Museum

objective

Define the purpose, identity, values, and narrative of your museum brand, ensuring coherence, appeal, and a compelling story, while preparing to present it confidently to potential funders, collaborators, or institutional partners.

STEP 1 • WHAT WE DO AND WHY WE DO IT

museum goals

What does your museum want to achieve?

What cultural or social change does your museum aim to create?

if we achieve these goals, we imagine...

Describe the future you envision for your museum success if it fulfills its goals. What will your museum be known for? What experiences, emotions, and relationships will people associate with it? Designing a future-oriented museum requires imagination – the more vivid your vision, the better.



how will my museum's brand help me?

How your museum's brand can drive the ambitions you're aiming for. How can it inspire action, build trust, and deepen connection with audiences and partners?




purpose (stand for)

The purpose of a museum brand defines its deepest reason for being: the why behind what it does and how it contributes to something bigger — the impact you want to create in the world.

Use this formula for inspiration:

- We exist to... [main intention – what you want to contribute]
- Through... [how you do it – your approach or unique way]
- So that... [the change or impact you want to create in people's lives]

Inspired by “Find your why” Simon Sinek



core idea

Summarise your museum brand and essence in one sentence.

inspiration

LESSONS FROM INSPIRING CULTURAL BRANDS

V&A

CELEBRATING DESIGN AND CREATIVITY

We champion design and creativity in all its forms, promoting cultural knowledge and inspiring creators and innovators around the world.

KEY INSPIRATION

Educational purpose and focus on creativity as a cultural value.

TATE

CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS

We foster a deeper and more critical relationship with art through “look again, think again”.

KEY INSPIRATION

Critical thinking and cultural provocation.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM FOR THE PLANET

We create advocates for the planet. For a planet where people and nature thrive.

KEY INSPIRATION

Transformative action and environmental purpose.

LESSONS FROM INSPIRING COMMERCIAL BRANDS

LEGO

INSPIRING THE BUILDERS OF TOMORROW

We inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow.

KEY INSPIRATION

Creative learning and future potential.

PATAGONIA

RADICAL PURPOSE

We are in business to save our home, planet Earth.

KEY INSPIRATION

Activism and transformative purpose.

NIKE

INSPIRE AND MOVE EVERYONE

To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world. (If you have a body, you are an athlete)

KEY INSPIRATION

Inclusion, empowerment, and energy.

ICONIC SLOGAN

Just do it — an invitation to action, self-confidence, and achievement.

STEP 2 • HOW TO DO IT AND WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT

how to do it and what makes it different

Values define your museum *modus operandi*; they are the guiding principles that ensure the museum's purpose translates into behavior and aligns with its beliefs. Choose a word and give it meaning. The words can be the same – courage, boldness, collaboration, etc. – but you can give it a distinctive meaning.

Value

Meaning

positioning

Think about the place you want your museum to occupy in people's minds and the type of connection you want to create based on the value your museum provides and its purpose. Consider the perception you want your museum to be recognized for – what you want people to say about it when you're not there.

what your museum does?

This is about clearly defining what your museum does – the actions, programs, and experiences that bring your purpose and values to life.

STEP 3 • HOW DO I COMMUNICATE IT?

tone of voice

Is your way your museum speaks adventurous, energetic, calm, exciting, humble, meticulous, inquisitive, empathetic, exuberant, friendly, precise, optimistic, fun, confident, kind, trustworthy, sensitive, emotional, impartial, persistent...?



key words

Star concepts – the words that best define your museum ideas, your museum's "mood words"



narrative

Tell the story that gives meaning to your museum. What need did you identify? What story or vision inspires it? What transformation does it bring about? (max 6 lines)



visual identity

Describe any elements you've identified to define the image you want to project. You can include: color palettes, types of images, the "look and feel" of your aesthetic, typography. What concepts or feelings do they convey?



STEP 4 • WHO IS IT FOR?

target audiences

Think about who your main audiences are. From your key audiences, develop two of them – the priority groups – and explore them in depth.

CHARACTERISTICS

Name

Profession

LABEL

Create a catchy label that combines their name and key function or characteristic, e.g., the insatiable researcher.

NEEDS/MOTIVATIONS

Define their dreams, interests, ambitions, and needs.

KEY MESSAGES

What do you want to convey to them, and how can you connect?

QUOTES

What do they say.

CHARACTERISTICS

Name

Profession

LABEL

Create a catchy label that combines their name and key function or characteristic, e.g., the insatiable researcher.

NEEDS/MOTIVATIONS

Define their dreams, interests, ambitions, and needs.

KEY MESSAGES

What do you want to convey to them, and how can you connect?

QUOTES

What do they say.

congratulations

You've completed this worksheet, which serves as your roadmap. A guide to help define your museum's identity and communication based on its purpose, values, and narrative. This document shows who you are, why you exist, how you are unique, and how you communicate. Review your proposal to ensure that your values, narrative, tone, and visual identity are aligned and clearly reflect the museum's purpose. Coherent, engaging, and relevant communication will help you build a strong reputation and meaningful museum brand.

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3

Jadran ANTLOVIĆ
& Stella ANTOLOVIĆ

survey results

executive summary

The regional analysis portrays museums as socially committed institutions balancing their educational mission with the demands of modern cultural engagement. Across Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and neighbouring countries, museums continue to uphold public trust and emphasize cultural preservation — yet they do so within expert-led and administratively structured frameworks. Community involvement is present, particularly through schools and formal partnerships. However, little change is documented and links with local stakeholders remains concentrated in familiar formats. Minority groups, vulnerable audiences, and foreign professionals are still underrepresented, indicating room for improvement, in particular by fostering inclusion and co-creation practices.

Tourism brings visibility and revenue, but without systematic visitor management, it also increases pressure on infrastructure, staff, and community relations. Still, museums across the region consistently prioritize accessibility and public service, showing a strong civic ethos even under financial constraints. Most institutions recognize communication, adaptability, and openness as future-facing competencies. However, structured professional development and strategic planning remain underdeveloped. Reputation and brand are widely valued but managed more intuitively than systematically. Mission statements are often complex and inconsistently recalled, with only a minority of museums maintaining clear and coordinated communication strategies.

RESEARCH PREPARED BY

Jadran Antolović
Goranka Horjan
James Heaton

DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

Jadran Antolović
Stella Antolović

EDITED BY

Jadran Antolović
Goranka Horjan

ZAGREB, OCTOBER 2025.



Jadran Antolović participates in the discussion at the project meeting in Venice.

To strengthen their long-term relevance, museums would benefit from creating impactful purpose driven mission statements, embedding storytelling and audience feedback into routine operations, and building stronger internal communication systems.

In parallel, greater participation in European networks such as UNESCO, ICOM, and regional partnerships—as well as sustained investment in staff development—could enhance credibility, innovation, and resilience. This would help position regional museums as open, collaborative, and future-ready cultural institutions.

project research

In recent years, museums across our region have been operating amid profound social, economic, and tourism-related changes. To understand what “museum reputation” means in practice today—for communities, visitors, and professionals—we conducted research within the project Museum Reputation as a Leadership Tool, in two phases: first during international museum forums with workshops in Zadar and Trebinje, and then through a supplementary online survey addressed to museum professionals in Albania, Montenegro, Italy, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria. The publication before you brings together the complete results of this process.

The research framework is built around seven interrelated thematic areas:

1 ASSESSING MUSEUM REPUTATION AND TRUST

Understanding how museums build trust with local communities, their transparency, and public involvement in decision-making.

2 EVALUATING COMMUNITY- CENTRED APPROACHES

Exploring the extent of community engagement, inclusion of minorities, and well-being programs.

3 ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF OVERTOURISM

Identifying challenges and strategies linked with mass tourism and its effects on museum operations and communities.

4 UNDERSTANDING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Gaining insights into the integration of foreign or migrant workers and the support systems in place.

5 IDENTIFYING TRAINING NEEDS AND FUTURE READINESS

Gathering information on staff training, communication strategies, and preparedness for social or environmental uncertainties.

6 EXPLORING THE ROLE OF REPUTATION IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

Gauging how museums perceive and manage their public image as a strategic asset.

7 BRANDING AS MISSION-DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT

Examining how museums align their brand and communication with internal values and societal missions.

These areas form the methodological “backbone” of the study and structure the chapters of the publication, from descriptive findings to practical recommendations for museum management and cultural policy.

The training programme was carried out in Zadar (June 2025) and Trebinje (September 2025), where participants completed questionnaires and engaged in joint discussions on case studies, dilemmas, and potential solutions. In doing so, combined quantitative insights with qualita-

tive reflections were drawn from professional experience. The subsequent online survey broadened the geographical reach and enabled comparisons across different contexts of museum practice.

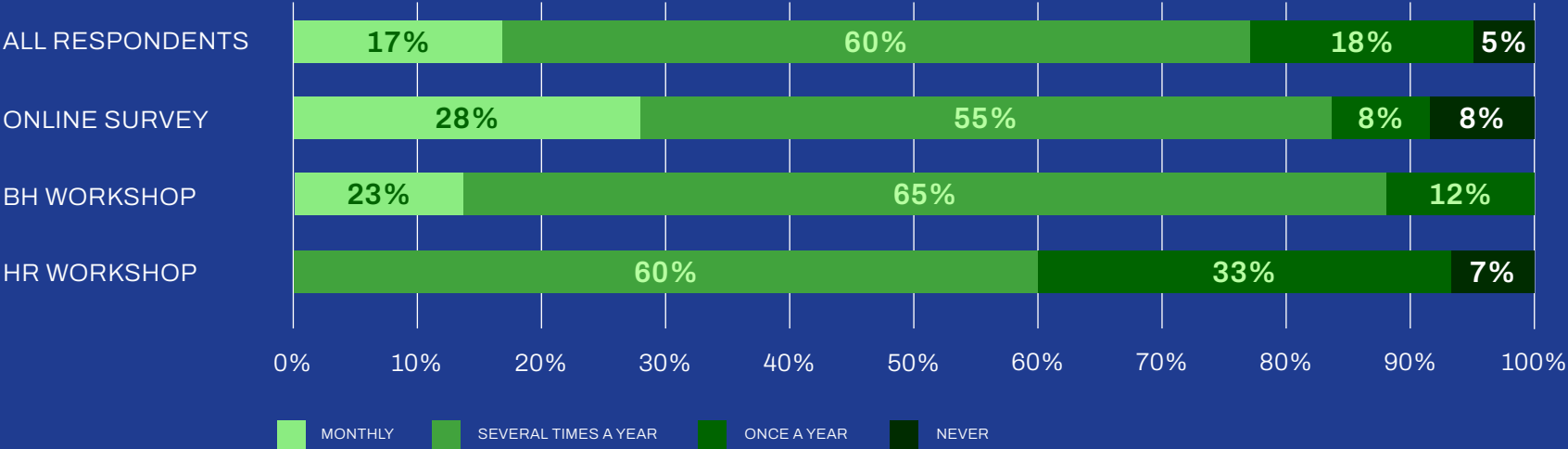
The publication provides: an overview of the methodology and research instrument; an analysis of results by theme (with emphasis on patterns of trust, models of community collaboration, the impacts of tourism, the state of workforce diversity, and areas for further training); and a set of recommendations—from quick, operational actions to strategic guidelines for managing museum reputation and branding. Special attention is given to transferable solutions that museums can apply regardless of size or founding authority, as well as to mechanisms for tracking progress through measurable goals.

The research was prepared by Jadran Antolović, Goranka Horjan, and James Heaton, with data processing and analysis by Jadran Antolović and Stella Antolović. All workshop and online survey participants are acknowledged for their time, trust, and openness—without their contribution, this publication would lack its most important element: the voice of the museum community. Special thanks for their contribution to the research scope and the discussion of results at the project’s Wrap-Up meeting in Venice go to Alenka Černelić Krošelj, President of the Regional Alliance ICOM South East Europe (ICOM SEE); Cristina Vannini, Secretary of INTERCOM (International committee for Museum Management); Mattia Agnetti and Pietroluigi Genovesi of the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia; Adriano Rigoli, President of ICLCM (International Committee for Literary and Composers Museums); and to Matija Dronjić, ICOM Croatia for the graphic design.

These findings will serve as an incentive for reflection, dialogue, and concrete change—so that museums, as trustworthy custodians of heritage and active actors within their communities, can build their reputations transparently, inclusively, and responsibly.



1 HOW FREQUENTLY DOES YOUR MUSEUM INCLUDE LOCAL VOICES IN SHAPING EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMMING?



KEY SIGNAL

Only 17% of all the respondents include local voices monthly, the ideal level for sustained collaboration. Most (60%) engage them several times a year, indicating that participation is still occasional and project-driven. Museums in Bosnia and Herzegovina (23%) and online respondents (28%) show some regular involvement, while Croatian museums (HR workshop) stand out for having no monthly engagement, relying instead on annual or event-based inclusion.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

Against the benchmark of monthly collaboration, most museums in the region lag behind. While awareness of community participation is present, practices remain irregular and dependent on specific projects or exhibitions. Croatian institutions, although operating within relatively developed infrastructures, tend to approach community involvement through periodic consultation, while some BiH and online participants show emerging practices of more regular engagement. This points to a regional need to institutionalize participatory processes rather than rely on ad-hoc initiatives.

practical recommendations

PROMOTE MONTHLY ENGAGEMENT AS A GOAL

Museums could consider introducing internal objectives that encourage regular, ideally monthly, consultation with local communities through both formal and informal channels.

EXPLORE SIMPLE PARTICIPATION TOOLS

Short online surveys, comment boxes, or digital polls could serve as accessible ways to maintain an ongoing dialogue with visitors and community members.

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

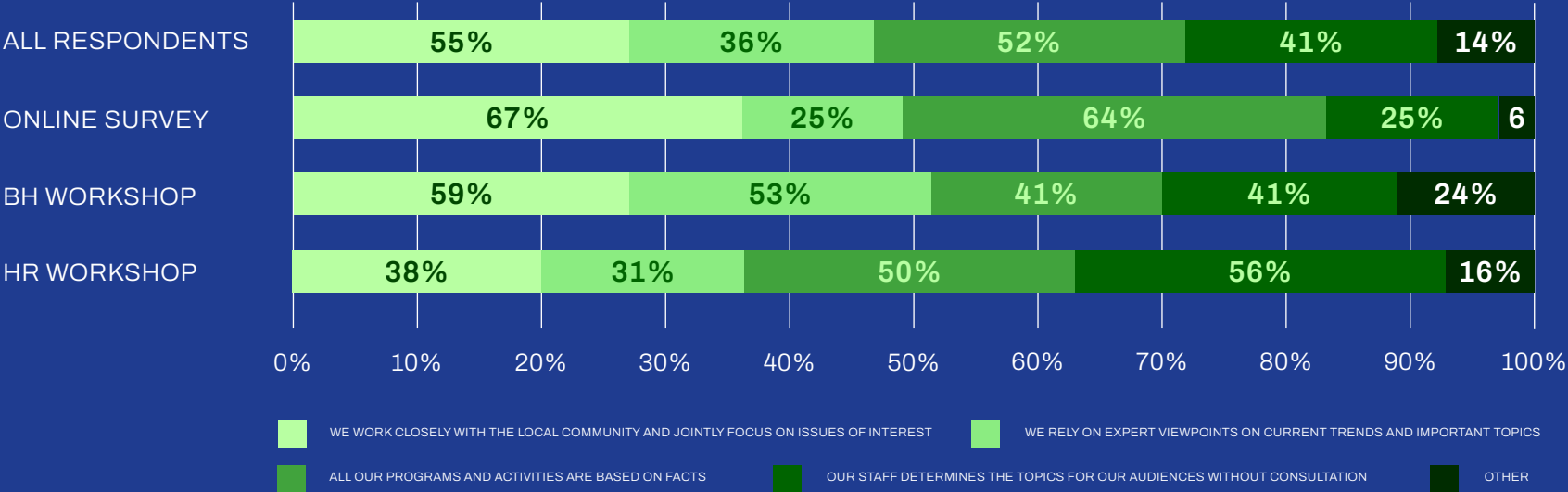
Integrating local input into regular planning processes may help ensure that programming remains relevant and reflective of community perspectives.

FOSTER REGIONAL EXCHANGE

Facilitating knowledge sharing between regional institutions could support the gradual adoption of more sustainable participatory practices across the region.

2

WHAT STEPS HAS YOUR MUSEUM TAKEN TO BUILD OR MAINTAIN PUBLIC TRUST? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the most common trust-building measures include working closely with the local community (55%), relying on facts (52%), and consulting expert viewpoints (36%). Online participants show the highest level of collaboration with local communities (67%) and a strong reliance on fact-based programming (64%), reflecting an open and dialogic approach to trust-building. In contrast, Croatian museums more often select topics internally (56%), with less frequent collaboration (38%), indicating a more centralized and expert-driven model. BiH museums occupy a middle ground, balancing community cooperation (59%) and expert involvement (53%).

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

The results highlight a continuing tension between expert authority and participatory co-creation. While scientific accuracy and professional standards remain key trust foundations, the process of defining museum topics is still largely internally controlled, especially in Croatian institutions. BiH museums show ongoing efforts to balance expert insight with community participation, while online respondents lean more strongly toward open, dialogue-based approaches. Across the region, museums appear to be transitioning from an expert-driven model toward more inclusive practices, yet the shift remains gradual and uneven.

practical recommendations

ENCOURAGE A BALANCE BETWEEN EXPERTISE AND PARTICIPATION

Museums could consider combining expert-led content with structured opportunities for public input, such as advisory groups or thematic workshops.

PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY IN TOPIC SELECTION

Sharing how themes are chosen—even when decisions remain internal—may strengthen visitors’ trust and sense of inclusion.

INTEGRATE PARTICIPATORY REVIEWS INTO PLANNING

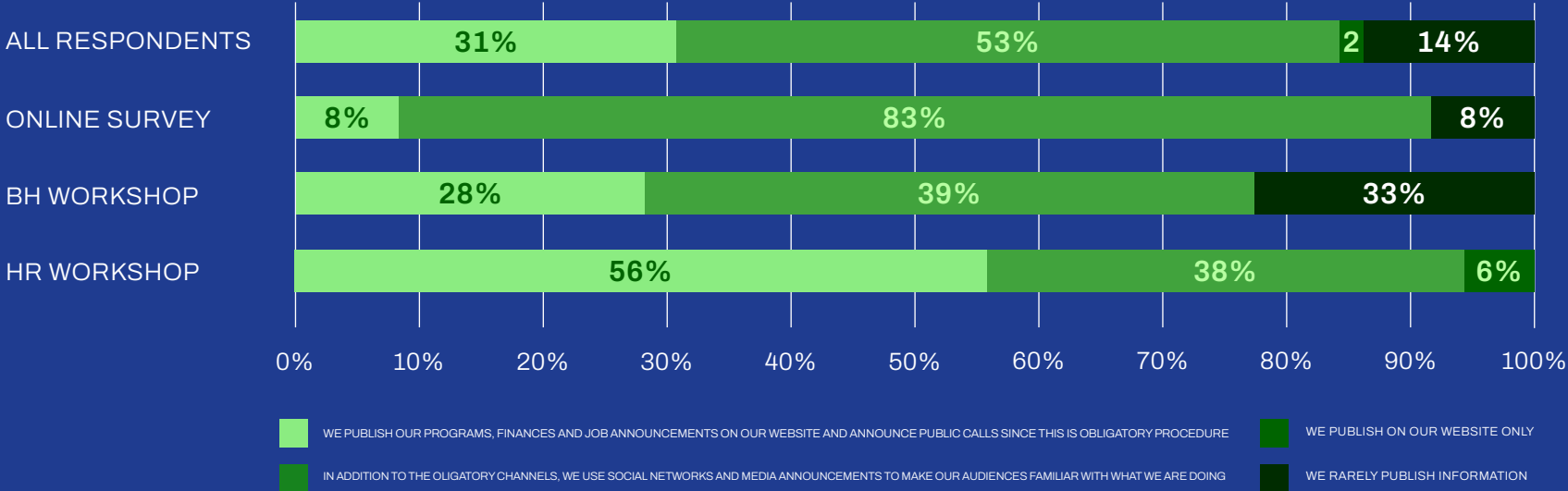
Organizing joint workshops or post-program discussions with the community before final decisions are made might help build shared ownership.

FOSTER REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Peer collaboration among regional museums could help spread participatory methods while maintaining scientific credibility.the region.

3

HOW TRANSPARENT IS YOUR MUSEUM ABOUT ITS DECISION-MAKING, FUNDING, OR STAFFING PRACTICES?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, 53% use additional communication channels beyond obligatory ones, while 31% share only required information. Online participants show the highest level of proactive transparency (83%), actively communicating decisions and updates across multiple channels. Croatian museums, operating within the EU framework, show a more procedural approach, with 56% publishing obligatory information and 38% extending communication beyond basic requirements — a pattern likely shaped by EU-mandated transparency standards. BiH museums fall between these two models, with 39% adopting proactive communication and 33% rarely publishing information, reflecting inconsistent transparency practices.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

Transparency across the region generally aligns with legal and procedural obligations, but proactive storytelling remains limited. In Croatia, where museums operate under EU regulations that define and enforce transparency standards, legal compliance is high — yet communication often remains formal and procedural. BiH museums show a greater variation, with some moving beyond obligatory reporting while others communicate infrequently. Online respondents show a more audience-oriented communication culture, suggesting that digital engagement supports more open and proactive transparency practices.

practical recommendations

PROMOTE PROACTIVE COMMUNICATION

Museums could consider using blogs, social media, or pop-up displays to explain decisions and financial management in a clear, relatable way.

DIVERSIFY COMMUNICATION FORMATS

Combining formal reports with accessible channels — such as newsletters or short videos — may help audiences better understand institutional processes.

SHIFT FROM COMPLIANCE TO ENGAGEMENT

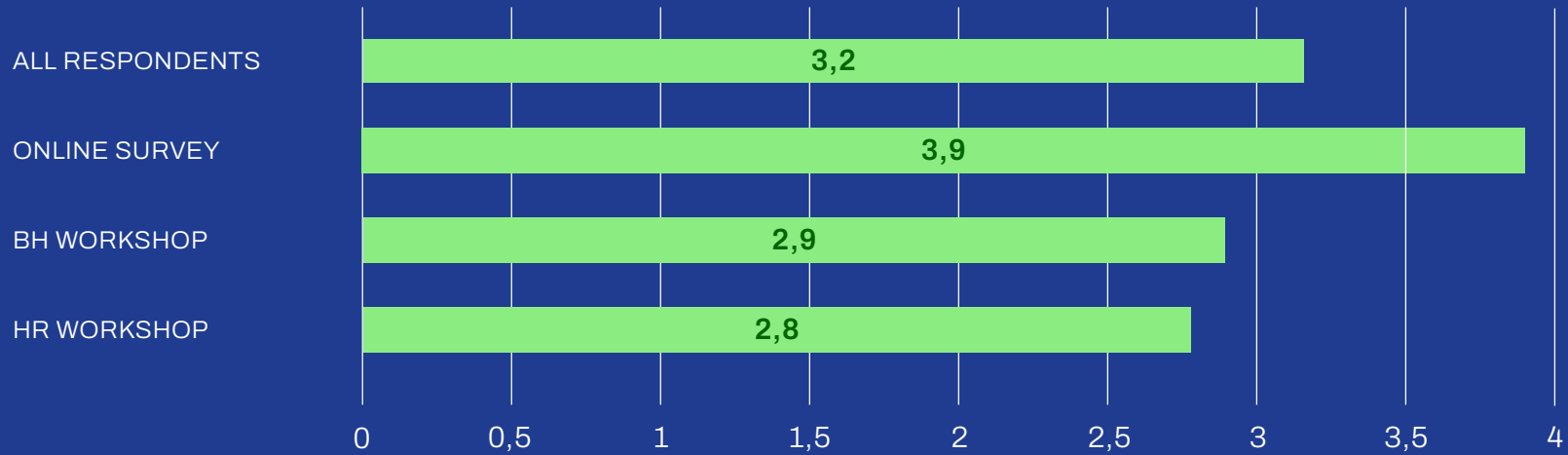
Presenting the reasoning and values behind decisions could enhance trust and make transparency a part of the museum's public identity.

ENCOURAGE REGIONAL EXCHANGE OF PRACTICES

Sharing approaches between more digitally active institutions and those relying on traditional channels could help raise transparency standards across the region.

4

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT: “OUR TRUST IN THE COMMUNITY IS BASED ON OPENNESS AND SHARED DECISION-MAKING.”



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the average level of agreement is 3.2, suggesting a moderate belief that trust is built on openness and shared decision-making. The strongest difference appears between online respondents (3.9) and Croatian museums (2.8). Online participants show a high level of confidence in participatory trust, while Croatian museums express a more neutral–positive stance, indicating that openness is valued but not yet systematically practiced. BiH museums (2.9) show a similar position, leaning slightly positive but still reflecting a partial rather than fully realized participatory culture.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

The findings indicate that participatory trust is acknowledged but not fully integrated into institutional culture. Croatian and BiH museums generally accept the importance of openness but do not yet perceive it as a defining element of their operations. This moderate stance reflects ongoing but incomplete integration of participatory practices, where shared decision-making is more aspirational than systematic. Online respondents, on the other hand, show that greater digital connectivity and openness to collaboration may strengthen trust in community relationships.

practical recommendations

SET MEASURABLE PARTICIPATORY GOALS

Defining clear objectives for community inclusion in decision-making could help institutions track progress and identify concrete improvements.

USE SURVEYS TO MONITOR CHANGE

Repeating this type of assessment after implementing participatory initiatives could provide valuable indicators of progress — for example, a score above 3.5 may signal meaningful advancement.

ENCOURAGE PEER EXCHANGE

Institutions with stronger participatory practices could share methodologies and lessons learned with peers, supporting gradual regional alignment.

INTEGRATE PARTICIPATION INTO EVALUATION PROCESSES

Embedding openness and shared decision-making as a part of internal reviews and planning cycles may help translate values into consistent practice.

section 1 summary

museum reputation and trust

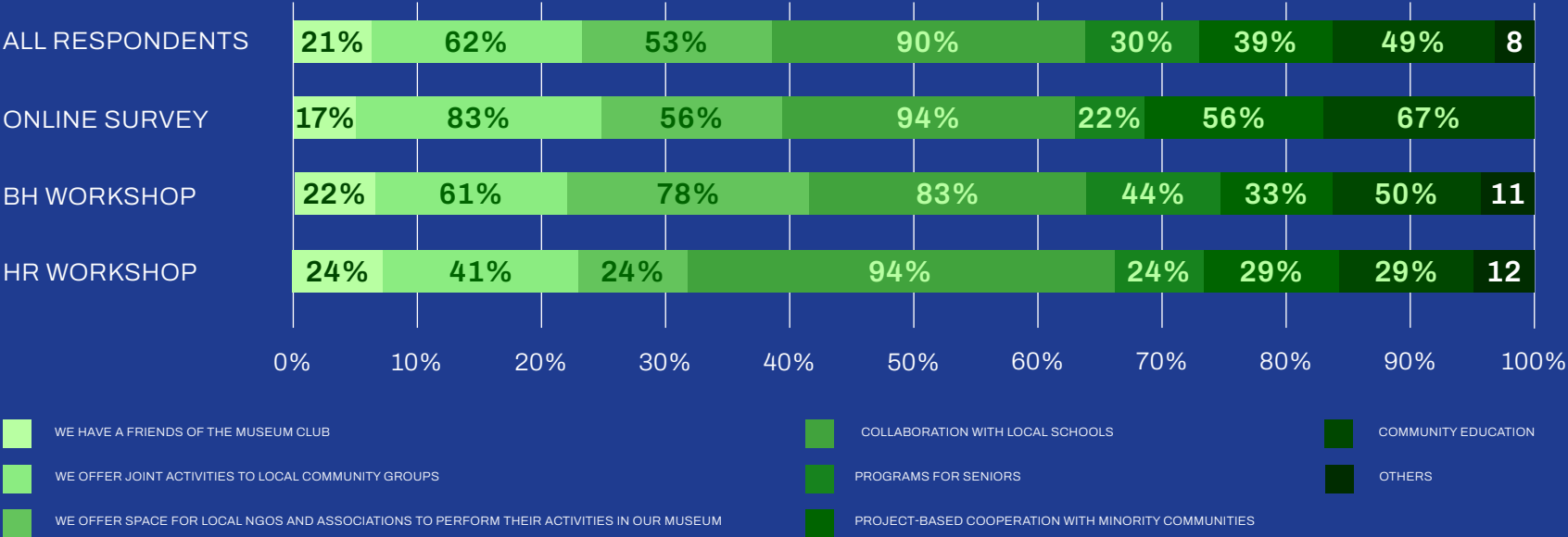
The first section explores how museums across the region perceive and build trust through openness, transparency, and collaboration. Respondents included professionals from the HR workshop in Zadar (primarily Croatian museums), the BiH workshop in Trebinje (museums from Bosnia and Herzegovina), and the online survey included regional professionals (participants from Albania, Montenegro, Italy, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria).

Overall, museums show a shared awareness of the importance of credibility, transparency, and engagement, but their approaches vary. Institutions in EU member states tend to show a strong compliance with formal transparency standards, while others show a greater flexibility and openness in using diverse communication channels and participatory practices. Most institutions still rely primarily on expert-driven and project-based decision-making, indicating that participatory culture is present but not yet systematic.

To strengthen trust and reputation, museums could further develop regular mechanisms for community input, communicate decision-making processes more openly, and frame transparency as a part of storytelling rather than administration. Encouraging regional exchange of good practices may also support a more consistent culture of openness and collaboration across the sector.

5

HOW DOES YOUR MUSEUM CURRENTLY ENGAGE WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES BEYOND MUSEUM VISITS? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, collaboration with local schools (90%) is the most common and stable form of community engagement, serving as a shared foundation across the region. Beyond this, Croatian museums most often cooperate with local community groups (41%), while BiH museums emphasize partnerships with NGOs and associations (78%) that use museum spaces for their activities. Online respondents display the widest range of engagement, combining school partnerships (94%) with NGO cooperation (56%), community education (67%), and initiatives involving minority and senior groups. The least represented forms of engagement across all groups include Friends of the Museum Clubs (21%) and project-based work with minority communities (30%), highlighting untapped potential for broader inclusion.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

Educational collaboration remains the primary link between museums and local communities, offering a reliable but often limited channel for connection. In Croatia, this dependence on the school network reflects a structured yet traditional approach, where engagement beyond formal education remains occasional. In BiH, cooperation with NGOs and associations marks a step toward a more socially responsive model, although inclusion of minority and senior groups is still developing. Online respondents show a greater diversity and adaptability, suggesting that less formal institutional frameworks may allow for more dynamic and inclusive community interaction. Overall, museums across the region appear to be transitioning from education-centred outreach toward broader participatory practices, but the process is still uneven.

practical recommendations

EXPAND THE USE OF MUSEUM SPACES

Museums could consider systematically opening their halls or facilities to neighbourhood associations, local initiatives, or informal groups, fostering a stronger sense of shared ownership.

SUPPORT COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES

Introducing micro-grants or small project funds for collaborations outside the school system could encourage creativity and new partnerships.

DEVELOP INCLUSIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD PROGRAMS

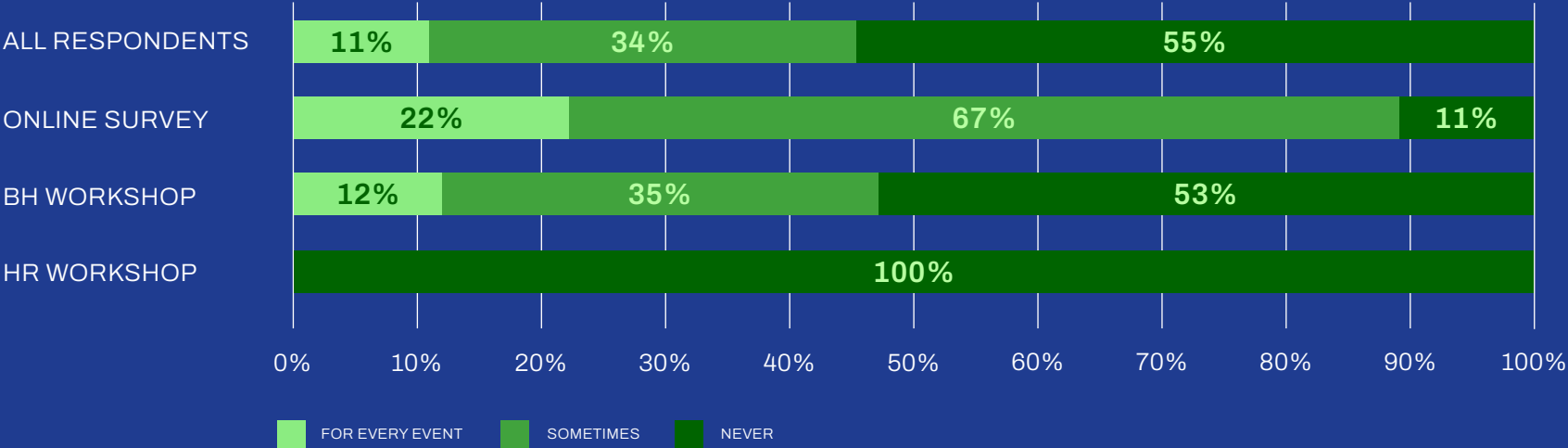
Creating initiatives such as a “Museum in the Neighbourhood” or targeted activities for senior and minority groups may enhance accessibility and social visibility.

ENCOURAGE REGIONAL PEER LEARNING

Exchanging practices among Croatian, BiH, and online participants could help identify scalable models for expanding engagement beyond educational frameworks.

6

HOW OFTEN DO YOU ENCOURAGE FOREIGN WORKERS AND MINORITIES TO JOIN MUSEUM ACTIVITIES?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the inclusion of foreign workers and minority communities in museum activities remains very limited. Only 11% of museums encourage participation for every event, while 34% do so occasionally and 55% never. Differences between groups are notable: Croatian museums reported no inclusion (100% never), while BiH museums show a modest but higher engagement (12% for every event, 35% sometimes). Online respondents stand out for stronger inclusion efforts (22% for every event, 67% sometimes), reflecting broader international exposure and networks.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

The findings indicate that inclusion of minorities and migrant communities is one of the least developed aspects of museum practice across the region. In Croatia, this could be partly due to the absence of significant ethnic diversity—multicultural interaction has not been a strong societal feature until very recently. As a result, museums have had limited structural or social impetus to address intercultural engagement, and the concept of the “local community” has remained closely linked with the majority population. In BiH, the context is different: the country’s multiethnic composition (Croats, Serbs, and Bosnians) and the workshop’s location in Trebinje, a city at the crossroads of these identities, strongly influenced responses. Here, inclusion is often understood as interethnic coexistence, rather than engagement with migrant or foreign groups. Online respondents, more linked with international frameworks, show a greater awareness of diversity and inclusion principles, pointing to the influence of global museum networks and digital exchange. Overall, while museums recognize inclusion as a value, systematic strategies and dedicated programs remain rare.

practical recommendations

MAP AND CONNECT WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Museums could create a directory of minority and migrant associations to identify potential partners for collaboration.

INTRODUCE BILINGUAL AND INCLUSIVE OUTREACH

Publishing bilingual calls for participation or volunteer ambassador programs can help attract underrepresented audiences.

DEVELOP ANNUAL INCLUSIVE INITIATIVES

Co-creating one exhibition or educational program per year with minority or migrant communities could build lasting trust and visibility.

ADAPT INCLUSION STRATEGIES TO LOCAL REALITIES

In BiH, focus on interethnic dialogue; in Croatia and other less diverse settings, inclusion efforts could evolve alongside new demographic changes and growing migrant presence.

7

WHAT INITIATIVES DOES YOUR MUSEUM IMPLEMENT TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL OR COMMUNITY WELL-BEING? RANK THE INITIATIVES YOUR MUSEUM IMPLEMENTS THE MOST.

HR WORKSHOP	BH WORKSHOP	ONLINE SURVEY
1 PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY	1 PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY	1 PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY
2 EDUCATION	2 EDUCATION	2 EDUCATION
3 CREATIVE DEVELOPEMENT	3 CREATIVE DEVELOPEMENT	3 INCLUSION OF VUNERABLE GROUPS
4 INCLUSION OF VUNERABLE GROUPS	4 VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT	4 CREATIVE DEVELOPEMENT
5 SOCIAL DIALOGUE	5 SOCIAL DIALOGUE	5 VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT
6 VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT	6 INCLUSION OF VUNERABLE GROUPS	6 SOCIAL DIALOGUE
7 MENTAL HEALTH	7 MENTAL HEALTH	7 MENTAL HEALTH

KEY SIGNAL

All groups rank preservation of cultural identity and education as their top two well-being initiatives, affirming museums' traditional public role. Creative development consistently places third, showing a growing attention to engagement through cultural production. Inclusion of vulnerable groups ranks fourth in the online survey but only sixth in the BiH workshop, suggesting a disparity in perceived priority or program capacity. Social dialogue and volunteer engagement alternate between fifth and sixth positions, reflecting recognition without strategic anchoring. Mental health ranks last across all groups, underscoring that emotional well-being is acknowledged but not institutionally supported.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

While museums consistently emphasize heritage and education, the uniform bottom ranking of mental health reveals a strategic blind spot. This suggests that despite rising public discourse around well-being, museums are not yet positioning themselves as emotionally supportive or resilience-building spaces. The online group's relatively higher placement of inclusion of vulnerable groups may reflect broader institutional exposure or stronger rights-based frameworks outside the workshop countries. Meanwhile, the similar rankings of social dialogue in both HR and BiH groups points to a shared awareness of its value—but also the absence of systematic implementation. Ultimately, this ranking format reveals a conservative orientation: museums remain rooted in conventional roles while emerging priorities—mental health, inclusion, civic dialogue— still struggle to break into the top tier of strategic focus.

practical recommendations

INTEGRATE A “SOCIAL PACKAGE” INTO ANNUAL PLANNING

Museums could expand their programming to include mental health and emotional resilience workshops, a “Museum & Volunteers” program, and exhibitions connecting heritage with current social themes.

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND INCLUSION

Introducing thematic events or participatory discussions could help museums position themselves as spaces for exchange, empathy, and understanding.

COMPLEMENT TRADITION WITH SOCIAL INNOVATION

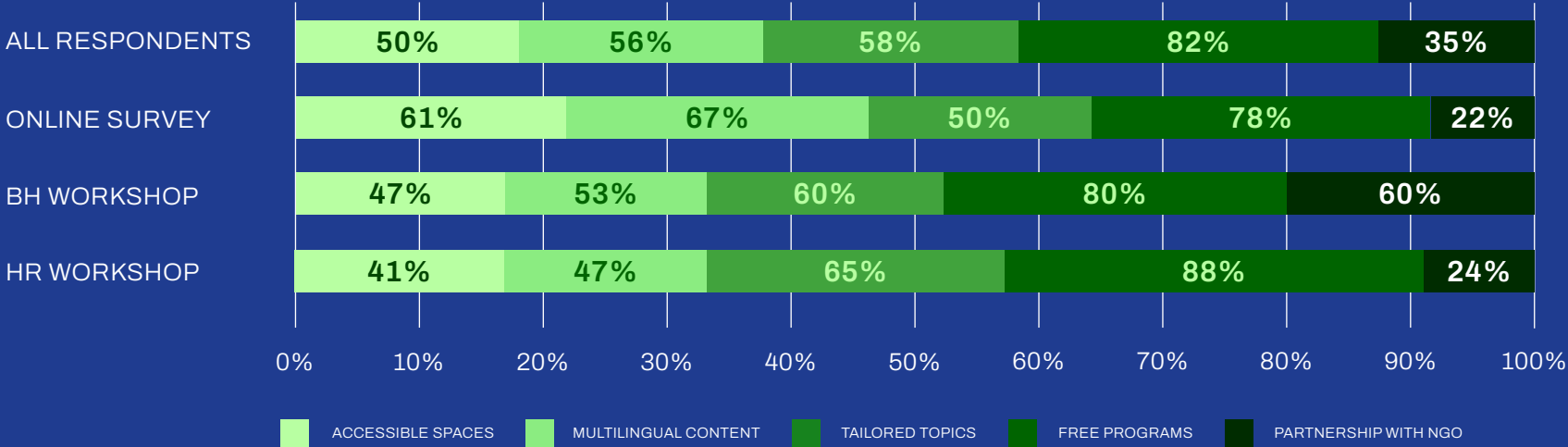
Maintaining a focus on cultural identity and education while incorporating well-being and social inclusion initiatives would increase both cultural and civic impact.

ENCOURAGE LONG-TERM VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

Structured volunteer programs can help build community ownership and strengthen ties between institutions and their audiences.

8

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING METHODS DOES YOUR MUSEUM USE IN WORKING WITH VULNERABLE GROUPS? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the most common inclusion method is offering free programs (82%), confirming that museums primarily address accessibility through financial measures. Tailored topics (58%), multilingual content (56%), and accessible spaces (50%) follow, while partnerships with NGOs (35%) remain less frequent overall. In Croatia, inclusion relies mainly on free programs (88%) and adapted topics (65%), while physical accessibility (41%), multilingual content (47%), and NGO partnerships (24%) lag significantly behind. In BiH, inclusion efforts appear more balanced, with free programs (80%), adapted topics (60%), and NGO partnerships (60%), suggesting a more diverse approach to accessibility. Online respondents emphasize multilingualism (67%) and accessible spaces (61%), reflecting closer alignment with international accessibility standards.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

The results confirm that financial accessibility remains the most developed form of inclusion, while spatial, linguistic, and collaborative aspects are still emerging. When compared with Question 5, a clear distinction emerges between community engagement and inclusion practices. Museums show a stronger and more institutionalized connection with local communities, primarily through partnerships with schools and formal organizations, while work with vulnerable groups remains less structured and less frequent. Community collaboration tends to rely on established, education-based networks, whereas inclusion efforts depend on individual initiatives or project funding, lacking long-term continuity. This indicates that while museums are rooted in their communities, their understanding of “community” often excludes vulnerable populations, and accessibility is still defined more as affordability than as participation. Overall, museums across the region are progressively expanding their social role, yet the shift from serving communities to actively including underrepresented voices is still at an early stage.

practical recommendations

BROADEN THE APPROACH TO ACCESSIBILITY

Museums could consider complementing free programs with additional measures such as universal design features, multilingual communication, and collaborative activities that involve vulnerable communities more directly.

ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSION STANDARDS

Introducing a shared set of accessibility principles—covering free entry for vulnerable groups, bilingual signage, and physical accessibility—may help ensure a more consistent and balanced approach across institutions.

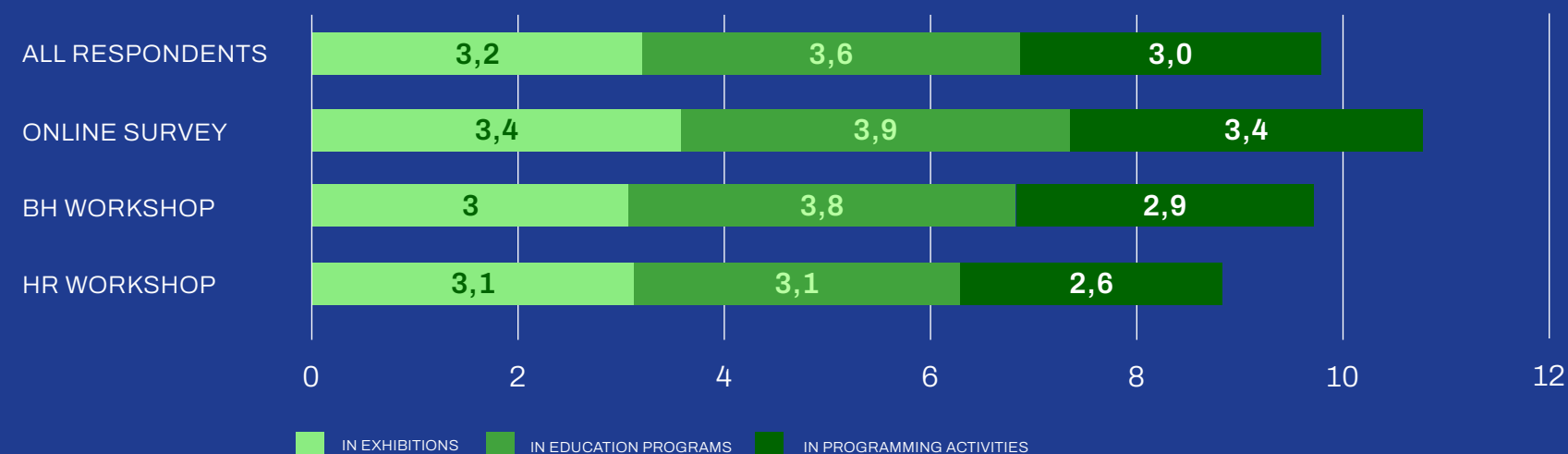
FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS WITH NGOS

Closer and more sustained cooperation with organizations working with people with disabilities, minorities, or socially excluded groups could enhance both program quality and long-term social impact.

EMBED INCLUSION WITHIN EXISTING COMMUNITY WORK

Revisiting the definition of “community” to consciously include vulnerable and marginalized groups can help museums strengthen their social role and ensure these audiences are a part of regular, not separate, engagement efforts.

9 TO WHAT EXTENT DOES YOUR MUSEUM CO-CREATE CONTENT, EXHIBITIONS, OR PROGRAMS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, community participation is most present in educational programs (3.6), followed by exhibitions (3.2) and programming activities (3.0). BiH museums and online participants report stronger engagement in education (3.8–3.9), while Croatian museums show a moderate involvement across all areas, with co-creation weakest in everyday programming (2.6). This pattern indicates that participation primarily occurs within structured educational contexts, while operational and exhibition-related collaboration remains limited.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

Community engagement tends to be episodic and linked with educational projects, rather than an integrated institutional practice. Croatian museums generally maintain a moderate level of inclusion, with participation viewed as supportive input rather than shared authorship. In contrast, BiH museums display greater openness within educational contexts, though similar limits appear in exhibition-making and daily operations. Overall, the findings suggest that co-creation is valued but not yet embedded as a continuous process—a recurring trend seen in earlier questions (particularly Q1 and Q5).

practical recommendations

INSTITUTIONALIZE COMMUNITY INPUT

Museums may consider forming community councils or advisory groups (6–8 members from diverse backgrounds) to provide ongoing feedback on exhibitions, education, and programs.

IMPLEMENT PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

Short post-event surveys or public feedback reports could help translate visitor insights into visible improvements, strengthening trust and accountability.

BROADEN PARTICIPATION FORMATS

Encouraging co-creation workshops, open calls, or community-led micro-projects may help expand engagement beyond education and into exhibition and programming development.

PROMOTE CROSS-REGIONAL LEARNING

Sharing experiences between regional museums could support the adoption of more sustainable participatory practices, balancing expert guidance with community voices.

section 2 summary

community-centred approach

Museums across the region show a clear commitment to social engagement, but participation remains concentrated in familiar and structured settings—most often through schools, associations, and educational programs.

These partnerships provide continuity but limit the scope of collaboration, as minority groups, seniors, and vulnerable audiences are still engaged only occasionally.

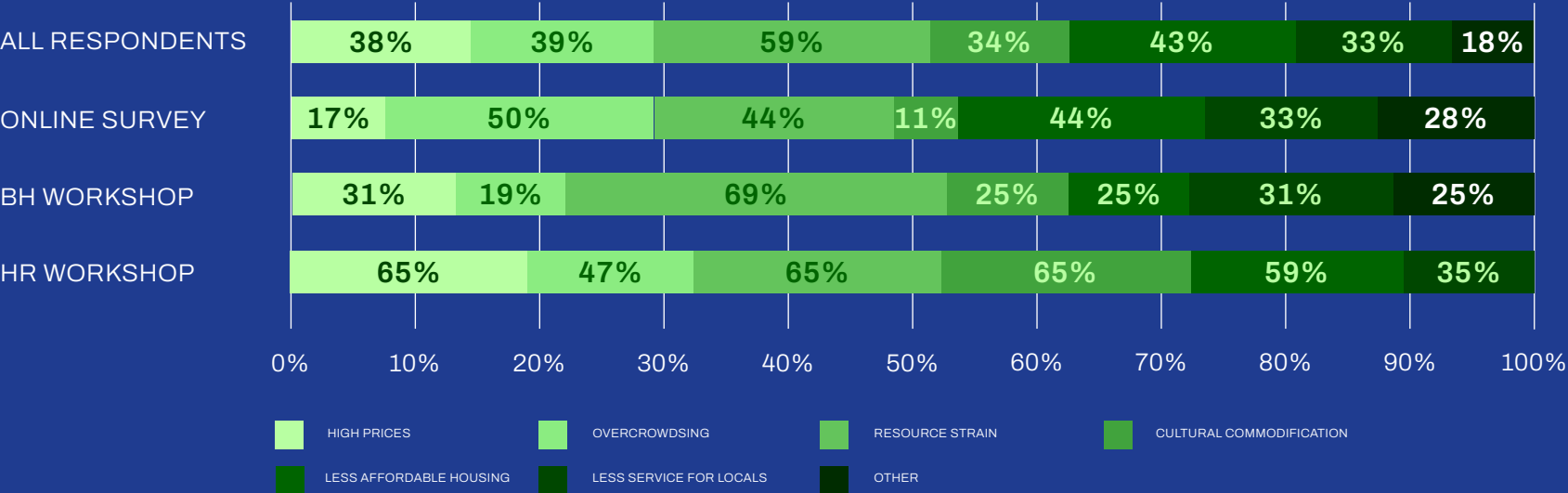
Engaging local communities, foreign workers, minorities, and vulnerable groups is not only a matter of inclusion but of relevance and sustainability.

By broadening participation beyond formal education settings, museums can strengthen their role as civic spaces where diverse experiences, languages, and perspectives shape collective understanding of heritage.

Co-creation—when communities actively contribute to exhibitions and programs—builds shared ownership and trust, transforming museums from institutions that speak to the public into platforms that speak with it.

Embedding these relationships into everyday practice would allow museums to act as dynamic agents of social connection, dialogue, and cultural resilience in an increasingly fragmented environment.

10 HAS YOUR MUSEUM EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES LINKED WITH OVERTOURISM (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the most common challenges linked with overtourism are resource strain (59%), high prices (38%), and cultural commodification (34%), showing that the impact of tourism is felt beyond crowding. Croatian museums stand apart, reporting higher exposure across almost all categories: resource strain is 8% above average (67%), while high prices (65%) and cultural commodification (65%) are nearly double the overall rate. BiH museums identify resource strain (69%) as their primary issue but report substantially fewer challenges in other areas. Online respondents note overcrowding (50%) and resource strain (44%), reflecting moderate and operational forms of impact.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

The results highlight clear differences in how overtourism affects museums across the region. Croatian institutions face the strongest and most multidimensional tourism pressures, particularly in coastal or high-traffic destinations where tourism shapes both economic conditions and community life. BiH museums experience tourism mainly as a resource and infrastructure issue, without the social saturation seen in Croatia. Online respondents show only occasional or localized challenges, confirming that overtourism is not yet a region-wide problem but rather concentrated in a few highly visited areas. Across all groups, museums recognize that tourism represents a challenge extending beyond visitor numbers, as they increasingly experience its indirect economic and social impacts—from rising prices and operational strain to shifts in local community dynamics.

practical recommendations

INTRODUCE INTERNAL SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORKS

Museums may benefit from establishing simple internal procedures to monitor visitor flow, assess seasonal impacts, and track how tourism affects local access and resources.

ADVOCATE FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM POLICIES

Beyond cooperation, museums can play a more active role in shaping public discourse by providing data, case studies, and heritage-based arguments for local tourism regulations.

DIVERSIFY ENGAGEMENT BEYOND PROMOTION

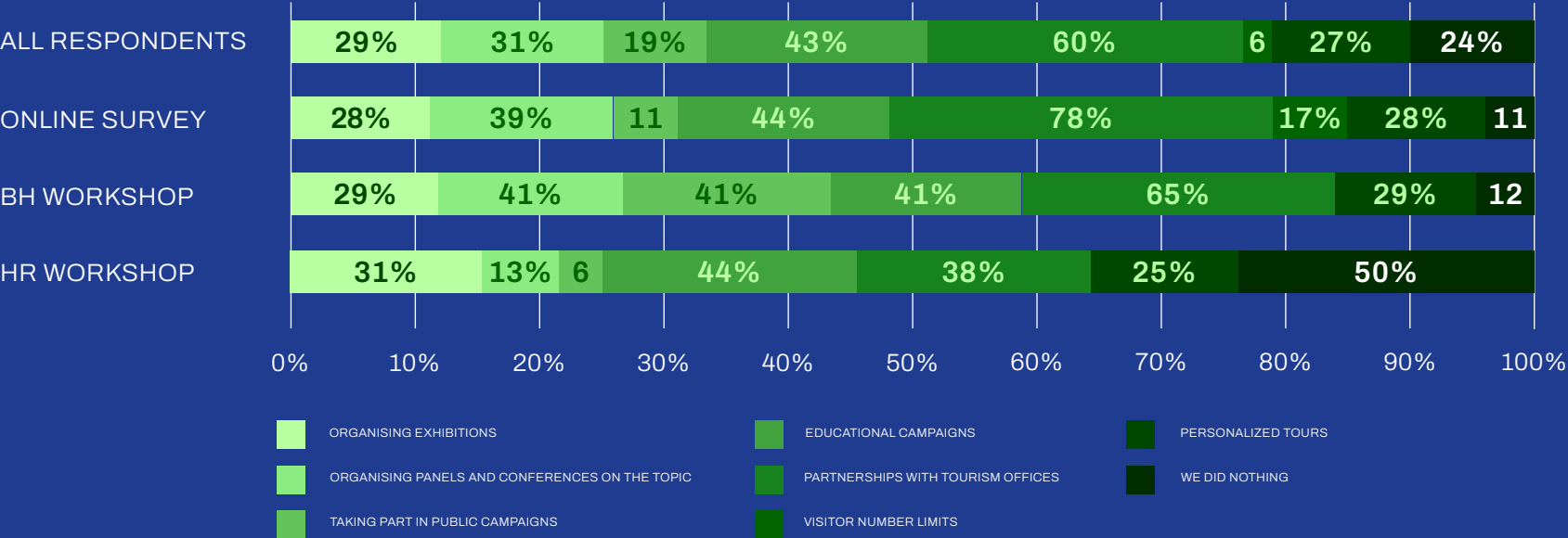
Move from purely promotional partnerships toward initiatives that raise public awareness about sustainable visitation, cultural preservation, and community balance.

FOSTER INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE AND PEER LEARNING

Collaborating with museums from countries that have long dealt with overtourism—such as Spain, Italy, or Greece—could provide valuable insights into visitor flow management, community communication, and sustainable tourism models adaptable to local contexts.

11

WHAT STRATEGIES HAS YOUR MUSEUM IMPLEMENTED (OR CONSIDERED) TO MITIGATE THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the most common mitigation measures include partnerships with tourism offices (60%), educational campaigns (43%), and organising exhibitions (29%). However, 24% of institutions report taking no action, and only 6% have considered introducing visitor number limits. Among the groups, Croatian museums stand out with the highest level of inaction (50%), despite facing the strongest tourism pressure identified in Q10. In contrast, BiH museums are more proactive, with 65% partnering with tourism offices, 41% organising educational or awareness campaigns, and only 12% indicating no action. Online respondents mirror the BiH trend, with 78% collaborating with tourism offices and 44% developing educational initiatives, suggesting a growing awareness of tourism’s cultural and social impacts.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

The data highlight a paradox between exposure and response: Croatian museums experience the highest levels of tourism pressure but remain the least active in introducing mitigation measures. This may reflect limited institutional autonomy or the perception that overtourism is an external problem rather than a museum management issue. It may also reflect the attitude of the tourist sector towards cultural institutions. As strongly positioned stakeholders, tourist organisations may be reluctant to jointly explore the issue with museums. Meanwhile, BiH and online participants, operating in environments with lower tourism intensity, show a greater initiative and adaptability, incorporating partnerships and awareness-raising activities into their operations. Across all groups, no museum has adopted visitor capacity limits or dynamic quotas, confirming that visitor management remains an underdeveloped area in museum practice. The overall pattern suggests that while the challenges of overtourism are widely recognized, structured, data-driven responses are still in their early stages.

practical recommendations

PILOT CONTROLLED VISITOR MANAGEMENT MODELS

Museums could consider testing dynamic quotas or time-slot entrances during peak seasons to assess their impact on visitor satisfaction, revenue, and operational efficiency.

PROMOTE SLOW TOURISM INITIATIVES

Developing slow tourism itineraries in collaboration with local communities and tourism offices could help redistribute visitor flows and enhance the overall quality of the visitor experience. Drafting actions and collaborative programmes with the tourism sector.

ENHANCE SUSTAINABILITY MONITORING

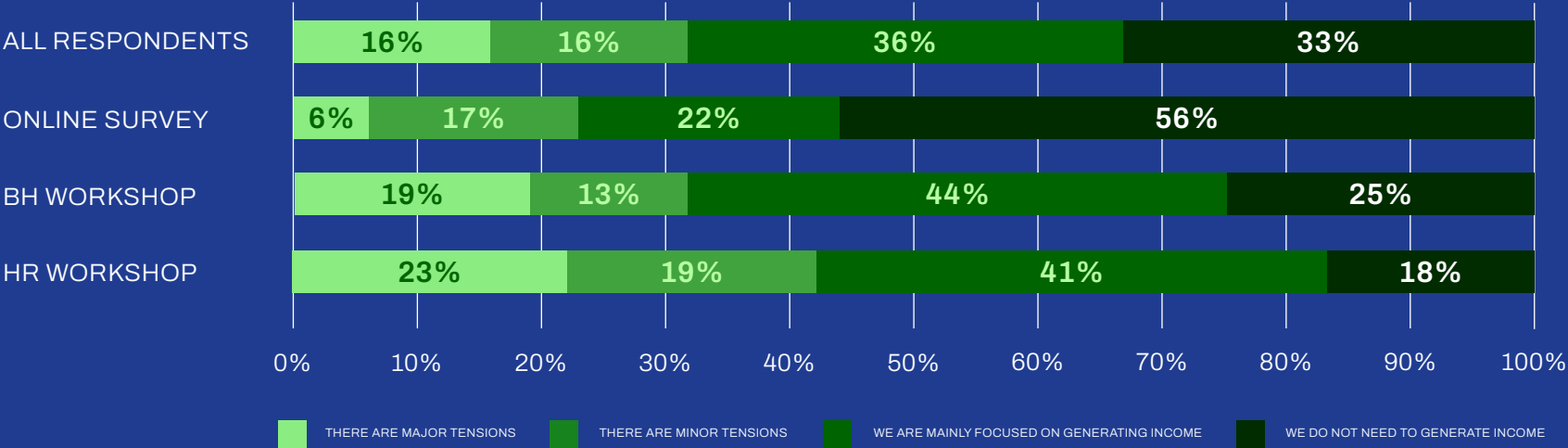
Introducing simple tracking tools — such as monthly visitor flow reports and post-visit surveys — can provide data for adjusting opening hours and programming to seasonal demand.

FOSTER INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE AND PEER LEARNING

Collaborating with museums in countries experienced in managing overtourism could offer valuable insights into visitor flow management and sustainable tourism planning.

12

WHAT TENSIONS DOES YOUR MUSEUM EXPERIENCE BETWEEN THE NEED TO GENERATE REVENUE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SERVE VULNERABLE OR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, museums are evenly split: 36% are primarily focused on generating income, 33% report no need to do so, and 32% experience tensions between financial and social responsibilities. Croatian museums report the highest perceived tensions (42%), suggesting stronger internal conflict. BiH museums show the highest share of income-driven institutions (44%) but less reported tension, indicating more acceptance of the balance. Online respondents differ significantly, with 56% reporting no need to generate income — pointing to more stable funding models and fewer mission-related trade-offs.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

The results reveal distinct institutional profiles across the region. Croatian museums report the highest internal tensions, suggesting that commercial demands — particularly from tourism — are felt as competing with their public mission. BiH museums show a higher income dependence, but with fewer reported conflicts, indicating a more pragmatic or integrated approach to balancing economic and social goals. Online respondents stand apart, with most reporting no financial pressure, reflecting stronger public funding models or alternative governance structures that allow for greater programmatic autonomy. This contrast becomes even more apparent when viewed alongside Q11: Croatian museums, despite facing the highest tourism pressure, remain the least proactive in managing its effects — reinforcing their financial dependence. Meanwhile, BiH institutions, under less external pressure, show more socially responsive strategies, suggesting a more sustainable alignment between funding models and community values.

practical recommendations

DIVERSIFY REVENUE SOURCES

Develop local membership programs or “Friends of the Museum” initiatives that reduce dependency on tourist numbers. Introducing digital tours or virtual exhibitions can provide alternative income streams.

ADVOCATE FOR CULTURAL FUNDING MECHANISMS

Museums may engage local authorities to allocate a significant share of tourist tax revenue toward maintaining cultural infrastructure and community programming.

INTEGRATE INCLUSION INTO COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

Design bilingual workshops, accessible guided tours, or events co-created with underrepresented groups that both generate revenue and reinforce social inclusion.

LEARN FROM INTERNATIONAL MODELS OF SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Collaborate with institutions in countries where financial independence coexists with strong public missions (e.g., the Netherlands). Exchange practices that show how commercial activities can support rather than compete with inclusion and accessibility goals.

section 3 summary

dealing with overtourism

Tourism brings both visibility and vulnerability to museums. It creates opportunities for international recognition and local economic benefit, but without systematic visitor management, it can erode community relations, staff capacity, and the quality of the visitor experience.

Croatian museums face the strongest tourism pressure yet respond mainly through symbolic or communicative actions, with few operational mechanisms to regulate visitor flow or safeguard cultural assets.

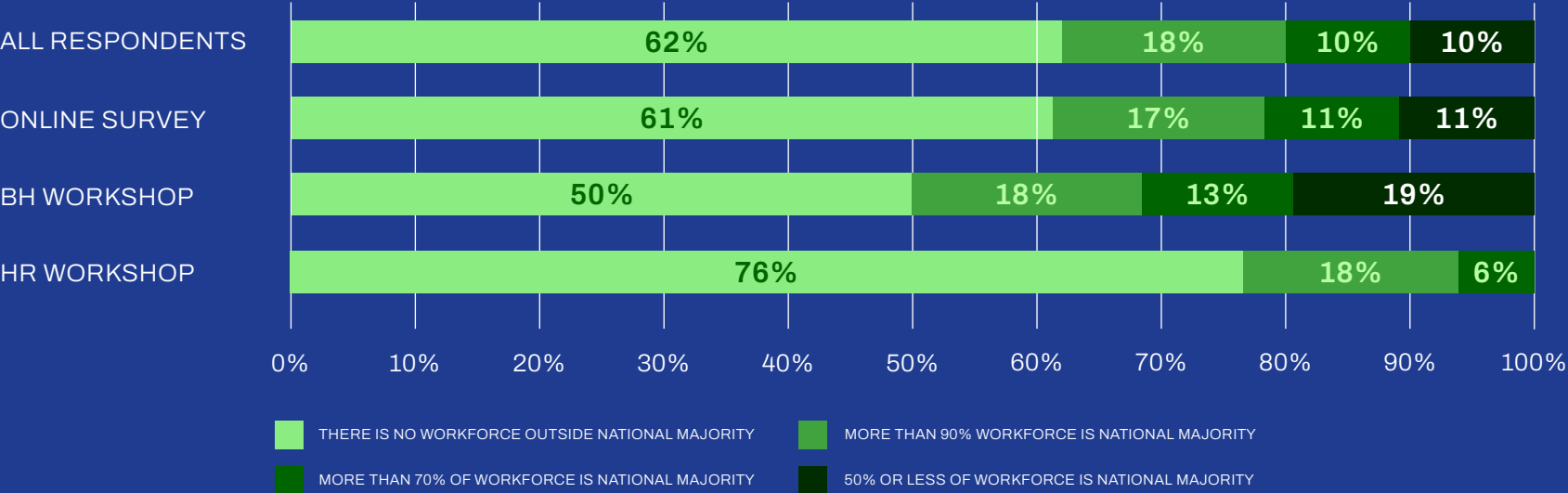
By contrast, BiH museums, though less exposed to mass tourism, show a greater initiative through cooperation with tourism offices and awareness-raising activities, reflecting a stronger orientation toward community well-being.

To transform tourism from a strain into a strategic asset, museums should implement structured visitor management systems (e.g., time-slot entry, capacity limits, or data-driven monitoring) and develop local partnerships that balance tourism growth with cultural and social sustainability.

Interestingly, when linked with Question 8, which showed that most museums offer free programs for vulnerable groups, the results reveal a clear institutional approach: even under significant financial and tourism-related pressures, museums continue to prioritize accessibility and inclusion.

This resilience underscores the persistence of a strong public mission, suggesting that with better tools and support, museums could align tourism benefits more effectively with their broader cultural and social responsibilities.

13 HOW DIVERSE IS YOUR MUSEUM’S WORKFORCE IN TERMS OF NATIONALITY, BACKGROUND, AND LANGUAGE SKILLS?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, 62% of museums report no workforce outside the national majority, and 18% state that more than 90% of employees belong to the national majority. This indicates a predominantly homogeneous workforce, with only around 20% of institutions showing measurable diversity in nationality, background, or language skills. Croatian museums record the lowest diversity (76% report entirely national-majority staff), while BiH museums show the highest relative variation (31% include minority or foreign staff members), reflecting the country’s multiethnic structure rather than targeted recruitment.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

These results should be interpreted with caution. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the presence of three constituent peoples and several national minorities, as well as the fact that the survey took place in Trebinje, a border area, naturally contributes to somewhat greater internal diversity. However, both in BiH and Croatia, museums predominantly operate as public institutions, where employment is tightly regulated by state or municipal policies. Consequently, formal restrictions, administrative rules, political frameworks, and language requirements significantly limit the employment of foreign or migrant workers. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of museum-specific professional profiles among migrant populations, which reduces opportunities for diversification even where willingness exists. Therefore, the results reflect systemic and demographic constraints rather than a lack of openness or interest among museum professionals.

practical recommendations

CLARIFY INCLUSION PATHWAYS WITHIN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORKS

Collaborate with relevant ministries and cultural bodies to explore regulatory options that allow limited-term or project-based employment of foreign professionals.

ENCOURAGE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES WITHOUT STRUCTURAL REFORM

Until hiring frameworks evolve, museums can focus on training existing staff in intercultural communication, foreign languages, and community collaboration with migrant or minority groups.

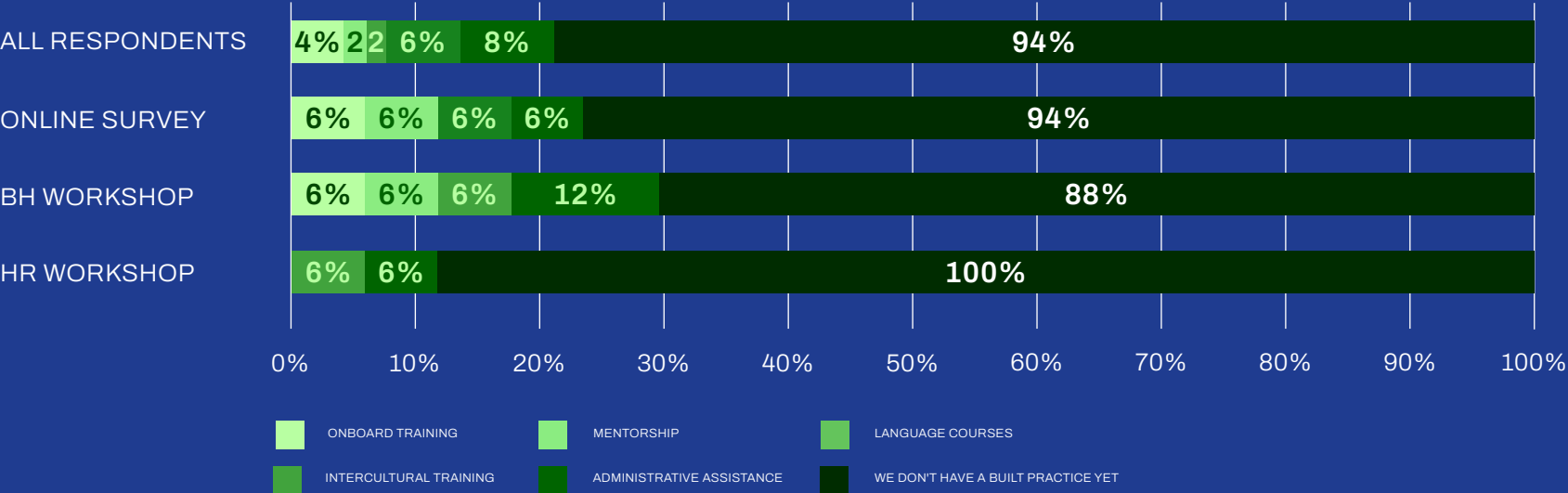
LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS FOR DIVERSITY EXPOSURE

Participate in cross-border exchanges, residencies, or mentorship programs that temporarily integrate foreign experts, bringing international perspectives into local institutions. Participate in Erasmus exchanges and international programmes involving volunteers.

DOCUMENT AND SHARE GOOD PRACTICES

Highlight examples of institutions that have successfully balanced public hiring regulations with diversity goals, fostering gradual systemic change.

14 WHICH PRACTICES DOES YOUR MUSEUM USE TO SUPPORT FOREIGN WORKER INTEGRATION? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, 94% report having no established practices to support foreign worker integration. Only a few institutions mention support measures, such as administrative assistance (8%), onboarding training (4%), or language and intercultural support (each under 6%). This pattern is visible across all groups: Croatian museums report 100% absence of structured practices, BiH institutions show slightly more initiative (12% offer administrative assistance), and online respondents also report 94% with no integration model in place. This confirms a widespread lack of operational support for foreign professionals, despite the growing importance of intercultural collaboration.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

These findings align with the results of Question 13, confirming that foreign or migrant employment in museums remains exceptional rather than systemic across the region. The near-universal absence of integration programs does not reflect institutional unwillingness, but rather structural constraints: public-sector hiring laws, political frameworks, and strict language requirements limit the flexibility to recruit and support foreign professionals. Because most museum employees are civil servants, institutions lack the autonomy to introduce practices like mentorship, onboarding, or intercultural learning. This is compounded by the rarity of migrant professionals in museum-related fields, which reduces both institutional demand and visibility of such needs. Taken together, the data suggest that museum inclusion practices are shaped less by internal strategy and more by national regulations, making this an issue of broader policy reform rather than HR planning alone.

practical recommendations

DEVELOP PREPARATORY INCLUSION FRAMEWORKS

Even if foreign employment is currently limited, museums could define simple onboarding and mentoring guidelines adaptable for future hires or international collaborations.

PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL LEARNING INTERNALLY

Introduce short workshops on intercultural communication or multilingual service for staff, enhancing readiness for international cooperation and eventual workforce diversification.

COLLABORATE WITH PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Work with ministries or local administrations to identify ways to modernize public hiring rules and open pilot programs for cross-border or project-based cultural employment.

CONNECT WITH INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

Engage in staff exchanges, residencies, or EU-funded mobility programs to introduce diversity and knowledge transfer without requiring permanent foreign hires.

15

DESCRIBE IN THREE WORDS THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO HIRING FOREIGN WORKERS IN YOUR MUSEUM

HR WORKSHOP	BH WORKSHOP	ONLINE SURVEY
1 LANGUAGE 2 POLITICS 3 ADMINISTRATION 4 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES	1 LAWS 2 LANGUAGE 3 POLITICS 4 CITIZENSHIP	1 INTOLERANCE 2 LANGUAGE 3 MISTRUST 4 TOO MANY EMPLOYEES

KEY SIGNAL

Across all responses, the dominant barriers to hiring foreign workers are language, politics, and administration/laws, while cultural factors and institutional attitudes appear secondary. Croatian respondents most often cited language, politics, and administration as barriers, followed by cultural differences. BiH participants emphasized laws and citizenship alongside language and politics, reflecting the complexity of administrative and legal frameworks. Online respondents added a social dimension — intolerance and mistrust — suggesting that beyond structural issues, perceptual and interpersonal barriers also play a role.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

The findings confirm and contextualize earlier results (Q13–Q14). Museums’ limited workforce diversity is not primarily a matter of unwillingness, but rather of systemic, linguistic, and political constraints. Since most museums operate as public institutions, their hiring practices are strictly regulated by national or municipal laws that limit foreign employment. In both countries, language emerges as a practical and symbolic obstacle, reflecting not only communication challenges but also the formal requirement for fluency in the official language for public service positions. The mention of politics and administration/laws highlights the bureaucratic rigidity that prevents more open recruitment, while intolerance and mistrust from the online survey indicate that social readiness for multicultural work environments also remains limited. Overall, these responses portray museums as institutions operating within nationally defined legal systems and cultural expectations, where inclusion of foreign professionals is constrained more by policy and structure than by organizational intent.

practical recommendations

ENGAGE POLICYMAKERS IN DIALOGUE

Museums, together with cultural associations, can initiate discussions with ministries and local governments on modernizing public-sector hiring to enable temporary or project-based employment of foreign experts.

DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE INCLUSION MECHANISMS

When direct employment is not feasible, institutions can include foreign professionals through short-term consultancies, research partnerships, or joint exhibitions.

PROMOTE LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

Encouraging staff to learn the neighbouring languages and intercultural competencies can improve readiness for cross-border cooperation and visitor diversity.

ADDRESS PERCEPTION BARRIERS

Through public programs or internal reflection sessions, museums can address unconscious bias and promote openness to diversity as a cultural value, not merely a legal adjustment.

section 4 summary

workforce migration and inclusion

All the participants in the survey — from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the online group — report that museum workforce remain predominantly nationally homogeneous, reflecting the structure of public-sector employment and the limitations imposed by administrative and language regulations.

While language, politics, and legal frameworks remain the primary barriers to hiring foreign professionals, this pattern also points to a deeper structural issue rather than a lack of institutional willingness.

The almost complete absence of onboarding, mentorship, or intercultural training practices indicates that the topic of workforce diversity has not yet entered operational planning. Yet, this represents an area of future opportunity rather than a deficit.

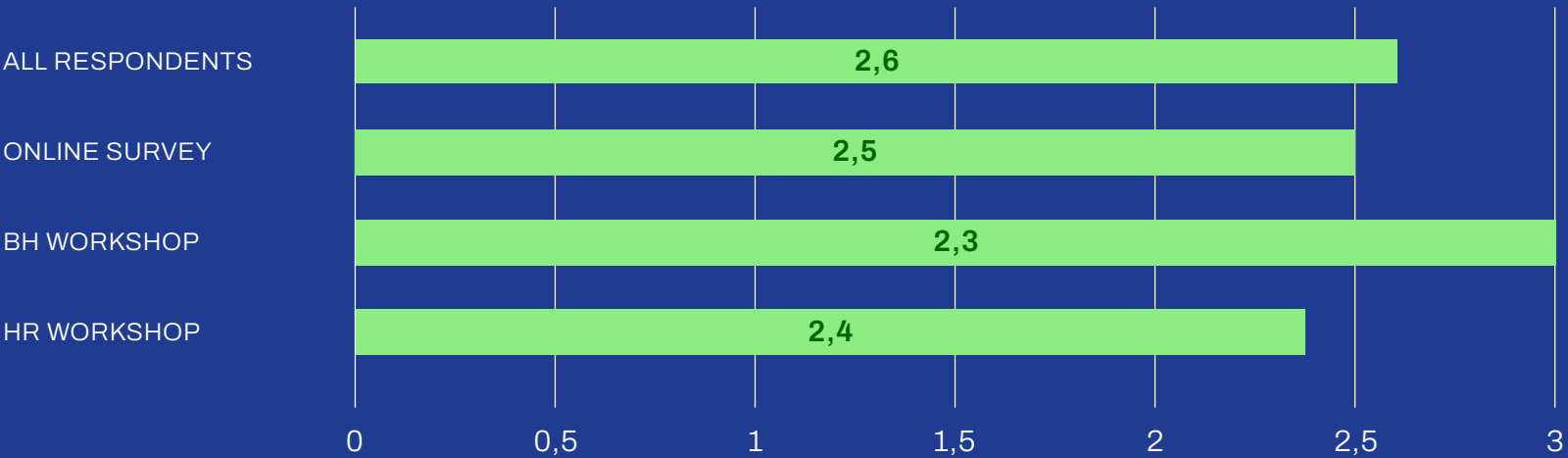
Foreign professionals can contribute new perspectives, languages, and international experience, enhancing museums' ability to communicate across cultures, attract broader audiences, and innovate in exhibition and education design.

In the long term, as seen in many European and global museum systems, diversity tends to increase with institutional development — driven by international cooperation, staff mobility, and globalized heritage networks.

Preparing early for such change — by introducing intercultural learning, participating in exchange programs, and advocating for flexible hiring frameworks — can help regional museums position themselves as a part of this broader evolution: open, connected, and future-oriented cultural institutions.

16

HOW MUCH TRAINING OR SUPPORT HAVE YOU GIVEN YOUR STAFF LINKED WITH PURPOSE-DRIVEN BRANDING OR COMMUNITY-CENTRED COMMUNICATION? (A LITTLE=1, A LOT=5)



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the average level of training in community-centred communication is 2.6/5, reflecting limited and often ad-hoc investment in staff development. Compared with this baseline, BiH museums score higher (3.0)—a 0.4-point increase—indicating stronger institutional focus on communication and storytelling skills. In contrast, Croatian museums score lower (2.4), 0.2 points below the overall average, suggesting that communication training is less prioritized within their current professional development frameworks. Online participants (2.5) fall close to the overall mean, showing similar moderate engagement. This 0.6-point gap between BiH and Croatian museums highlights a regional imbalance: BiH museums show a more proactive approach to communication capacity-building, while Croatian institutions remain focused on operational rather than participatory competencies.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

Museums across the region recognize the strategic value of purposeful, community-oriented communication, yet training investment lags behind institutional aspirations. Stronger results from BiH correspond with earlier findings (Q7–Q8), which showed a greater emphasis on social dialogue and local collaboration. In contrast, Croatian museums, operating in more tourism-driven and administratively complex environments, appear to prioritize operational continuity over communication up-skilling. Overall, these findings suggest that “openness” and “engagement” are perceived as institutional values but have not yet been translated into systematic professional development practices.

practical recommendations

INSTITUTIONALIZE CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduce an annual quota for continuing professional development (e.g., four training days per employee) and allocate a fixed percentage of the labour budget—around 2%—for staff education.

LINK TRAINING WITH MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

After each training session, require participants to submit a brief implementation plan outlining how the acquired skills will be applied within three months.

STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION AND STORYTELLING CAPACITIES

Design regular workshops focused on storytelling, public communication, and digital branding, delivered in collaboration with external experts or academic partners.

PROMOTE REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Encourage partnerships between museums to share effective communication practices and co-create regional learning programs that embed community engagement as a professional standard.

17

RANK WHAT TYPES OF TRAINING OR SUPPORT FOR MUSEUM EMPLOYEES WOULD HELP YOU BETTER ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF INCLUSION, TRUST, AND REPUTATION BUILDING?

HR WORKSHOP	BH WORKSHOP	ONLINE SURVEY
1 PUBLIC COMMUNICATION	1 PUBLIC COMMUNICATION	1 INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY
2 REPUTATION MANAGEMENT	2 REPUTATION MANAGEMENT	2 PARTICIPATORY PROGRAMMING
3 INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY	3 CRISIS MANAGEMENT	3 PUBLIC COMMUNICATION
4 PARTICIPATORY PROGRAMMING	4 INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY	4 REPUTATION MANAGEMENT
5 CRISIS MANAGEMENT	5 PARTICIPATORY PROGRAMMING	5 CRISIS MANAGEMENT

KEY SIGNAL

In both Croatia and BiH, public communication ranks first, followed by reputation management (2nd), reflecting a strong focus on improving visibility and credibility. By contrast, the online respondents prioritize inclusivity and diversity (1st) and participatory programming (2nd), while placing public communication only in third place — indicating a shift toward strengthening internal culture and openness rather than external image. Crisis management also ranks significantly higher in BiH (3rd) than in Croatia (5th) or the online group (5th), suggesting greater institutional vulnerability or awareness of social and operational risks.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

Findings from this question — when viewed alongside Q16, which measured existing training efforts — show that museums recognize communication as both a strategic and ethical skill, yet still see a clear need for deeper and more systematic development in this area. Croatian and BiH workshops emphasize public-facing communication and reputation building, treating it as a professional competence necessary for stability and public trust. In contrast, the online group places greater emphasis on inclusivity, diversity, and participatory approaches, reflecting a more values-driven understanding of communication as dialogue rather than promotion. The higher ranking of crisis management in BiH highlights a pragmatic concern with institutional resilience, shaped by complex administrative and political environments. Overall, these results show a divergence in focus: workshops prioritize external reputation and preparedness, while online respondents advocate for internal openness and participatory ethics — both dimensions being essential for long-term institutional trust.

practical recommendations

INTEGRATE INCLUSIVITY INTO COMMUNICATION TRAINING

Develop programs combining storytelling, reputation management, and inclusion, emphasizing how diverse representation enhances credibility and community connection.

CREATE JOINT REGIONAL WORKSHOPS ON PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Encourage cross-border collaboration through training on media relations, participatory communication, and ethical storytelling, tailored to small and mid-size museums.

BUILD INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE THROUGH SCENARIO-BASED TRAINING

Include modules on crisis management and public trust recovery, particularly relevant for institutions in politically or economically fragile contexts.

ESTABLISH PEER LEARNING BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION MODELS

Facilitate exchanges between museums focused on internal inclusivity and those with advanced public communication practices to promote a balanced approach.

18

WHAT THREE KEY VALUES SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED WHEN BUILDING A MUSEUM NARRATIVE FOCUSED ON SUSTAINABILITY AND INCLUSION? WRITE THREE WORDS: VALUES.

HR WORKSHOP	BH WORKSHOP	ONLINE SURVEY
1 OPENNESS 2 CREATIVTIY 3 FUTURE 4 INCLUSION	1 OPENNESS 2 TRADITION 3 MODERNIZATION 4 ACCESSIBILITY	1 ACCESSIBILITY 2 RESPONSIBILITY 3 PROFESSIONALISM 4 ACCESSIBILITY

KEY SIGNAL

In Croatia, openness ranks the highest, followed by creativity and future orientation, highlighting a progressive outlook and a desire to innovate within the sector. In BiH, openness also leads, but it is followed by tradition and modernization, revealing an aspiration to balance heritage preservation with renewal. The online respondents, on the other hand, prioritize accessibility, responsibility, and professionalism, indicating a more operational and service-oriented interpretation of sustainability. This variation shows how museums interpret inclusion through different lenses — from creative innovation (Croatia) and cultural continuity (BiH) to institutional accountability (online).

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

When viewed together with Q17, these results highlight that openness remains the central, unifying value across all groups, but there are differences in the way it is implemented. Croatian participants connect openness with innovation and creativity, reflecting a forward-looking mindset. BiH respondents link it with tradition and modernization, suggesting that inclusion and sustainability are understood within a framework of cultural continuity. Meanwhile, the online group emphasizes responsibility and professionalism, showing a more structured, institutional approach aligned with public accountability. This diversity indicates that while the concept of openness is widely accepted, the practical expression of inclusive values still depends heavily on local context and organizational maturity.

practical recommendations

EMBED VALUES INTO INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVES

Museums may benefit from translating abstract values such as openness and accessibility into clear internal guidelines, visual storytelling principles, and exhibition design choices.

BALANCE TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Institutions could explore ways to present modernization as an extension of cultural heritage rather than its disruption, fostering a sense of continuity in change.

DEVELOP A VALUES-BASED TRAINING FRAMEWORK

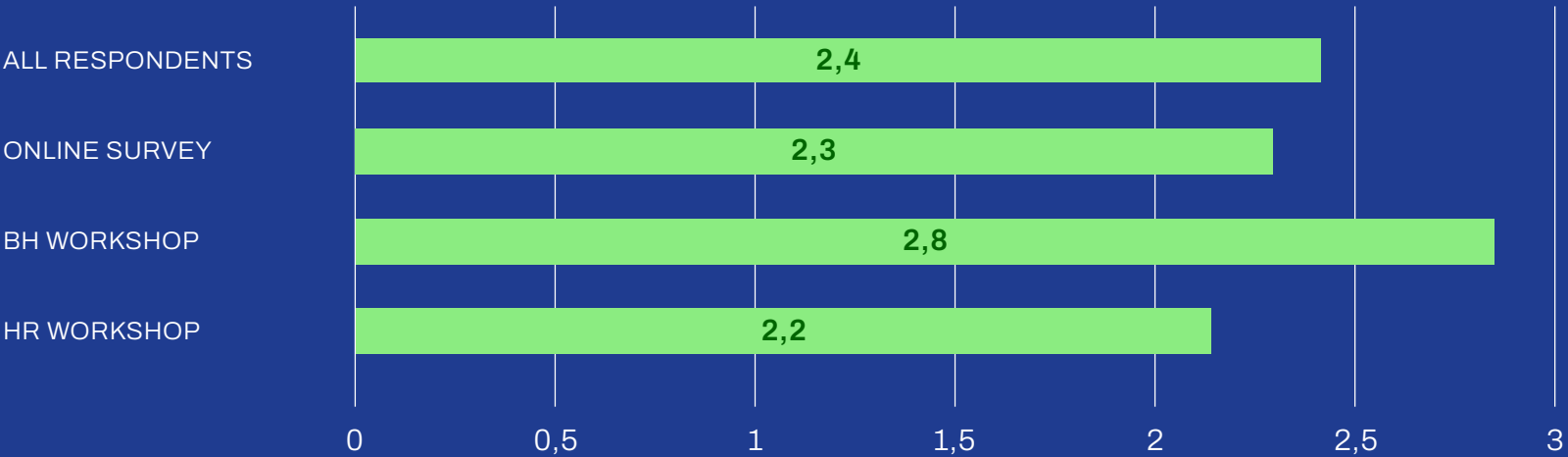
Integrate the identified values — openness, responsibility, creativity, and accessibility — into staff development programs to ensure consistent practice across departments.

PROMOTE CROSS-CONTEXT REFLECTION

Encourage regional and online participants to exchange perspectives on how inclusion and sustainability are enacted in practice, supporting mutual learning and adaptation.

19

HOW WELL PREPARED IS YOUR INSTITUTION TO RESPOND TO FUTURE SOCIAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL UNCERTAINTIES? (WE ARE NOT PREPARED=0, WE ARE PREPARED=5)



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the overall preparedness score is 2.4/5, indicating moderate but limited readiness for future social or environmental challenges. Museums in BiH report the highest level of preparedness (2.8), followed by online respondents (2.3) and Croatia (2.2). This 0.6-point gap between BiH and Croatia reflects a notable difference in confidence and adaptability — particularly significant given the stronger tourism pressures reported in Croatia (Q10).

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

When considered in connection with Q10, museums most exposed to overtourism (especially in Croatia) paradoxically report the lowest sense of preparedness. This suggests that while they recognize external pressures, they may lack structured strategies or operational capacity to address them. At the same time, compared with Q16, which showed a limited training in purpose-driven communication (2.4 in HR vs. 3.0 in BiH), these results reinforce that institutions with stronger internal training and communication frameworks also feel more equipped to manage uncertainty. In essence, the findings highlight that preparedness is not only a matter of external conditions but of internal investment — in staff development, communication, and proactive planning. Overall, the regional picture points to a reactive rather than anticipatory institutional culture, where resilience planning is still emerging as a professional competence.

practical recommendations

DEVELOP SCENARIO-BASED RESILIENCE PLANS

Museums could simulate responses to crises such as sudden drops in tourism, energy shortages, or climate-related disruptions to strengthen operational flexibility.

INTEGRATE TRAINING WITH RISK MANAGEMENT

Link staff development (Q16) directly to preparedness goals by offering workshops on strategic communication, community crisis response, and sustainable resource use.

ESTABLISH CROSS-SECTOR ALLIANCES

Collaborate with municipal authorities, cultural networks, and emergency management offices to create joint preparedness frameworks tailored to museum environments.

SHIFT FROM REACTION TO ANTICIPATION

Introduce annual review sessions to assess institutional vulnerabilities and translate findings into actionable prevention measures rather than post-event responses.

section 5 summary

training needs and future outlook

Museums across all groups increasingly recognize communication, inclusion, and adaptability as core skills for long-term sustainability. However, training efforts remain modest, with most institutions still lacking structured, ongoing development programs.

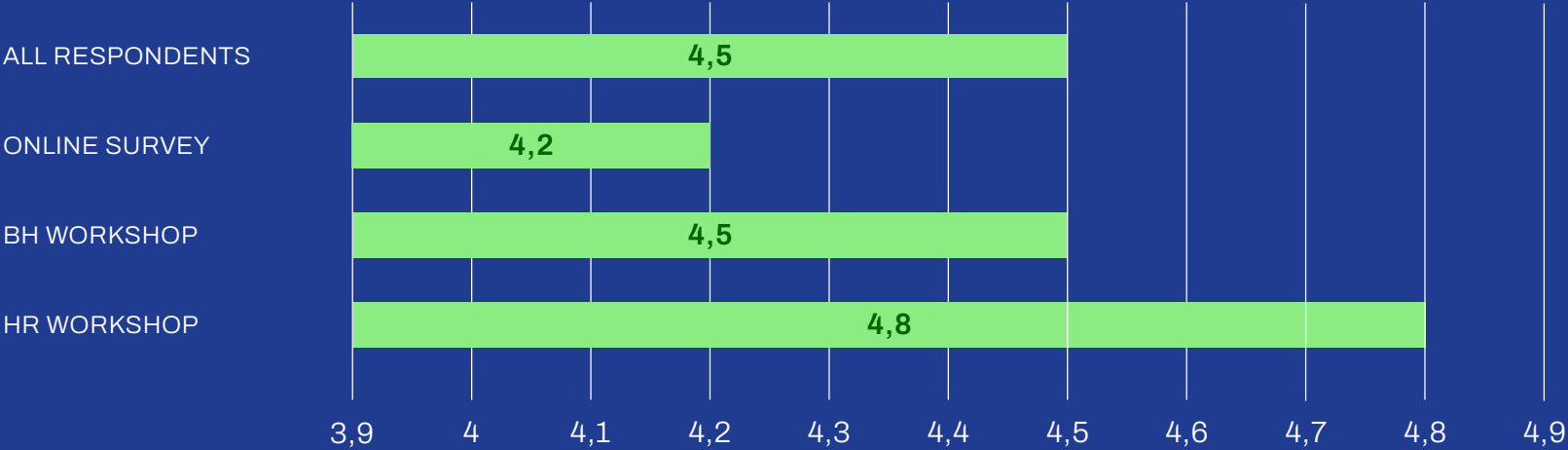
Public communication consistently ranks as a top priority, reflecting a growing understanding that the museum's voice is central to its social role. Yet, while values such as openness and accessibility are widely embraced, the mechanisms for translating them into daily practice are still evolving.

A clear contrast emerges between countries: Croatian museums, facing stronger tourism pressures, report lower preparedness for future challenges, while BiH museums show a greater confidence and adaptability. This suggests that readiness depends less on external conditions and more on internal capacity — particularly investment in people, communication, and planning.

Overall, the sector appears to be shifting from awareness to action, but sustainable progress will require systematic skill development and stronger integration between values, communication, and institutional strategy.

20

IN YOUR VIEW, HOW IMPORTANT IS THE REPUTATION OF A MUSEUM OPERATING IN TODAY'S SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CLIMATE?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the reputation of museums in the current social and environmental climate is rated very highly, averaging 4.5 out of 5. Croatian museums place the strongest emphasis on reputation (4.8), 0.3 points higher than BiH institutions (4.5) and 0.6 points higher than online respondents (4.2).

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

The consistently high ratings confirm that museums across the region view reputation as a key component of their institutional identity and long-term sustainability. The difference in intensity suggests that the importance of reputation grows with exposure to external scrutiny and community expectations, especially in environments where tourism and media attention are high. When compared with Q19 (preparedness for future challenges), the results reveal a clear imbalance: reputation is highly valued but not equally supported by organizational readiness (average 2.4). This points to a gap between recognition and action—reputation is seen as vital, yet few institutions have developed the mechanisms to safeguard it in moments of crisis or uncertainty.

practical recommendations

DEVELOP A REPUTATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Museums could introduce internal guidelines that define proactive communication, transparency standards, and crisis response steps to ensure consistency in protecting institutional credibility.

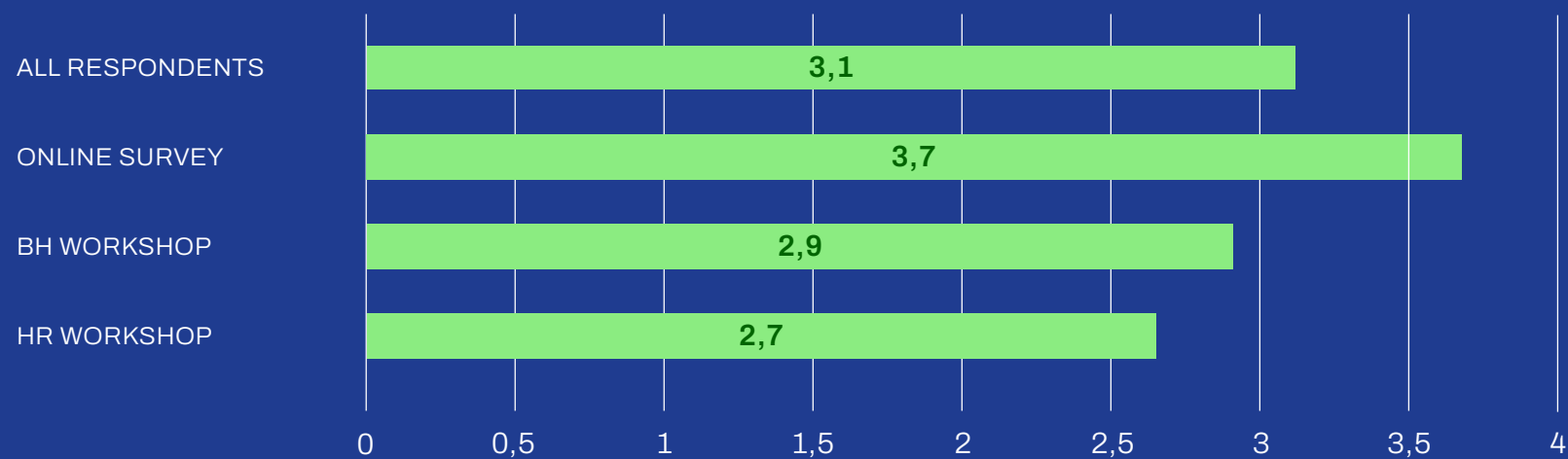
LINK TRAINING TO REPUTATION GOALS

Incorporate modules on communication ethics, media relations, and narrative building into staff training to align internal culture with the museum's public reputation.

INTEGRATE REPUTATION INTO PREPAREDNESS PLANNING

Connect communication strategies with sustainability and crisis preparedness goals (Q19) to strengthen both resilience and trust among stakeholders.

21 TO WHAT EXTENT DOES YOUR MUSEUM SHOW THAT IT USES REPUTATION AS A LEADERSHIP TOOL TODAY?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the use of reputation as a leadership tool averages 3.1, indicating a moderate level of practical application. Online participants report the highest engagement (3.7), a whole point higher than Croatian museums and 0.8 points higher than BiH institutions. This shows that while reputation is broadly acknowledged as a valuable concept, its consistent application in leadership roles varies significantly across groups.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

While reputation is widely acknowledged as important (as seen in Q20), its consistent integration into leadership remains uneven. Many museums appear to treat reputation as a static institutional trait rather than an active lever for guiding decisions, building internal culture, or strengthening external partnerships. This is particularly relevant in governance contexts where institutional autonomy is limited. Museums operating under more centralized public administration or rigid bureaucratic frameworks often face constraints in how reputation can be used dynamically by leaders. Conversely, online respondents—likely representing more flexible or internationally exposed institutions—show a stronger orientation toward using reputation as a strategic leadership tool. This highlights a potential direction for broader institutional development: enabling museum leaders to connect mission, values, and public trust through proactive and reputation-aware decision-making.

practical recommendations

EMBED REPUTATION IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Introduce targeted training for directors and senior managers on using reputation as a governance and communication asset, linking it with measurable institutional goals.

STRENGTHEN ACCOUNTABILITY CULTURE

Encourage leadership teams to integrate reputation considerations into planning and evaluation processes, ensuring that strategic choices align with public trust and long-term credibility.

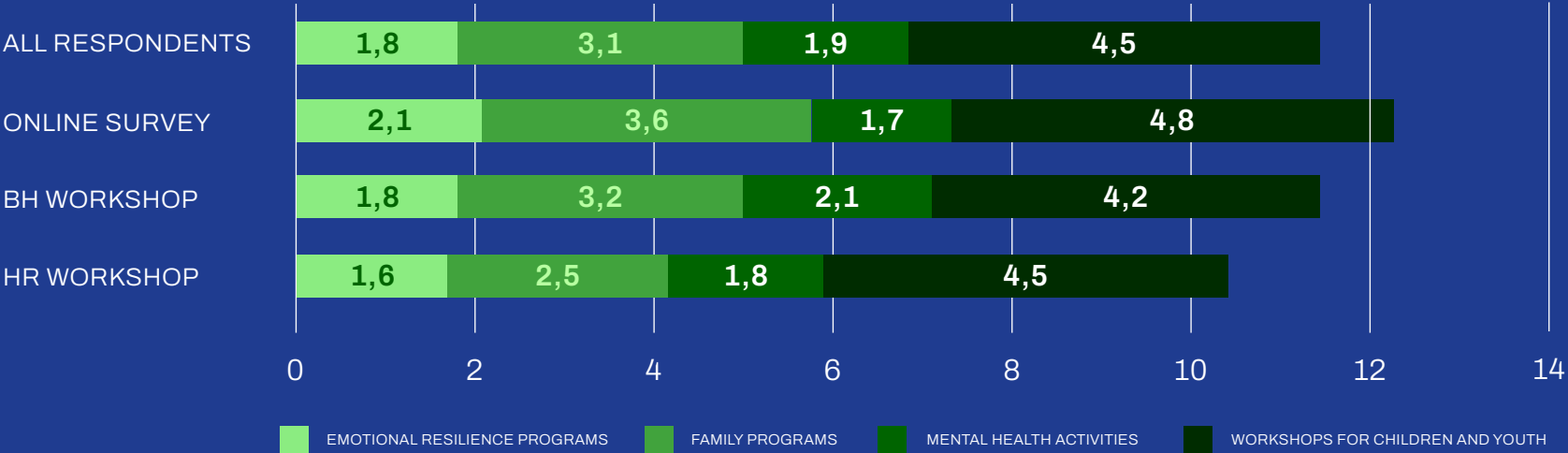
FOSTER PEER LEARNING AND MENTORING

Establish regional mentorship programs connecting leaders from more adaptive museum environments with those in traditional public institutions to exchange practical strategies and leadership insights.

CONNECT REPUTATION TO INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE

Link reputation management with preparedness and sustainability planning (as reflected in Q19), ensuring that reputation is not only protected but also actively leveraged during social or environmental challenges.

22 DOES YOUR INSTITUTION SUPPORT THIS THROUGH ITS PROGRAMS?



KEY SIGNAL

Workshops for children and youth (4.5) and family programs (3.1) continue to dominate as the main formats for building public trust. Emotional resilience programs (1.8) and mental health activities (1.9) remain less developed, suggesting that well-being-oriented programming is still at an early stage. Online participants report slightly higher engagement across all categories, particularly in family programs (+1.1 compared with HR) and workshops for children and youth (+0.3). BiH museums also show a stronger community involvement, scoring higher in family programs (+0.7) and mental health activities (+0.3) than Croatian institutions.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

When connected with Q7 (audience engagement priorities) and Q5 (social impact), the results reinforce a pattern of traditional educational engagement, where museums mainly support families and children through familiar formats. While emotional resilience and mental health are recognized as important areas, they remain peripheral to museum programming, likely due to limited partnerships with the health and education sectors. This shows that museums continue to operate in safe, well-established domains rather than exploring cross-sectoral roles that position them as contributors to social and emotional well-being.

practical recommendations

BROADEN PROGRAM SCOPE

Maintain strong youth and family activities while gradually introducing initiatives linked with mental health and emotional resilience (e.g., mindfulness tours, intergenerational workshops, “Museum & Wellbeing” cycles).

DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS WITH EXPERTS

Collaborate with schools, NGOs, healthcare providers, and psychologists to co-create programs that strengthen emotional health and community trust.

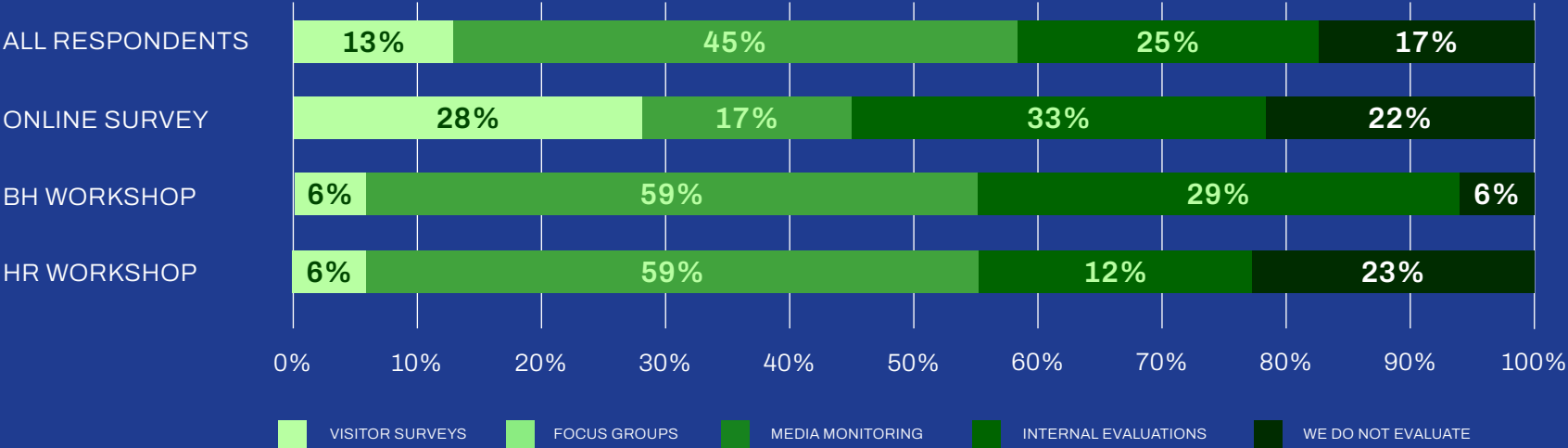
EVALUATE SOCIAL IMPACT

Introduce simple evaluation tools (visitor feedback, reflection sessions) to track how these programs affect visitors’ sense of belonging and well-being.

POSITION MUSEUMS AS SUPPORTIVE SPACES

Communicate museums as places that foster inclusion, empathy, and emotional resilience — essential for long-term community trust and relevance.

23 HOW DOES YOUR MUSEUM EVALUATE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OR REPUTATION?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, focus groups (45%) and media monitoring (25%) are the most common tools for evaluating public perception. However, visitor surveys are used by only 13%, and 17% of institutions do not evaluate reputation at all. Online participants rely most on visitor surveys (+15% compared to HR and BiH), while BiH museums lead in using focus groups (59%, +14% above average) and have the lowest rate of non-evaluation (6%). In contrast, Croatian museums report the weakest formal evaluation structure, with 23% indicating that they do not measure reputation.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

When cross-referenced with Q20, which showed that reputation is considered very important (average 4.5/5), these findings reveal a clear implementation gap. While museums acknowledge the importance of reputation, systematic assessment mechanisms remain underdeveloped, often replaced by occasional media monitoring or informal impressions. Relying primarily on external media coverage provides a fragmented picture and neglects the direct voice of the audience—posing a risk of delayed response to emerging issues. Introducing regular and structured evaluation processes could help transform reputation management from a reactive activity into a strategic institutional tool.

practical recommendations

ESTABLISH REGULAR FEEDBACK CHANNELS

Introduce short on-site visitor satisfaction surveys (e.g., via QR codes at exits) and an annual focus group with key stakeholders, publishing results transparently in the annual report.

INTRODUCE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

Collaborate with universities or independent cultural researchers to provide objective assessments and benchmark results against peer institutions.

INTEGRATE DIGITAL ANALYTICS

Combine social media sentiment analysis and website engagement metrics with traditional tools to capture ongoing changes in public perception.

TRANSLATE INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

Use collected feedback to inform institutional communication, programming priorities, and partnerships, ensuring that reputation management actively supports trust and long-term collaboration.

24

HOW MANY PROGRAMMES DID YOU RUN LAST YEAR WITH PARTNERS IN EUROPE FOR JOINT LEARNING AND REPUTATION BUILDING? ENTER A NUMBER



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the number of European cooperation programmes remains very low. Most museums reported between zero and three joint initiatives in the past year, with online respondents showing a slightly higher engagement (up to four programmes) compared with Croatian (0–3) and BiH institutions (0–3). This indicates that regional museums are still underrepresented in European cultural and educational networks.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

When cross-referenced with Q19 (institutional preparedness) and Q23 (evaluation practices), these results suggest that most museums remain locally focused, with limited external cooperation that could strengthen expertise, funding capacity, and visibility. Regional museums are aware of broader cultural and social shifts, yet administrative barriers and a lack of strategic outreach prevent active participation in European learning and networking frameworks. Limited international visibility restricts opportunities for knowledge exchange, joint campaigns, and reputational “spillover” from more established institutions — for example, through tourism partnerships. Utilizing joint branding can help expand reach and enhance credibility, while museums with a higher number of realized programs could act as mentors and role models for others. Systematically encouraging international collaborations would strengthen museum reputation, foster innovation, and enable deeper integration into the European cultural sector.

practical recommendations

STRENGTHEN ENGAGEMENT IN EUROPEAN CULTURAL PROGRAMMES

Museums could explore opportunities offered through UNESCO, ICOM, and various European cultural foundations to enhance visibility, professional exchange, and access to development funding.

ENCOURAGE MENTORSHIP AND PEER LEARNING

Institutions with experience in international cooperation may consider sharing knowledge and good practices with others, contributing to a more balanced regional development and stronger collective presence in European networks.

PROMOTE JOINT VISIBILITY AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Partnerships can be positioned not only as learning initiatives but also as platforms for shared storytelling, cultural dialogue, and reputation building—particularly in connection with sustainable tourism and heritage promotion.

ENHANCE READINESS FOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Museums may benefit from designating specific roles or small teams tasked with monitoring calls, initiating partnerships, and coordinating participation in joint projects, ensuring consistency and continuity in cross-border engagement.

section 6 summary

understanding reputation in today's context

Reputation stands out as one of the most valued aspects of museum work across all groups. While it is widely recognized as essential to institutional identity and sustainability, the capacity to actively manage or measure it remains limited. This points to a clear gap between awareness and implementation.

Museums tend to view reputation as a collective institutional quality rather than a leadership-driven process. Public-sector frameworks and limited managerial flexibility often prevent it from becoming part of strategic decision-making. Strengthening leadership and communication skills could help translate this awareness into consistent and transparent practice.

Evaluation of public perception remains fragmented, relying mainly on media coverage or informal impressions. Introducing regular feedback tools—such as short visitor surveys or annual focus groups—would provide a clearer understanding of public trust and help guide reputation management.

Low participation in international programmes further limits visibility and access to shared expertise. Greater engagement in European initiatives, such as those offered by UNESCO, ICOM, and cultural foundations, would foster learning, credibility, and innovation.

Overall, museums value reputation highly but still approach it intuitively. Building systematic communication, evaluation, and international cooperation practices would allow them to strengthen public trust and establish a more visible and resilient cultural presence.

25 HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR MUSEUM'S "BRAND" IN ONE TO THREE WORDS?

HR WORKSHOP	BH WORKSHOP	ONLINE SURVEY
1 MUSEUM 2 UNIQUE 3 COMPLEX 4 INTERESTING	1 OPENNESS 2 HERITAGE 3 UNIQUE 4 TRADITION	1 AUTHENTIC 2 INSPIRING 3 COMMUNITY-ORIENTED 4 RESPONSIBILITY

KEY SIGNAL

When comparing the most frequently mentioned words — “museum” (HR), “openness” (BiH), and “authentic” (online) — a clear divide emerges between institutional and storytelling definitions of brand identity. Croatian respondents describe their institutions through organizational or structural terms, focusing on what the museum is. Bosnian participants begin shifting toward relational language, highlighting openness and heritage as connecting values. Online respondents go further, using storytelling-oriented expressions such as authentic, inspiring, and community-oriented, which reflect a modern, audience-centred understanding of brand.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

Compared with Q23 (on how museums evaluate reputation), this question reinforces the finding that branding across the region is still primarily internally defined. Almost no references were made to user emotions, social impact, or contemporary values, indicating that museums are still described through static terms (“what we have”) rather than dynamic experiences (“how the audience feels”). This gap between institutional self-definition and public perception highlights why museums struggle to measure and communicate their relevance effectively. A more audience-centred approach to branding—supported by storytelling and co-creation—could help align internal narratives with how the community actually experiences the museum.

practical recommendations

ESTABLISH CURRENT BRAND PERCEPTION

Conduct short visitor and community surveys to identify how the museum is perceived versus how it wishes to be perceived.

ORGANIZE VALUE-BASED BRANDING WORKSHOPS

Facilitate internal sessions to consolidate existing and desired brand positions through key values such as “living heritage” or “unique experience.”

INTEGRATE STORYTELLING INTO COMMUNICATION

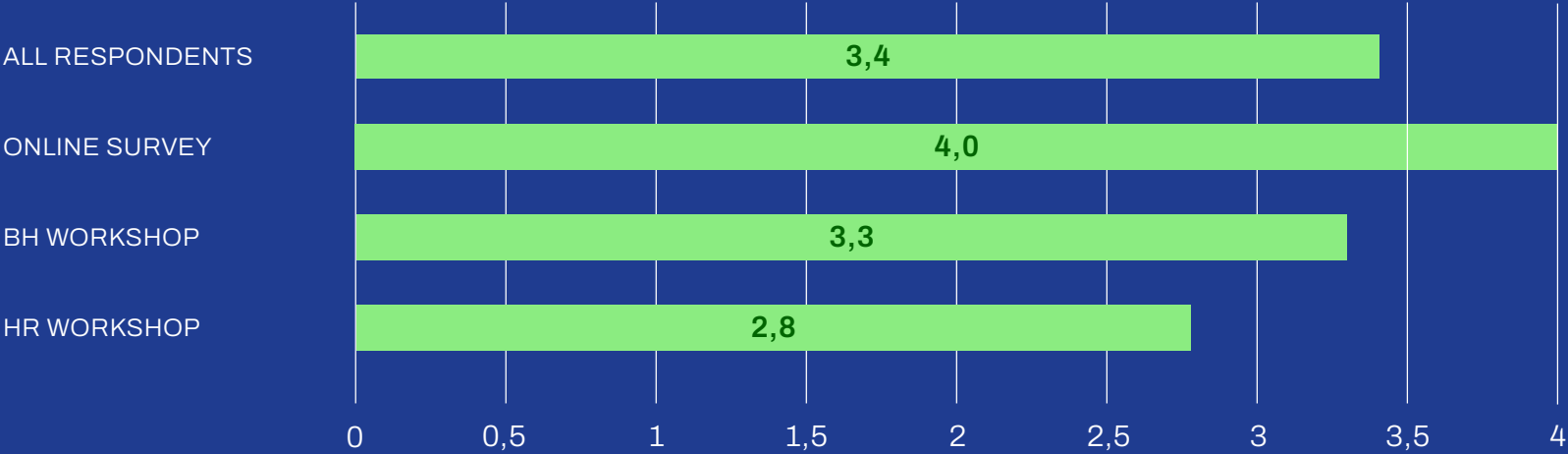
Encourage staff to describe exhibitions and programs through human stories, emotions, and relevance rather than institutional descriptions.

ALIGN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Combine internal definitions of identity with regular audience feedback to ensure that branding reflects both professional goals and public sentiment.

26

TO WHAT EXTENT IS YOUR MUSEUM’S BRAND
ALIGNED WITH ITS MISSION?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, the perceived alignment between brand and mission averages 3.4, suggesting moderate coherence. The online survey group reports the highest alignment (4.0), while Croatian workshop participants express the lowest (2.8). This gap of 1.2 points indicates differing levels of strategic integration — from institutions that actively link branding to purpose, to those where the brand remains primarily visual or descriptive.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

When compared to Q25, which showed that many institutions still define their brand through static or institutional terms, these results confirm that mission integration remains partial. Museums that use storytelling and value-based language (as seen in the online group) also perceive stronger alignment between their identity and mission. Conversely, those with descriptive or heritage-focused definitions report weaker alignment, suggesting that branding and mission often evolve separately rather than as a unified narrative. The overall trend reflects a transitional phase: museums are aware of the importance of aligning brand and mission, but still lack the tools or frameworks to operationalize it in communication, programming, and staff culture.

practical
recommendations

CREATE A “MISSION AND BRAND MAP”

Consolidate the museum’s purpose, core values, communication tone, and visual identity in a single framework. This can serve as a practical tool for maintaining coherence across departments.

CONDUCT REGULAR ALIGNMENT AUDITS

Introduce quarterly mini-reviews of communication materials and visitor feedback to ensure that external messaging remains true to the mission.

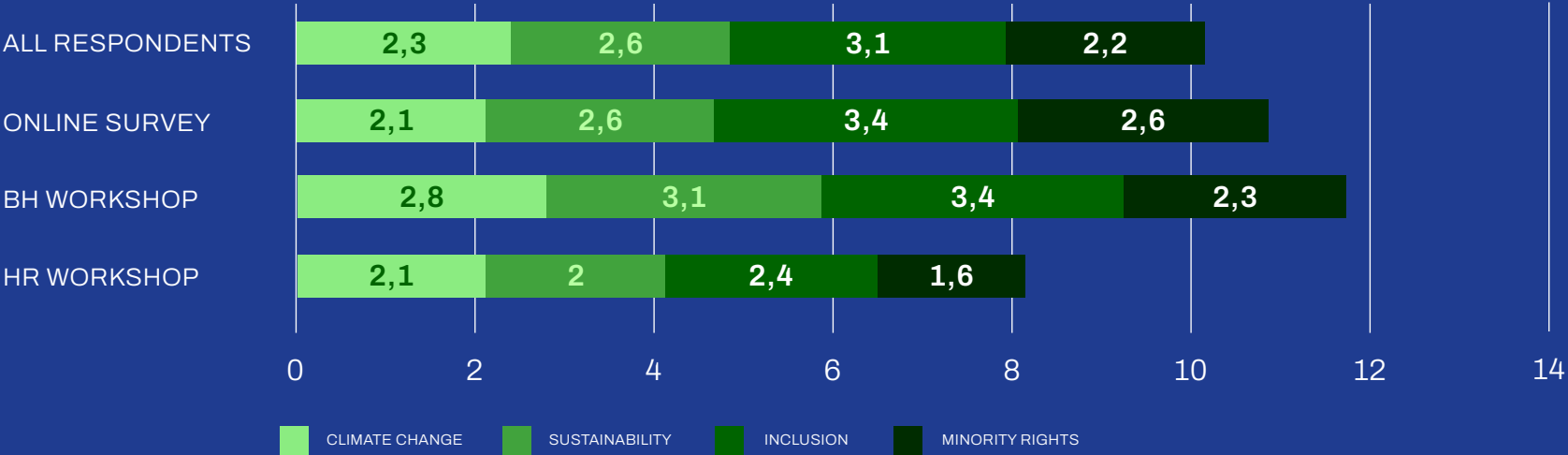
ENGAGE STAFF AND COMMUNITY IN CO-DEFINITION

Involve employees, volunteers, and local stakeholders in refining mission-related communication to strengthen internal understanding and external credibility.

INTEGRATE BRAND REFLECTION INTO PLANNING

Require each new exhibition or campaign to specify how it supports the museum’s mission and brand values, ensuring continuous connection between strategy and execution.

27 DOES YOUR MUSEUM TAKE A PUBLIC STANCE ON SOCIAL OR POLITICAL ISSUES, AND HOW OFTEN?



KEY SIGNAL

Across all respondents, inclusion ranks as the most common area of engagement (3.1), followed by sustainability (2.6) and climate change (2.3), while minority rights (2.2) remain the least addressed. The BiH workshop shows the highest overall activity, particularly on sustainability (3.1) and inclusion (3.4), while Croatian museums report more reserved engagement, especially regarding minority rights (1.6). The online group reflects an intermediate position, maintaining similar scores across all themes but slightly stronger engagement in inclusion-oriented initiatives.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

This question builds upon Q26, which explored the connection between mission and brand alignment. Here, we see that while many museums articulate inclusive and socially responsible values, mission-driven engagement remains cautious and selective. Institutions tend to stay within a “safe zone”—aware of reputational risks, they often remain silent, even though taking a stance aligned with their mission could strengthen public trust and relevance. Topics such as inclusion and sustainability are perceived as non-confrontational and therefore dominate communication, while more contentious areas (e.g. minority rights or climate activism) are less visible. This pattern suggests that museums recognize their civic role but have yet to translate it into consistent public advocacy. The higher engagement seen in BiH museums may reflect their direct experience in navigating socially complex contexts, where community dialogue is more embedded in institutional practice.

practical recommendations

SELECT MISSION-RELEVANT THEMES FOR PUBLIC ADVOCACY

It is advised to identify one or two social topics that logically stem from each museum’s collection or expertise (e.g., climate change for a natural history museum) and plan at least four public appearances annually—through panel discussions, blogs, podcasts, or media commentary.

ENCOURAGE MISSION-CONSISTENT ADVOCACY

Linking advocacy to institutional purpose can strengthen credibility and position museums as relevant and progressive social actors.

DEVELOP COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES FOR SENSITIVE ISSUES

Establish internal frameworks that enable staff to engage confidently with socially relevant themes while managing reputational risks responsibly.

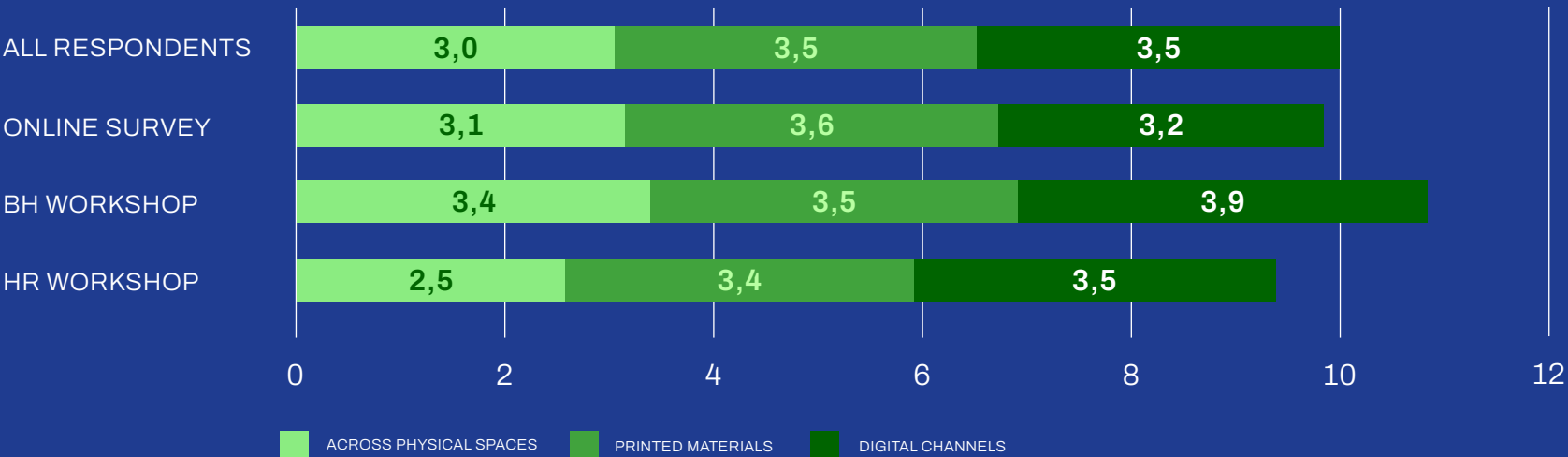
FACILITATE REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Organize peer sessions between Croatian and BiH museums to share examples of socially engaged yet balanced communication strategies.

INTEGRATE ADVOCACY INTO AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Connect public stances to participatory activities—such as debates, open days, or collaborative art projects—to translate values into authentic, lived experiences.

28 RATE HOW CONSISTENT YOUR MUSEUM'S MESSAGE IS: ACROSS PHYSICAL SPACES, PRINTED MATERIALS, AND DIGITAL CHANNELS?



KEY SIGNAL

Overall message consistency averages 3.3, indicating moderate alignment across communication formats. Printed materials (3.5) and digital channels (3.5) score higher than physical spaces (3.0), suggesting that visual and written communication is more coherent than on-site experiences. The BiH workshop shows the highest level of overall consistency, with particularly strong results in digital communication (3.9), while the Croatian workshop reports the lowest score for physical spaces (2.5). The spread of 1.4 points between physical space (as low as 2.5) and digital channels (up to 3.9) illustrates how communication consistency varies widely depending on the format, highlighting the need to strengthen spatial storytelling in particular.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

When viewed alongside Q26, which measured the alignment of brand and mission, the findings suggest that even when the mission is conceptually clear, its communication remains uneven across channels. Museums appear to achieve greater coherence in static or controlled media—such as printed and digital formats—than in physical and experiential environments, where visitor perception depends on curatorial, interpretive, and spatial design choices. This imbalance suggests that while brand–mission alignment (Q26) may exist at a conceptual level, it is not yet fully translated into consistent multisensory communication. In some cases, digital channels reflect modern and accessible messaging, while exhibitions or signage continue to convey more traditional narratives.

practical recommendations

DEVELOP A UNIFIED COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

Integrate spatial, visual, and digital communication under a single brand and mission guideline to ensure consistency across all visitor touchpoints.

CONDUCT REGULAR COHERENCE AUDITS

Every six months, evaluate message alignment between exhibitions, printed materials, and online platforms using short internal checklists or peer reviews.

LINK CURATORIAL AND COMMUNICATION TEAMS

Encourage collaboration between curators, designers, and communication staff from the early planning phase to ensure exhibitions visually and conceptually reflect institutional values.

ENHANCE SPATIAL STORYTELLING

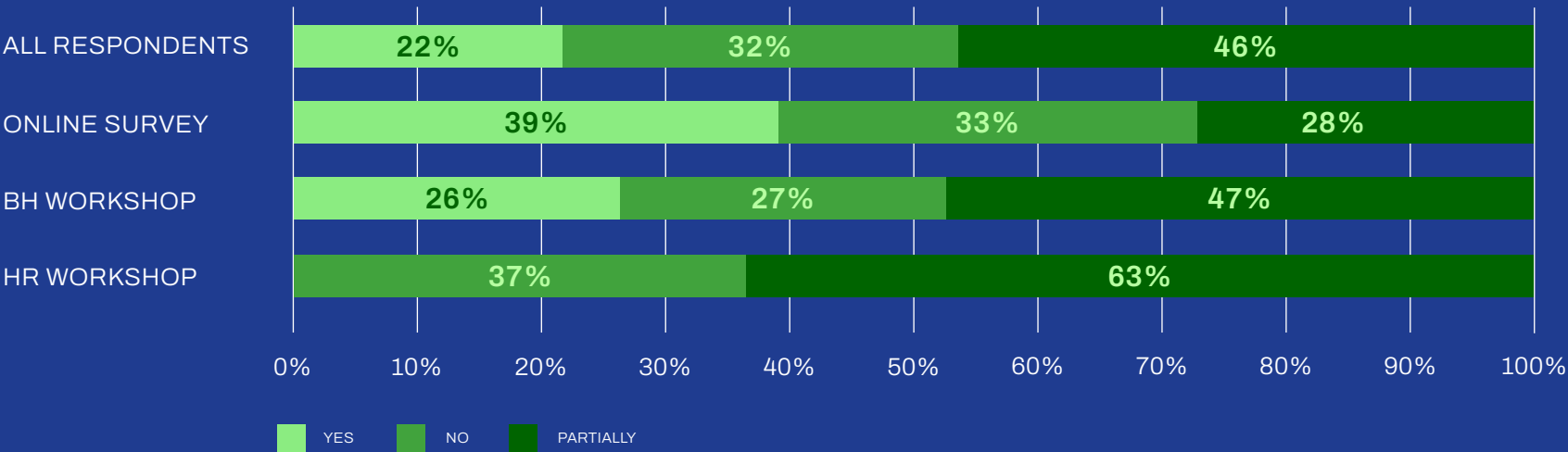
Introduce visitor-centred elements—such as interpretive signage or immersive audio-visual materials—to better connect the on-site experience with digital and printed narratives.

USE DIGITAL PLATFORMS AS TESTING GROUNDS

Pilot new communication tones or visual identities online before scaling them to exhibitions or printed materials, ensuring consistency through gradual adaptation.

29

DOES YOUR MUSEUM HAVE A CLEAR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY THAT CONNECTS INTERNAL ALIGNMENT WITH EXTERNAL OUTREACH?



KEY SIGNAL

Less than one-quarter (22%) of all respondents report having a clear, integrated communication strategy. Nearly half (46%) say their institutions manage communication only partially, indicating a lack of structured processes linking internal coordination with public messaging. The Croatian workshop shows the weakest strategic foundation, with 63% of participants stating their museum lacks such a strategy entirely. In contrast, the online group (39%) and BiH workshop (26%) show comparatively better levels of strategic development, though fragmentation remains evident across all contexts.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

When viewed in connection with Q25, which examined how museums describe their “brand,” this question reveals that while many institutions possess a sense of identity, few have formalized it into an actionable communication framework. In other words, museums often know what they stand for but lack a coherent way to express it consistently both internally (to staff) and externally (to audiences). The absence of structured communication planning may explain inconsistencies observed in Q28 (message coherence across media) and Q26 (brand–mission alignment). Without a defined communication strategy, brand values risk remaining abstract—manifesting more in internal discourse than in public experience. This structural gap limits museums’ ability to position themselves competitively, respond to social dynamics, or leverage their cultural capital through media and partnerships.

practical recommendations

DEVELOP A CONCISE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY DOCUMENT

Outline the key messages, tone of voice, visual principles, and content priorities that link the museum’s mission and brand identity. A two-page “communication compass” can serve as a practical, easy-to-update internal tool.

ENSURE INTERNAL ALIGNMENT BEFORE EXTERNAL CAMPAIGNS

Regularly brief all staff—curatorial, educational, and administrative—on communication goals to ensure unified representation of the institution across public touchpoints.

INSTITUTIONALIZE COMMUNICATION ROLES

Where dedicated staff are unavailable, assign communication responsibilities across teams with clear coordination procedures and periodic review meetings.

INTRODUCE ANNUAL COMMUNICATION WORKSHOPS

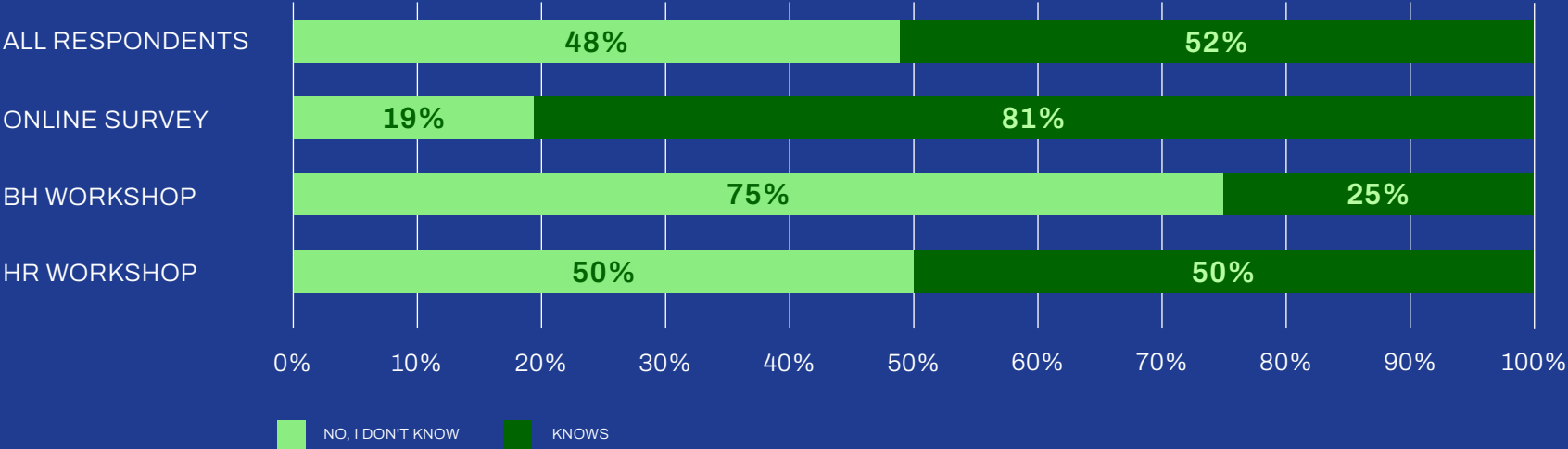
Build internal capacity by holding short, skills-oriented sessions on storytelling, brand coherence, and digital engagement, linking them directly to institutional goals.

ENCOURAGE CROSS-DEPARTMENT COLLABORATION

Communication should not remain the responsibility of one person or department; integrating multiple perspectives strengthens authenticity and organizational cohesion.

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DO YOU KNOW THE MISSION OF YOUR MUSEUM? IF YES, PLEASE WRITE IT DOWN. IF YOU DO NOT KNOW IT BY HEART, PLEASE WRITE NO.



KEY SIGNAL

Just over half of all respondents (52%) report knowing their museum’s mission. The online survey group shows the highest awareness (81%), while only 25% of BiH workshop participants could recall their mission statement. The Croatian workshop sits at an even 50–50 split, highlighting significant variation across institutional and national contexts.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

This question provides an important internal counterpart to Q29, which examined communication strategy and alignment. The findings indicate that mission awareness is not only a matter of internal culture but also of clarity and usability. Institutions with concise, well-formulated mission statements were more likely to have staff who could recall them by heart, as seen in the online survey group (81% awareness), which also scored highest in perceived brand–mission alignment (4.0 in Q26). Conversely, groups with lower alignment scores—such as the BiH (3.3) and HR workshops (2.8)—also reported the lowest ability to recall mission statements (25% and 50% respectively). This suggests that abstract, lengthy, or administratively worded mission statements hinder staff engagement and weaken internal coherence. Together, these results confirm that clear, emotionally resonant, and operationally relevant mission statements support both internal alignment and external brand communication.

practical recommendations

SIMPLIFY AND HUMANIZE MISSION STATEMENTS

Revisit the museum’s mission to ensure it is short, specific, and memorable. One sentence that clearly states why the museum exists and for whom is more effective than a long, formal paragraph.

INTEGRATE THE MISSION INTO DAILY COMMUNICATION

Display the mission statement in staff areas, internal newsletters, and onboarding materials to strengthen familiarity and ownership.

CONDUCT SHORT INTERNAL REFLECTION SESSIONS

Encourage teams to discuss how their individual roles contribute to the mission, fostering a stronger sense of purpose and alignment.

ALIGN MISSION LANGUAGE WITH BRAND TONE

Ensure the mission uses the same vocabulary and tone present in public communication, reinforcing coherence between internal and external identity.

EVALUATE MISSION RECALL ANNUALLY

Include a simple question in staff surveys or performance reviews — “Can you describe our mission in one sentence?” — to track institutional awareness over time.

section 7 summary

branding as mission-driven engagement

Museums across the region show an emerging awareness of branding as a part of their institutional identity, yet their approach remains largely descriptive rather than experiential.

Most define their brand through static concepts such as “heritage” or “uniqueness,” while emotional, community, or value-driven narratives are still rare.

Although many institutions claim alignment between their brand and mission, the findings reveal gaps in practical communication and consistency across platforms.

Digital and printed materials show a greater coherence than on-site visitor experiences, indicating that the brand is more effectively managed in controlled formats than in spatial or interpretive communication.

Only a minority of museums have established a clear communication strategy connecting internal coordination with external messaging, and nearly a half of the employees cannot recall their museum’s mission by heart.

These results suggest that while strategic awareness is growing, the operational translation of mission and values into everyday communication remains underdeveloped.

The section highlights the need for museums to simplify their missions, strengthen internal understanding, and cultivate consistent, mission-driven storytelling that engages audiences emotionally and socially.

Project partners:



Project supporters:

