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CultHeRit

CultHeRit Insights

Senka Gavranov Anna Böhm-Vinceffy Carlotta Schiller

Mentorship in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM)

CultHeRit

Identifying Solutions for Labor Market Imbalances in the **Cultural Heritage Sector** in the **Danube Region** by Improving Its Accessibility to Young Professionals

2.043.590 €	**1.634.872 €**	**1/2024 - 6/2026**
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Core Team

The development of this publication and the associated survey was a collaborative effort.

Senka Gavranov – Team Leader, Facilitator and Editor. Convened and designed the participatory process, facilitated workshops in response to participant needs and feedback, conducted desk-based research and designed the methodological instruments that shaped the inquiry, synthesized the collective input and conceptualized, authored and edited the publication.

Anna Böhm-Vinceffy (MNMKK-IMM) – Editorial Assistant. Collected and administered documents, centralized and edited material and written texts of the contributors (mentors and mentees) as part of preparation for the workshop in Postojna, October 2025 and for this publication.

Carlotta Schiller (MAK) – Co-author and Research Contributor. Conducted a literature review on the historical roots of mentorship and synthesized findings with insights from the Bucharest workshop (June 2025). Drafted the workshop minutes and authored the first version of the chapter on the historical roots of mentorship for this publication.

Serioja Bocsok – Graphic Designer. Designed the visual identity and layout of the publication and prepared print-ready files.

Roxana Cleja – Legal Advisor. Provided legal counsel and review.

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Lead Partner

Hungarian National Museum Public Collection Centre

Museum of Applied Arts

Project Partners

MAK

Kulturplattform Oberösterreich

National Institute of Heritage Romania

MUZEUL NAȚIONAL DE ISTORIE A TRANSILVANIEI

ANOFM AGENȚIA JUDEȚEANĂ PENTRU OCUPAREA FORȚEI DE MUNCĂ BIHOR

u(p)m

MUO Muzej za umjetnost i obrt / Museum of Arts and Crafts

About This Publication

This volume is the second in the four-part series ***CultHeRit Insights***. It focuses on mentorship in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM). The *CultHeRit Insights* series also includes:

Improving the Employment Situation and Accessibility of Jobs in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM),

Invisibility of Work in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM) with its two Annexes

> *Annex I: Beyond the Exhibit – A Catalogue of Good Practices for Improving Visibility of Work in CHIM*
> *Annex II The Diagnostic Mini-Survey – A Step-by-Step Guide for Practitioners*

Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM).

This volume is accompanied by five annexes available on the project website:

> *Annex I: Methodology and Inquiry Framework – The Evolving Dialogue*
> *Annex II: Voices from the Field – Perspectives on Mentorship in the CHIM*
> *Annex III: Mentoring Young Professionals – From Model to Practice and Evaluation*
> *Annex IV: The Mentorship Lab – Concepts, Proposals and Activities*
> *Annex V: The Mentorship Rulebook*

The series *CultHeRit Insights* was elaborated within the CultHeRit project (1 January 2024 – 30 June 2026), which was funded by the Interreg – Danube Region Programme with a total budget of 2 043 590 EUR (80% EU support). The initiative united thirteen organizations from eight Southeastern and Central European countries to identify and address barriers which young professionals encounter when accessing quality jobs in the CHIM sector.

Executive Summary

This volume captures the insights and practical tools derived from the CultHeRit pilot action, which tested mentorship as a strategic intervention within the broader employment model defined for CHIM. Within the project, ten early-career professionals were employed for twelve months in 2025 in ten institutions in eight countries to test the developed employment model. The findings suggest that formalizing mentorship can be a viable, employee-led pathway to improving onboarding and retention, while ensuring intergenerational knowledge transfer and cooperation. Three partner institutions adopted mentorship as a recognized onboarding and workplace integration practice beyond the pilot phase. Designed for CHIM professionals, HR experts and policymakers, this volume examines the benefits and limitations of workplace mentorship in CHIM. The volume covers historical roots of mentorship, workplace dynamics, tacit knowledge transfer, structural barriers, gendered dimensions of care work, scalability and nomothetic risk, participatory methodology, complementary models (co-mentoring, work buddy, peer mentoring, job shadowing), limitations, institutional ecosystems, and six emerging policy directions. It also introduces the Mentorship Lab as a package of conceptual tools for further discussion and institutional adaptation. Rather than prescribing a single model, it offers an experience-based starting point for institutions to explore mentorship and complementary approaches and for professional peers and colleagues to join the conversations about improving employment situation in CHIM.

CultHeRit Project Overview

Project Title:	**Identifying solutions for labor market imbalances in the cultural heritage sector in the Danube region by improving its accessibility to young professionals**
Duration:	01 January 2024 – 30 June 2026
Total Budget:	2 043 590 EUR (EU support: 1 634 872 EUR – 80%)
Funding Source:	Interreg - Danube Region Programme

The CultHeRit initiative united thirteen organizations from eight Southeastern and Central European countries to tackle barriers facing the young professionals when accessing employment in CHIM sector. The CultHeRit project aimed to improve entry into the sectoral labor market and diversify its workforce by enhancing hiring and onboarding practices in order to attract and retain young professionals. In 2024, the partnership developed a transnational aspirational employment model, defining a series of HR practices and processes intended to improve the attractiveness of CHIM careers. Throughout 2025, ten institutions from eight countries tested the model by employing ten young professionals. Workplace mentorship was an integral part of that process.

CultHeRit team at the project meeting in Bucharest, at the National Museum of Contemporary Art of Romania, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

CultHeRit Partnership

The project brought together a diverse consortium of institutions across Southeastern and Central Europe.

Lead Partner (LP):

Hungarian National Museum Public Collections Center – Museum of Applied Arts (MNMKK-IMM), Budapest, Hungary

Project Partners (PP):

PP2: MAK – Museum of Applied Arts (MAK), Vienna, Austria
PP3: KUPF OÖ – Cultural Platform Upper Austria (KUPF OÖ), Linz, Austria
PP4: National Institute of Heritage (INP), Bucharest, Romania
PP5: National Museum for the History of Transylvania (MNIT), Cluj-Napoca, Romania
PP6: Bihor County Employment Agency, (AJOFM), Oradea, Romania
PP7: Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments (RIPCM), Belgrade, Serbia
PP8: Intermunicipal Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments – Subotica (IPCMS), Subotica, Serbia
PP9: Serbia Trade Union of Employees in Cultural Institutions (SKS), Belgrade, Serbia
PP10: Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague (UPM), Prague, Czech Republic
PP11: Institute for Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Republic of Srpska (IPC), Banja Luka, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina
PP12: Museum of Arts and Crafts (MUO), Zagreb, Croatia
PP14: Notranjska Museum Postojna (NMP), Postojna, Slovenia

Associated Strategic Partners (ASP):

ASP1: Ministry of Culture and Innovation State Secretariat for public collection and cultural developments (Hungary)
ASP2: Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (Romania)
ASP3: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia (Serbia)
ASP4: Institute for Cultural Concepts (Austria)
ASP5: Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia (Croatia)

Participants

The insights presented in this volume emerged from a dynamic participant-led inquiry involving more than sixty team members from CultHeRit consortium throughout 2025 and in early 2026. More than half of them were in the role of mentors and mentees testing the employment model across ten institutions in eight countries. They contributed through their active participation in the transnational working sessions and also through their written testimonies.

The Mentorship Pilot

The pilot employed TEN young professionals across TEN CHIM institutions in EIGHT countries for TWELVE months in 2025.

Mentors and mentees in Banja Luka, April 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit

Hungarian National Museum Public Collections Center – Museum of Applied Arts (MNMKK-IMM)
Location: Budapest, Hungary
Mentor: Júlia Katona
Mentee: Dalma Pszota

MAK - Museum of Applied Arts (MAK)
Location: Vienna, Austria
Mentor: Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel
Mentee: Jenny Unterkofler

National Institute of Heritage (INP)
Location: Bucharest, Romania
Mentor: Ioana Petrescu
Mentee: Erika Nagy

National Museum for the History of Transylvania (MNIT)
Location: Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Mentors: Monica Bodea, Ștefania Dogărel
Mentee: Andra-Cezara Comiati

Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments (RIPCM)
Location: Belgrade, Serbia
Mentor: Vladimir Džamić
Mentee: Dorotea Ašćerić

Intermunicipal Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments - Subotica (IPCMS)
Location: Subotica, Serbia
Mentor: Neda Džamić, Klara Evetović
Mentee: Richárd Morvai Rácz

Museum of Arts and Crafts (MUO)
Location: Zagreb, Croatia
Mentor: Marija Jurkić Flis
Mentee: Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić

Institute for Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Republic of Srpska (IPC)
Location: Banja Luka, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Mentors: Milijana Okilj, Miroslav Malinović, Jelena Savić
Mentee: Sara Đumić

Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague (UPM)
Location: Prague, Czech Republic
Mentor: Lucie Vlčková
Mentee: Tereza Hrdlička

Notranjska Museum Postojna (NMP)
Location: Postojna, Slovenia
Mentors: Tina Poljšak, Ana Čič, Tine Kaluža
Mentee: Vital Jurca

Senka Gavranov anchored this multifaceted endeavor. She convened the community at each stage, maintained communication channels and continuously adapted goals to reflect the participants' evolving needs. Her role extended beyond conventional facilitation. She acted as the project's connective thread, ensuring that no voice was lost between sessions and that collective insight was faithfully translated into this publication.

Senka Gavranov facilitates a project workshop in Cluj-Napoca, June 2024.

Photo credit: Zoltán Szalontai

Partners jointly developed the transnational employment model. Thomas Philipp from KUPF OÖ guided and coordinated this process and conducted an ongoing evaluation through regular surveys. He also facilitated an assessment session involving the young mentees in Linz in December 2025. His analysis and reports ensured reliable guidance for the partners, helping them adjust onboarding practices and improve workflows throughout 2025.

Thomas Philipp facilitates a project workshop in Belgrade, October 2024. Photo credit: CultHeRit

The Transnational Employment Model with examples of good practice are available on the project website. A brief summary of the mentorship evaluation is available as Annex III to this publication.

This volume is neither a formal evaluation report nor a scientific study. It is a collection of insights derived from transnational working encounters, where participant needs and feedback shaped the agenda. It offers a window into the lived experience of mentorship, capturing its nuances, challenges, doubts and breakthroughs. While grounded in practice, the text is informed by theoretical frameworks that helped participants identify and explain observed patterns and daily phenomena. The working encounters also served as a space for research and calibration, where the partnership evaluated various analytical tools, concepts and approaches to devise practical and feasible solutions. The *CultHeRit Insights* series documents these tools as instrumental for identifying, contextualizing and tackling problems. While many theories and concepts were considered, the most promising frameworks facilitated identification of realistic and effective methods to address urgent issues and support advocacy and alliance-building necessary for achieving long-term goals. Designed for modular reading, the four volumes of the *CultHeRit Insights* incorporate these theoretical concepts and analytical tools because they have proven instrumental for explaining various aspects of work in CHIM. This recurrence serves as a connecting thread, while ensuring that each volume of the publication remains self-contained and accessible to readers who may not consult the entire series.

Beyond the collective energy and wisdom of the working encounters, this publication draws depth also from the testimonies of mentors and mentees who chose to document their journeys in writing. These personal narratives are collected in Annex II: Voices from the Field. Their reflections complement the broader group insights and offer a valuable resource for researchers and HR experts studying the real-life dynamics of professional development and institutional integration.

Mentors who contributed written testimonies are Ștefania Dogărel (MNIT), Neda Džamić (IPCMS), Vladimir Džamić (RIPCM), Marija Jurkić Flis (MUO), Milijana Okilj, Miroslav Malinović and Jelena Savić (IPC), Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel (MAK), Lucie Vlčková and Michaela Neškerova (UPM).

Mentees who contributed written testimonies are Dorotea Ašćerić (RIPCM), Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić (MUO), Andra-Cezara Comiati (MNIT), Sara Đumić (IPC), Erika Nagy (INP), Dalma Pszota (MNMKK-IMM), Richárd Morvai Rácz (IPCMS).

Readers are invited to explore this and companion publications in the series and to join the conversations about intergenerational cooperation and knowledge transfer in the workplace and contribute to the efforts for improving employment accessibility and outcomes for young professionals and all new colleagues.

The Imperative of Connection: Why Mentorship Matters Now

Like many employment markets, the cultural heritage sector is navigating a period of transition. Custodians of collective memory, CHIM institutions face significant challenges, including demographic shift and the urgent need to attract and retain new talent. The departure of senior staff and low retention rates of young professionals pose risks to institutional memory, intergenerational transfer of (tacit) knowledge and specialized skills. An important factor in addressing these challenges lies in how relationships between experienced colleagues and emerging professionals are structured.

In this context, mentorship emerges not merely as a 'nice-to-have' addition to human resources strategies, but as a strategic imperative for sustainability. This structured professional relationship, referred to interchangeably as workplace mentorship or mentorship at work, is often misunderstood. It is frequently conflated with supervision, reduced to an informal favor or misapplied as a temporary fix for structural, sectoral or even societal issues. This publication argues that for mentorship to be effective, it should be reimagined and implemented as a structured, reciprocal and formally recognized practice that benefits both the mentor and the mentee while strengthening the institution as a whole. If introduced without honest discussion, adequate resourcing or clear boundaries, mentorship risks becoming yet another unpaid burden for overworked staff. The goal here is to explore how to avoid this pitfall and make mentorship scalable and a source of strength.

The core component of the CultHeRit living lab on employment in CHIM was the development and testing of a transnational employment model in 2025, with mentorship as an integral part of the onboarding and orientation processes. During that year, the mentorship pilot was implemented in ten CHIM institutions in eight countries, avoiding to impose a rigid one-size-fits-all structure. The CultHeRit pilot rather embraced flexibility, allowing mentor-mentee pairs to explore various options and arrangements, from traditional one-on-one mentoring to co-mentoring and peer-support models. This openness to diverse configurations of traditional mentorship approaches and to explore complementary models was deliberate and strategic. It aimed to ensure that the resulting practices would be applicable and transferable across diverse institutional contexts, from large national museums to smaller local archives.

Focusing on innovative employment practices, CultHeRit sought to identify what works under different conditions rather than prescribing a single 'correct' method. It did so by testing diverse approaches and employment practices, including mentorship models, in real-world settings. Additionally, the project identified good mentorship practices within the field, detailed in the Transnational Employment Model, and mentorship for persons with disabilities, covered in the fourth volume of this series.

The purpose of this volume is to present insights from CultHeRit and show how a structured mentorship program can play a transformative role in improving employment conditions and outcomes in CHIM for young professionals. By pairing newly hired staff with experienced colleagues, mentorship can help improve retention rates and career outcomes, smooth onboarding as well as create a platform for intergenerational dialogue and intra-institutional cohesion. The publication

Senka Gavranov and Anna Böhm-Vinceffy working with mentors and mentees at the workshop in Postojna, October 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit.

captures the practical experiences and insights emerging from the CultHeRit pilots. It does not claim that mentorship is a panacea. Rather, it presents mentorship as one viable strategy which was trialed and evaluated. By summarizing ongoing conversations and presenting what worked, what fell short and what needs additional resources, the publication aims to stimulate wider conversations about scalability of mentorship as one of the sustainable ways to involve young people in heritage work.

While mentorship is already regulated by law in two partner countries, the CultHeRit pilot demonstrated that formalization can also be driven from within. In three institutions of the partnership, the pilot's impact extended far beyond the initial 12-month timeframe. Driven by the mentors and mentees themselves, who presented formal proposals to their leadership, these institutions officially adopted mentorship in the first half of 2026. This immediate transition from pilot to institutional policy serves as a testament to the model's viability and the capacity of staff to drive institutional policy change. It demonstrates that employee-led advocacy can successfully convince leadership to institutionalize the practice.

This text is not a rigid toolkit or guideline. It is a collection of insights and findings intended to start conversations about the advantages and disadvantages of mentorship and to present diverse alternative or complementary models, such as co-mentoring or work-buddy arrangements. In other words, this volume is written and published to invite colleagues from museums and, where relevant, libraries, archives and galleries, as well as other organizations, to consider formal mentorship schemes and ways to recognize, resource and remunerate them appropriately and to explore complementary approaches such as job-shadowing, team-mentoring or peer-mentoring. The goal is to move the conversation from theory to practice, offering concrete examples and tools that can be adapted across the cultural heritage landscape. Ultimately, the publication aims to inspire employers, museums and cultural-heritage institutes to sustain and adopt flexible, inclusive and fair employment models that build workplace communities, future-proof the sector and ensure its vitality.

Understanding Mentorship: Historical and Cultural Roots

by **Carlotta Schiller**, MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria

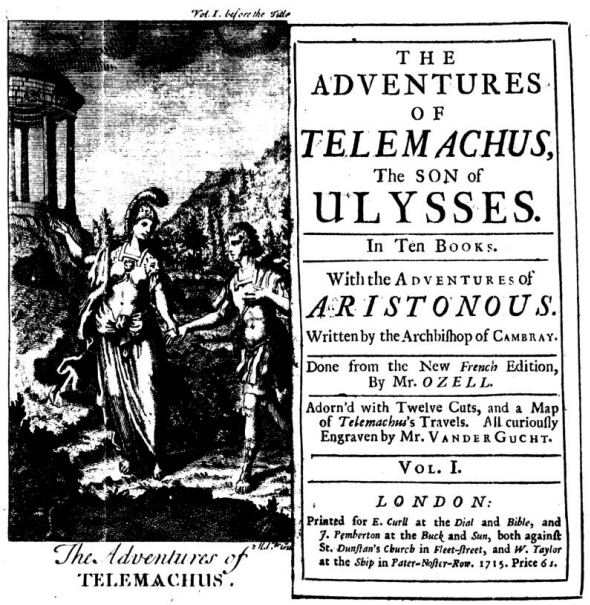
Mentorship and menteeship signal a joint journey in which both mentor and mentee actively participate. Knowledge, experience and learning flow in both directions, challenging the traditional 'expert-to-novice' hierarchy. Neither party is merely a passive recipient. Each person commits to a mutually supportive relationship and works toward shared objectives while remaining flexible enough to realign goals as circumstances change. By the end of their working interactions, both individuals emerge transformed, having enriched one another through a truly collaborative exchange. In this structured professional-yet-personal relationship, the collaborative and reciprocal dynamic is not merely an administrative formality but a mechanism for intergenerational solidarity as well as integration into teams. If done well, mentorship contributes to improving employee retention and fostering a profound sense of belonging among young professionals entering a sector often characterized by precarious employment conditions.

While the contexts for mentorship have shifted from mythological epics to organizational charts, the fundamental human need for wisdom, trust and guidance remains unchanged. To fully appreciate the weight of this commitment in the modern-day institutions, it is instructive to situate these practices within their broader historical context.

The modern concept of mentorship is deeply rooted in classical Greek literature, particularly in Homer's *Odyssey*. The term mentor originates from the character Mentor, a trusted friend of Odysseus. Before departing for the Trojan War, Odysseus entrusts Mentor with the care and guidance of his household and, more importantly, the upbringing of his son, Telemachus. Mentor's role extends beyond guardianship. He is responsible for advising, educating and shaping Telemachus' moral and intellectual development during Odysseus' long absence. Significantly, the goddess Athena frequently intervenes in *The Odyssey*, at times taking the form of Mentor in order to guide Telemachus. While Mentor is a trusted friend of Odysseus and the appointed guardian of his household, Athena's disguise of his identity allows her to deliver wisdom, encouragement and practical guidance directly to Telemachus. This blending of human guardianship and divine intervention reinforces Mentor's symbolic function as a source of wisdom, protection and personal growth rather than merely instruction (Graf & Edelkraut, 2016).

Telemachus and Mentor Photo credit: Wikimedia commons

From a linguistic perspective, the word *mentor* derives directly from the ancient Greek *Mentōr* (Μέντωρ). By the 18th century, the term began to be used metaphorically in European languages, particularly in English and French, to describe a wise and trusted advisor. François Fénelon's 1699 novel *Les Aventures de Télémaque*, inspired by Homer's *Odyssey*, played a critical role in popularizing the term in its figurative sense. The novel reinforced Mentor as an idealized guide, further embedding the concept in educational and philosophical discourse (Graf & Edelkraut, 2016). The etymological evolution of 'mentorship' reflects this transition from literature to social practice. While mentor initially referred to a specific individual, the derivative noun 'mentorship' emerged to describe the process or relationship itself. This shift marked an important conceptual development. Mentorship came to be understood not merely as the presence of a wise figure but as an intentional, ongoing relational practice focused on development and guidance.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The Adventures of TELEMACHUS.

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Vol. I.

LONDON:

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Francois Fenelon The Adventures of Telemachus Photo credit: Wikimedia commons

The modern concept of mentorship, found across cultures, echoes the classical guru principle in Hinduism, a relationship grounded in care, guidance and long-term personal growth (Yale, 1951). Today, mentorship brings these ideals into workplaces and organizations, fostering individual development, knowledge sharing and stronger communities. In Japan, the *senpai-kōhai* system reflects a similar approach. Informal relationships among employees are shaped by culturally embedded traditions of hierarchy and guidance. Senpai (seniors) support *kōhai* (juniors), while *doki* (peers) provide each other assistance. Sekiguchi & Ikeda explain that "[t]he *senpai-kōhai* dynamic in Japanese organizations is deeply rooted in cultural expectations of mutual support and respect." (Sekiguchi & Ikeda, 2025, point 2). *Senpai* are expected to guide and care for their *kōhai*, while *kōhai* show respect and appreciation in return. This reciprocal relationship extends beyond a single generation, as *kōhai* eventually take on the *senpai* role themselves, passing the cycle of guidance and support to the next generation within the organization.

Over time, the meaning of mentorship expanded beyond its classical roots to encompass diverse contexts, including education, academia and organizational settings. Nevertheless, the foundational attributes associated with Mentor in ***The Odyssey***, wisdom, trust, guidance and the nurturing of potential, continue to define the essence of mentorship today. The enduring influence of this ancient narrative underscores the timeless human need for guidance and the transmission of knowledge across generations. This is especially true for early-career professionals entering the field, yet the modern workplace requires a different mechanism to sustain that spirit.

The Intrainstitutional Dynamic: Workplace Mentorship

Workplace mentorship is a structured, purposeful relationship aimed at supporting the personal and professional development of employees. While academic mentorship provides a primary model for such guidance in the modern world, workplace mentoring differs significantly in its focus, goals and modes of relating. Unlike supervision, which centers on performance, task completion and accountability, mentorship is oriented toward long-term development, strategic guidance and integration into the professional field. The chain of supervision also plays a role in integrating new colleagues and steering their professional development. Yet, the supervision is driven primarily by the needs of the organization and the team, prioritizing the institution's goals within the organigram, even when a mentee's future trajectory may lie outside the current institution. Consequently, sensitizing supervisors to these distinct roles can be highly beneficial. Mentors often characterize their role as guiding integration, fostering independence and providing a safe space for honest dialogue, distinct from the evaluative priorities of supervision. This caring, developmental and forward-looking relationship fosters the growth of mentees, strengthens the capabilities of mentors and contributes to the resilience and sustainability of organizations.

Notably, in the CultHeRit pilot, the mentor was typically an internal colleague. The sole exception was IPC in Banja Luka, where co-mentors were external professionals who work in the same field and also bring extensive experience in academic mentoring. Intra-institutional mentoring arrangements often produce dynamics distinct from external or academic mentorship. Since the mentor operates within the same organizational hierarchy, a potential conflict arises between the mentor's supportive role and the supervisor's evaluative role. This tension requires careful navigation so the mentor remains a trusted confidant rather than an extension of management. While various mentorship models exist for professional growth, this publication focuses on the specificities of the in-situ model, where the mentor must balance institutional loyalty with the mentee's independent development.

Beyond Skills: The Transfer of Tacit Knowledge

The transfer of knowledge in mentorship extends well beyond the transmission of technical or professional content. Tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966) in this sector encompasses ethical frameworks, the 'unwritten rules' of institutional navigation, the preservation of institutional memory and access to professional networks and contacts. This implied knowledge and these resources are rarely codified in manuals or procedures, yet they are essential for effective professional practice. A mentor who shares the informal norms of institutional communication, introduces the mentee to key contacts across departments or conveys the ethical standards that govern decision-making in heritage preservation is transferring a form of capital that no handbook can replicate. The loss of tacit knowledge when senior staff retire represents a significant risk to institutional continuity, making mentorship a vital mechanism for its preservation.

Safeguarding this knowledge through mentorship, however, serves purposes larger than preservation alone. The objectives of this relationship are multifaceted. Mentorship at work primarily aims to support the personal and professional development

of employees while facilitating their onboarding and integration into institutions. It serves to transmit professional standards, ethics and sector-specific norms, thus strengthening institutional capacity and ensuring knowledge continuity. Ultimately, these efforts seek to improve retention of new hires, their job satisfaction and long-term career sustainability. Even when formal mentorship relationships conclude, their impact often extends far beyond the official timeframe, creating durable professional bonds and contributing to a stronger, more resilient cultural heritage sector.

Main Principles of Mentorship at Work

During CultHeRit working sessions, participants identified core principles to define the role, goals and nature of mentorship in CHIM. These principles guide workplace implementation and distinguish mentorship from other professional interactions. A fundamental principle is that mentorship requires dedicated professional commitment. It cannot be relegated to informal status or absorbed into standard workloads without affecting its effectiveness. The practice demands time, emotional investment and strategic thinking. Without formal recognition, mentorship risks becoming a burden for mentors and an inconsistent experience for mentees. It therefore warrants explicit recognition as part of institutional work.

Another key principle is that mentorship is distinct from supervision, as outlined earlier. Supervisors are responsible for daily tasks, performance evaluation and institutional hierarchy. Mentors, however, focus on long-term developmental trajectories. They guide mentees through onboarding, institutional processes and professional norms, while also helping them envision future career paths that may extend beyond the current institution. This distinction allows mentorship to remain a safe space for honest dialogue, critical (self-)reflection and growth. Yet, the practical application of this distinction sparked considerable discussion during the CultHeRit workshops. Participants did not reach a consensus on whether the same person should fulfill both roles. Some argued that the roles should be clearly delineated to prevent conflicts of interest and preserve the mentor as a trusted confidant outside the chain of command. Others suggested that combining the roles could be effective if clear boundaries were established and the mentor-supervisor possessed the interpersonal skills to navigate both functions. Rather than prescribing a single model, participants prioritized clarity as the main requirement. Institutions should explicitly define the roles, clarify responsibilities and potential risks associated with each. They must assess on a case-by-case basis which approach best suits their organizational context and the individuals involved.

Mentorship is also a fundamentally bi-directional learning process. While mentors provide experience, institutional knowledge and professional standards, mentees contribute new perspectives, digital skills and contemporary practices. The relationship thrives on mutually beneficial exchange rather than a rigid expert-to-novice hierarchy. Sustaining this reciprocity, however, requires deliberate effort. The terms of the relationship must be mutually agreed upon with clear expectations from the outset. This alignment is best achieved when mentorship is formally recognized and institutionalized, ensuring the exchange remains protected and valued amid the daily demands of the workplace.

The Persistent Challenge: Barriers in CHIM Employment

The CultHeRit project is a response to the observed crisis that threatens to disrupt generational ties and knowledge transfer in the cultural heritage sector. The attrition of young professionals to other sectors or to Western labor markets presents a persistent challenge for cultural heritage institutions in Southeastern and parts of Central Europe. This trend is particularly acute for non-sectoral functions, including administrative roles such as accounting, marketing, legal or administrative support roles. In general, there is a pronounced risk of CHIM institutions becoming mere launchpads. This accelerates the depletion of institutional resources. High turnover often means that remaining staff absorb the tasks of departed colleagues, resulting in overload and risking burnout. A slow pace of rejuvenation, low retention rates and high turnover contribute to the emergence of generational silos within many institutions. These silos, in turn, lead to widening intergenerational gaps, miscommunication, further fragmentation of practices and the loss of knowledge, expertise and international professional networks when senior staff retire.

There is a clear need for a systematic, resource-conscious and affordable solution to integrate newcomers while preserving and transmitting the knowledge of senior colleagues. If the onboarding of new colleagues remains ad-hoc and guidance is inconsistent or lacking altogether, it can leave them confused, isolated and uncertain about career pathways or even daily tasks. Combined with low remuneration, many feel compelled to seek employment elsewhere. A repeated cycle of attrition leaves leadership and teams in many institutions facing a dilemma: invest in the professional development of a young colleague and risk their departure, or refrain from investing and risk their stagnation if they stay. Ultimately, the solution lies in finding a way to retain new hires through a sustainable balance of interventions on individual, institutional, sectoral and societal levels.

Resolving this dilemma also requires confronting the root causes of instability that drive it. Employment in the cultural sector is characterized by job instability. As noted in the *EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026*, "artists and cultural and creative professionals tend to have project-based careers and experience a high degree of mobility. They often have an irregular and unpredictable income and combine several jobs to earn a living" (Council of the European Union, 2022). Mafalda Dâmaso (2021) explains that "the atypical nature of artistic and cultural work and its precarious characteristics cannot be fully addressed without taking into account broader structural vulnerabilities" (p. 2).

Even within its limited scope and a short-term project-based framework, CultHeRit sought to address reported job instability by prioritizing employment interventions. It focused on providing structured support to strengthen institutional HR processes, capacity and practices for the employment of early-career professionals, rather than relying on alternative work arrangements. The project was designed to improve job accessibility in the CHIM sector by moving beyond dependence on recurrent, often precarious arrangements such as repeated volunteering, unpaid internships and short-term freelance contracts. While often a necessary lifeline for underfunded institutions, the perpetuation of such arrangements ultimately risks reinforcing a cycle of job insecurity for young professionals. The CultHeRit initiative encouraged institutions

to prioritize permanent hiring over reliance on short-term options. Because interventions and tools were designed to be used beyond the project's conclusion, they establish a solid foundation for future recruitment and integration. Crucially, continued employment of well-integrated new colleagues means that the knowledge and skills acquired from senior colleagues remain in-house, strengthening the institution. Improving hiring and integration processes, ultimately, builds institutional and sectoral capacity to provide quality employment for young talent.

Nevertheless, interventions at the level of teams and institutions are limited in scope and outreach. Structural barriers call for interventions at the policy and societal level, including financial measures such as fair remuneration and stable funding for culture. For that reason, the CultHeRit partnership worked on many levels. In parallel with exploring mentorship as a viable institutional response which could improve the employment situation and outcomes for young professionals, it advocated for structural and financial interventions.

A Multi-level Approach to Effecting Change

Responding to the need for balanced holistic solutions, a core mission of CultHeRit was to identify fields of intervention where CHIM institutions, their leadership and employees could drive and effect change. The project aimed to empower professionals to (re)claim their agency by identifying problems and solving those within their reach, given their available resources and skills. This approach navigates a delicate balance. It seeks to empower staff without overburdening them or replacing the specialized knowledge of HR or other professionals. The CultHeRit self-reliant, bottom-up approach enabled CHIM professionals to regain agency and directly tackle challenges within their immediate scope. This empowerment extended beyond individual institutions, encouraging professionals to engage with colleagues and peers across the sector to discuss shared challenges, co-create solutions and build strategic alliances that amplify their collective voice. The project, therefore, recognized that many challenges require structural changes beyond the reach of individual employees, spanning institutional, sector-wide, policy and societal levels. At the institutional level, the initiative actively supported partners to improve hiring procedures and enhance onboarding and integration practices for new entrants. In parallel, CultHeRit worked to identify problems necessitating policy reform, directing advocacy campaigns toward policymakers and authorities. These efforts included placing the topic of employment conditions on the agendas of professional associations, meetings, conferences and fora for policy-makers. The CultHeRit multi-level approach ensures that internal institutional changes align with broader sectoral and policy goals. That way, the staff is empowered to act locally and effect change within their sphere of influence, while broader systemic issues are addressed through collective advocacy and targeted policy intervention.

Central to this multi-level approach, mentorship emerged as a pivotal institutional intervention capable of bridging individual agency with broader policy goals. It can be supported by individuals and their actions (such as the way individuals and teams relate to novice colleagues) and catalyze policy-level changes (regarding how policy and legal frameworks can support mentorship). In the specific context of CHIM, mentorship often forms ad-hoc and remains informal and resource-constrained, although exceptions exist where it is regulated by law. Without institutional or regulatory support, high workloads frequently render these organic pairings unreliable, risking the transformation of guidance into a burden for mentors and inconsistent support for mentees. Moreover, the reliance on informal goodwill, while often driven by dedication, is not without its complexities. The very characteristics that make mentorship a powerful tool, its dependence on emotional labor and relational care-work, are frequently overlooked in traditional organizational structures. Recognizing that these relational dynamics can impact staff differently depending on their position and background, it is important to consider how gendered expectations shape the experience of care and transmission in the sector. Examining these dimensions allows for a deeper understanding of how to support mentorship in a way that is both sustainable and equitable for all, especially in feminized sectors.

The Gendered Dimensions of Care and Transmission

Structuring and formalizing mentorship offers a path to address the sector's persistent challenges at the institutional level: maintaining intergenerational knowledge transfer, recognizing invisible, often gendered, relational work and reducing high attrition rates among early-career professionals. In CultHeRit, mentorship was an integral part of the employment model as a concrete mechanism explored within the project's scope and resources. Its relevance is particularly acute when considering the gendered dimensions of heritage work. According to Jiménez-Esquinas (2025, p. 1474), women constitute the majority of technical staff in the heritage sector yet hold fewer than one-third of executive positions in heritage management institutions. She further contends that this underrepresentation manifests through an imbalance in labor division and areas of influence regarding cultural authority. She characterizes the labor sustaining this sector as "often-invisible, trivialized and unpaid forms of care work," (p. 1472) which is defined as "the ensemble of often invisible, feminized and undervalued activities that ensure the continuity, maintenance, transmission, and affective engagement with cultural practices, places and heritage objects" (p. 1478).

Mentorship, as a practice of care and knowledge transmission, can be seen as directly engaging with these undervalued domains. By formalizing and recognizing the relational work inherent in mentorship, the CultHeRit model sought to counteract the tendency to treat such activities as invisible labor and to acknowledge and validate the contributions of those who sustain the sector's vitality. The gendered dynamics are not confined to individual institutions but permeate the sector across the region, underscoring the need for interventions that explicitly value and formalize relational work rather than leaving it unrecognized.

Scalability and Avoiding Nomothetic Risk

To ensure such interventions are effective across varied institutional settings, the project had to navigate the risk of applying the same model universally. Expecting a practice successful in one context to work in another often leads to failure. Nomothetic risk, as Vitiello et al. (2025) explain, is "assuming that any idea, or practice, may work in any context, geographic area, at any time" (p. 8). In the cultural heritage sector, this risk manifests when institutions adopt rigid models from other contexts without accounting for local specificities or structural characteristics or barriers. To avoid this, the CultHeRit pilot embraced flexibility, allowing mentor-mentee pairs to explore various options and arrangements, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all structure.

While Vitiello et al. (2025) differentiate between best practices, good practices and *what works* in the library sector, the distinction appears equally critical in CHIM. Both sectors face chronic resource constraints. CultHeRit partnership considered that scalability in CHIM requires adapting practices to fit local realities rather than assuming universal applicability. The openness to diverse configurations of traditional mentorship practices and to complementary models was deliberate and strategic. It aimed to ensure that the resulting practices would be applicable and

transferable across varied institutional settings, in other words – scalable.

Because nearly the entire sector faces similar problems of demographic shift, disruption of intergenerational knowledge transfer and chronic scarcity of resources, the ambition of CultHeRit was to devise and test scalable solutions and among them – mentorship. According to Vitiello et al. (2025), "scalability involves the capacity to adapt successful practices to different sizes, budgets and contexts without compromising quality or impact. The key question is not whether a practice can be transferred, but how it can be scaled effectively" (p. 12). Pioneering endeavors promoted as best practices are inspiring. They, however, risk remaining isolated or unachievable ideals unless they account for and avoid nomothetic risk. Discussing the diffusion of good practice models and solutions in the library sector, Vitiello et al. (2025) differentiate between best practices, good practices and *what works* as sources of inspiration. They further clarify that *what works* can be a good or best practice that "additionally incorporates aspects of frugality and scarce resources" (p.7).

They explain that "[m]any libraries operate under conditions of very scarce resources and have to find ways to accommodate innovation efforts accordingly. These efforts rest very often on employee motivation and initiatives, as well as on specific resource combinations available locally" (p. 7). Care must be taken not to equate libraries and CHIM institutions so readily, as their specific contexts differ. However, it is worth noting that many organizations in both sectors operate under the conditions of chronic scarcity of resources. This suggests that the risks associated with library models apply similarly to CHIM.

Recognizing that scalable solutions must work within the resource constraints, CultHeRit relied on the best accessible strength available: the in-house knowledge of experienced professionals. Mentorship, therefore, was embedded in the employment pilot intentionally in order to activate and strengthen precisely this strength by providing a supportive environment for intergenerational cooperation and capacity building for mentors, mentees and their teams.

CultHeRit Mentorship in Practice

The pilot was designed with flexibility at its core, testing whether a structured in-house mentorship model could serve as a viable intervention to build capacity, strengthen workplace cohesion and replenish institutions rather than deplete them. Partners, therefore, jointly developed a transnational employment model emphasizing transparent recruitment procedures, efficient onboarding practices and measures for improving job satisfaction. Ten partner institutions from eight countries piloted this model, each employing an early-career professional for a year. As mentorship was an integral part of the model, this ensured that the framework was tested and refined through multiple lenses, increasing its potential applicability across different geographical and sociocultural contexts.

CultHeRit Team: Towards a Community of Practice

The team's makeup itself helped validate the model for replication and scaling.

CultHeRit team at the project meeting in Banja Luka, April 2025.
Photo credit: CultHeRit.

The transnational CultHeRit team brought together professionals with diverse educational backgrounds, varied job profiles and different perspectives on work in CHIM. The project team comprised a deliberately mixed-age group of more than sixty professionals, with team members ranging in age from 23 to nearly 70. In this multigenerational, multinational, multilingual and multidisciplinary setting, dialogue, mutual respect and collaborative problem-solving characterized working interactions. Feedback suggests that age diversity stimulated creativity, allowing participants to collaborate on innovative solutions. Solid communal bonds emerged, contributing to intergenerational understanding and fostering empathy. This sense of belonging to a community of practice was reinforced by traveling together to project meetings, working closely on tasks and sharing a sense of purpose and mission. The shared commitment helped the team overcome obstacles and clarify misunderstandings. It also laid the groundwork for a broader change, strengthening internal ties and amplifying external impact.

However, the manifold employment challenges facing the sector cannot be fully solved within the framework of a single project. Recognizing this, the diversity of the CultHeRit partnership and the team was not merely symbolic. It provided the multi-perspective lens necessary to identify and categorize the complex issues, realistically assess their extent and complexity, evaluate available capacities and develop targeted approaches to resolution. The collective analysis confirmed that systemic barriers require broad policy intervention and revealed which specific institutional hurdles could be addressed through focused, in-house actions. Such participatory problem-solving process was built into CultHeRit by design: instead of imposing top-down solutions, the partners collaboratively defined a pool of solutions, selecting and adapting strategies based on their specific contexts, needs and agreed-upon goals. Over the project, this dynamic process, driven by participants themselves, shaped the insights presented here.

Building Strength from Within

The shift toward in-house action was also driven by the sector's chronic resource constraints. Mentoring was tested as an internal practice designed to develop institutional human resources. It is an accessible tool for smooth onboarding and helps foster a sense of belonging to a profession and a vibrant community of practice. In CultHeRit, the 12-month mentoring pairings were understood as a shared journey of mutual learning, where goals evolve and and relationships accordingly realign. As mentorship functioned as a solution that draws on existing institutional knowledge and skills rather than requiring extensive external support, it reduced reliance on outside help. In effect, if done well and properly supported, mentorship strengthens the organization. It turns in-house resources and institutional memory into an an active asset, simultaneously building the capacity of both the mentor and the mentee. For the mentee, it provides orientation in the field, accelerates professional integration and builds the confidence essential for early-career professionals. For the mentor, the process develops professional technical skills alongside soft-skill fluency in communication and leadership.

Senka Gavranov facilitates mentors-mentees building a community of practice in Banja Luka, April 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit.

To support mentoring efforts in CultHeRit, the mentorship pairs used simple, affordable tools, including mentoring journals, regular meetings and ongoing evaluation. These tools are accessible to every organization working on every budget. The approach used in CultHeRit resonates with the concept of frugal innovation, defined by Hossain et al. (2016) as "a resource scarce solution[...] that is designed and implemented despite financial, technological, material or other resource constraints, whereby the final outcome is significantly cheaper than competitive offerings [...] and is good enough to meet the basic needs of customers who would otherwise remain un(der)served" (p. 133). By leveraging in-house assets and building their capacity through the mentorship program, the CultHeRit pilot operationalized this concept, transforming the collective experience of CHIM professionals into a sustainable foundation for professional growth. Institutions often rely on pragmatic approaches that leverage existing assets to address immediate challenges while securing optimal quality. In CHIM, frugal resourcefulness is often born of necessity rather than strategic choice. CultHeRit, however, embraced it not as a fallback but as a formalized self-reliant way for institutions and their employees to (re)claim agency and improve the employment situation. Nevertheless, mentorship can complement, but cannot substitute, the structural support and adequate public investment on which long-term sustainability depends.

Generating Insights: A Participatory Approach

To maintain reliance on internal resourcefulness, the process of generating insights had to be equally embedded in the participants' daily reality. The findings presented in this volume were not simply extracted from a dataset but emerged organically from the ongoing conversations and workshops that acted as the scaffolding for the mentorship pilot.

Transnational Learning Exchanges

The development of these insights was a dynamic process driven by the participants. It unfolded throughout 2025, starting with mentorship pairings in January.

January 2025
Mentorship pairings started in ten CHIM institutions across eight countries.

April 6, 2025
The Launch: Building a Community of Practice | Location: Banja Luka, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Focus: Establishing group dynamics and initial connections. Facilitator: Senka Gavranov.

June 3, 2025
Mentor and Mentee Presentations | Location: Bucharest, Romania. Focus: Background, challenges and initial findings from the first semester of mentorship in CultHeRit. The survey was conducted by Senka Gavranov and Sebastian Boniș, completed and presented by mentors and mentees. Moderator: Sebastian Boniș and Anna Böhm-Vinceffy.

June 4, 2025
The Mentor's Forum: Focus Group on the Role and Tools | Location: Bucharest, Romania. Focus: Dedicated session for mentors to discuss challenges, refine skills and define roles. Facilitator: Senka Gavranov. Conclusions drawn by: Carlotta Schiller and Senka Gavranov.

June 4, 2025
The Mentee's Forum: Focus Group on the Ten Parameters for Good Employment | Location: Bucharest, Romania. Focus: Session dedicated to mentees to define parameters for good employment. Facilitator: Thomas Philipp.

July – September 2025
Preparatory survey designed by Senka Gavranov, completed by CultHeRit mentors and mentees. Results centralized by Anna Böhm-Vinceffy and analyzed by Senka Gavranov.

October 2, 2025
The Dialogues: Shaping the Framework Together | Location: Postojna, Slovenia. Focus: Focus: Joint workshop for mentors and mentees to discuss findings, refine definitions and share insights. Facilitator: Senka Gavranov.

November 27, 2025
The Horizon: Early Policy Insights and Future Pathways | Location: Bucharest, Romania and hybrid. Focus: Key Stakeholder Group (KSG) workshop to guide strategy and advocate for policy changes. Hosted by Lucia Leca and Irina Iamandescu (INP). Workshop facilitated by Senka Gavranov.

December 2025 – April 2026
Final input collection for this volume, administered and centralized by Anna Böhm-Vinceffy and analyzed by Senka Gavranov.

June 18, 2026
Intergenerational Cooperation and Future -proofing the CHIM sector | Location: Budapest, Hungary. Joint workshop for members of CultHeRit project team and Key Stakeholder Groups (KSGs) to strengthen intergenerational understanding and enhance transfer of skills and knowledge through experiential learning and empathy-building. Facilitator: Senka Gavranov.

Throughout 2025, transnational encounters and working sessions allowed findings to mature through continuous dialogue, ensuring that insights could be tested, challenged and refined over time rather than captured at a single point and ossified as static knowledge. These sessions functioned as both spaces of inquiry and support, allowing mentors and mentees to share challenges and brainstorm solutions together. Several workshops also included colleagues from the participating institutions, expanding the circle of engagement beyond the primary mentor-mentee pairs.

Notably, the request for these interactions came directly from the mentors and mentees themselves, who viewed them as vital for professional development. To accommodate this, the content, frequency and format of transnational interactions were designed based on consultations to identify and address the ongoing needs of the community. By encouraging participants to contribute to the agenda, select the tools and define the metrics of success, the project sought to foster a deep sense of agency. It also ensured that the insights and conclusions were grounded in the participant's lived reality.

From Employee Empowerment to Institutional Adoption

The CultHeRit pilot's most significant achievements include a robust Transnational Employment Model and compelling evidence that employee-led

initiatives can drive structural change. While mentorship is already regulated by law in two countries, this pilot demonstrated that formalization can be driven from within. By supporting and encouraging employees to define their needs and design solutions, the project supported participatory initiatives where professionals successfully navigated complex hierarchies and administrative barriers to implement lasting change. This empowerment delivered immediate, tangible results. In early 2026, three partner institutions officially integrated mentorship into their operational frameworks.

Employee-Led Success Stories of Institutional Adoption of Mentorship

Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments (RIPCM), Serbia: In late 2025 and early 2026, a rulebook was drafted to support the adoption of mentorship as a standard onboarding procedure. The rulebook was adopted by the Acting Director of the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments on June 5, 2026, setting a precedent for the entire network of heritage protection institutes in Serbia, including **Intermunicipal Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments - Subotica (IPCMS).** For future employees, mentors and institutions, this means ensuring the effective transfer of knowledge and skills, as well as smoother professional and social integration into the Institute's working environment.

Museum of Arts and Crafts (MUO), Zagreb, Croatia: On April 13, 2026, the MUO Council of Administration decided to adopt the *RULES on mentoring for newly employed employees trainee curator in the Museum of Arts and Crafts*. The mentoring process at the MUO lasts one year, unless otherwise stipulated by law. The mentor is appointed by the managing director upon the proposal of the President of the Expert Council, with the consent of the proposed mentor.

National Museum for the History of Transylvania (MNIT), Romania: On April 24, 2026, the MNIT Council of Administration decided to adapt the Internal Order Regulation, embedding mentorship into the institution's standard practice. Under this framework, the manager assigns a mentor or co-mentors to newly employed colleagues upon entry for the duration of the three-month standard trial period.
Although initially designed as a central aspect of onboarding and orientation to be tested and evaluated during the pilot, the formal adoption of mentorship was not a requirement of CultHeRit project. Recognizing its value and responding to their HR needs, the three partner institutions moved beyond the pilot phase to pursue formal integration. Empowered by the project's participatory approach, professionals drafted proposals, presented them to leadership and secured adoption.

These three cases demonstrate that employee-led initiatives are not just theoretical ideals but practical pathways to sustainability. This success was cultivated through structured support of CultHeRit working encounters, which provided expert guidance, peer support and problem-solving space necessary to navigate institutional and regulatory realities. Employees reclaimed the agency to identify needs and design solutions. CultHeRit confirmed that projects and experts are most effective when they respect participants' knowledge and help them turn it into action, supporting proactive problem-solving rather than prescribing rigid models or imposing universal solutions.

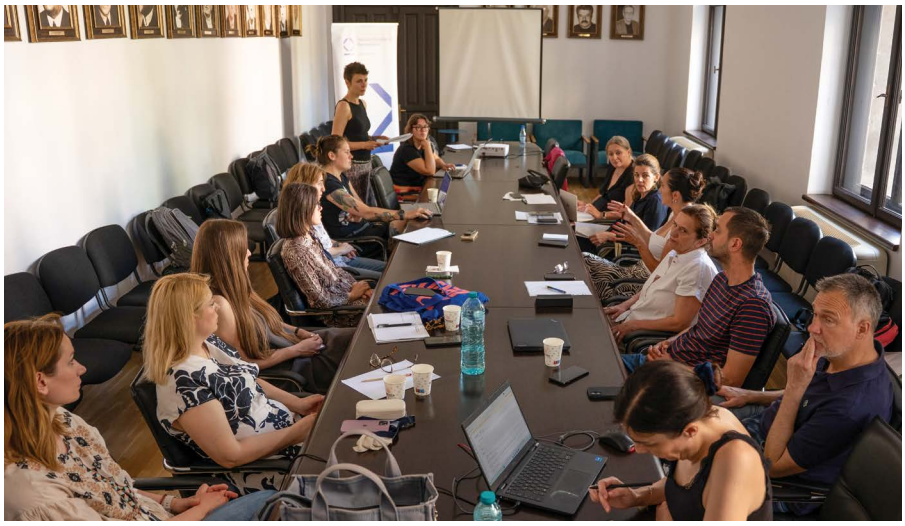
Critical Realities: Formalization, Limitations and Policy

The institutional adoption of mentorship in three partnership institutions succeeded also because the pilot, evaluations and transnational working sessions proactively tested, troubleshot and anticipated limitations in real time across multiple countries simultaneously. Throughout 2025, transnational working sessions and ongoing evaluation served as more than just reflective exercises. They were intentional mechanisms to stress-test the model and future-proof it for sustained impact. To ensure scalability, the partnership identified formalization pathways that respect the capacities of diverse institutions.

Mentorship does not exist in isolation but interacts with the wider structural landscape of the cultural heritage sector often characterized by resource-scarcity. It is touted as a resource-efficient intervention that leverages in-house assets and builds on existing informal practices. Yet, the reliance on goodwill and voluntary effort often masks hidden costs. This demanding work frequently depends on free time and personal dedication. Without dedicated support, chronic work overload risks turning informal arrangements into a burden, resulting in unstable and unreliable guidance.

The Case for Formal Recognition

Formalizing mentorship means acknowledging it institutionally and societally, regulated through job descriptions and certificates and rewarded financially through salary supplements or other means. Clear definition of responsibilities sets expectations, ensures accountability and legitimizes the time dedicated to mentoring activities. Without such formalization, the practice relies on personal goodwill, leading to uneven quality and limited sustainability. As Milijana Okilj, Miroslav Malinović and Jelena Savić from the IPC observe, true institutional support requires that “mentorship is recognized as part of the job, time is allocated for it and roles are well defined.” Similarly, Erika Nagy of the INP highlights the necessity of formal integration, noting that when mentorship is recognized, it “does not feel like a second thought” but is instead “incorporated within the institution’s processes.” Closely linked to official recognition is financial compensation.



Senka Gavranov and Carlotta Schiller at the workshop with mentors in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

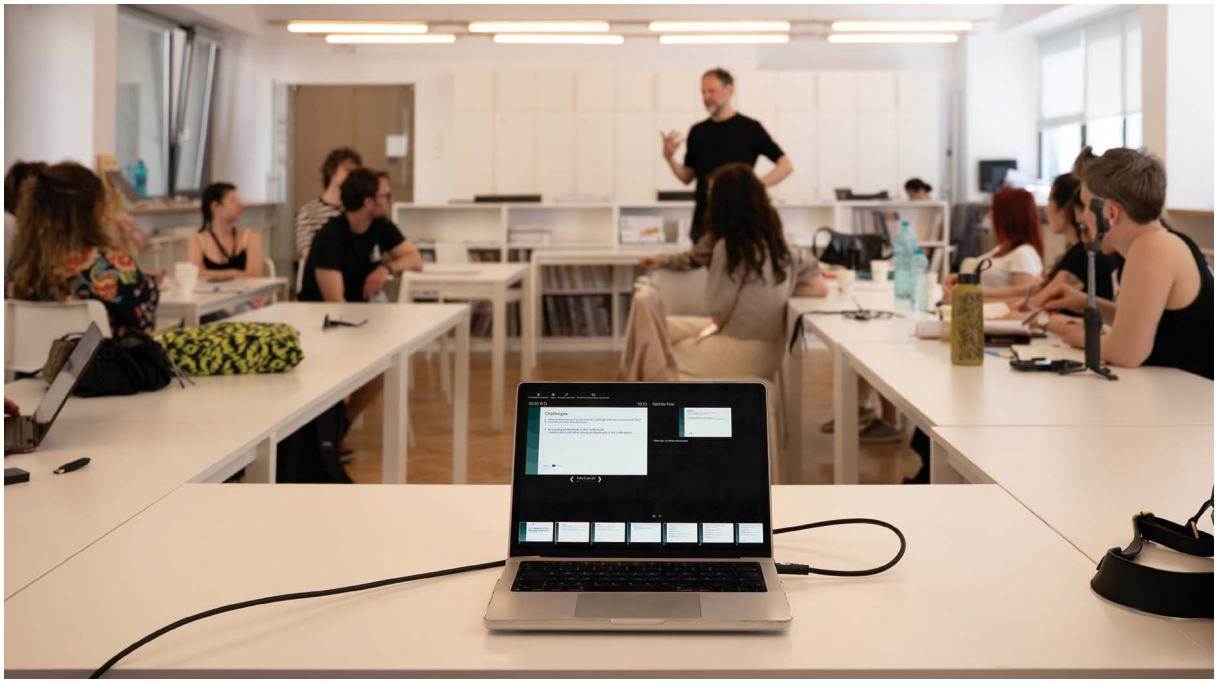
Mentorship should be financially compensated by employers through salary supplements, reduced workloads or other adequate means, ensuring mentors receive increased salaries or designated working hours. Financial recognition not only values the mentor's contribution but also increases the willingness of qualified professionals to take on these roles. Interactions and discussions within the CultHeRit suggest that a modest investment of time and resources yields tangible gains in onboarding confidence, intergenerational knowledge exchange and institutional cohesion. By institutionalizing mentorship, allocating a modest but sufficient budget and developing capacity-building measures, the sector could turn mentorship into a catalyst for retaining young talent and safeguarding collective heritage expertise.

However, a critical tension remains. Mentorship is often praised as a cost-effective solution because it leverages existing human capital rather than requiring costly external hires. Yet, this efficiency is conditional. While the method utilizes internal knowledge, implementation demands dedicated time, formal recognition and adequate financial remuneration. Planning, set-up and implementation of a mentorship program are labor-intensive and resource-consuming. Labelling mentorship cost-effective or even frugal without acknowledging these costs risks perpetuating the very burnout it aims to solve. True sustainability requires viewing mentorship as both a human and economic investment, not as a free add-on but as a strategic commitment that initially consumes resources to generate long-term returns.

The Human Factor: Selection and Fit

Translating this commitment into practice requires careful attention to the people involved: specifically, selecting mentors. While the role and perspectives of mentees warrant further exploration, this chapter focuses on the mentors, given their ability to influence outcomes and power dynamics within the relationship. Participants agreed that professional competence and expertise alone do not guarantee effective mentorship. The part of success of any program hinges on the personal traits and motivation of the mentors themselves. Participants highlighted that successful mentors possess specific interpersonal qualities: empathy, patience and a genuine desire to support another's growth. While domain knowledge and technical skills serve as the baseline, the most valued traits are interpersonal: active listening and the ability to provide constructive, non-judgmental feedback. Dorotea Ašćerić from the RIPCM emphasizes that a mentor "should have social intelligence to recognize which communication style suits the new employee best," suggesting that adaptability is more important than expertise. An ideal mentor is approachable, respectful and willing to invest time, embodying a balance of professional achievement and accessibility. Vladimir Džamić adds that at the ideal level, a mentor "embodies all the qualities listed above and demonstrates a high degree of empathy and personal charisma."

However, there is a tangible risk that individuals lacking desirable qualities may assume mentorship roles. Certain characteristics are also identified as disqualifying, including rigidity, arrogance, a chronic lack of time and an authoritarian



Thomas Philipp facilitates a workshop with mentees discussing ten parameters for quality employment in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

mindset. Additionally, Ștefania Dogărel from the MNIT warns that "a person with intense micro-manager behaviour would not make a good mentor, as they could never build trust with a mentee and offer constructive criticism." Furthermore, a mentor who views the relationship as a burden or refuses to share knowledge will likely fail. Neda Džamić (IPCMS) provides a stark warning against the abuse of power: "The mentor must not overload the mentee, nor use them for professional or personal purposes, nor manipulate, deceive, or claim their ideas." Marija Jurkić Flis from the MUO cautions against "arrogant behaviour, a sense of superiority, excessive control, or the imposition of the mentee's career path," noting that such traits undermine the relationship. Nearly all agree that an unsupportive or overly critical mentor can cause significant harm, undermining the mentee's confidence and defeating the purpose of the program.

Senka Gavranov facilitates mentors-mentees workshop in Postojna, October 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit.

Senka Gavranov facilitates workshop on intergenerational cooperation and future-proofing the CHIM sector, with members of CultHeRit project team and Key Stakeholder Groups (KSGs), in Budapest, June 2026. Photo credit: Zoltán Szalontai.

To mitigate this risk, institutions face the difficult task of establishing criteria for selecting and evaluating mentors. This implies a need for regulation, but it also introduces new complexities. Determining who is fit to mentor requires assessment methods that can be subjective or resource-intensive. Furthermore, the workshops underscored that a mentor who is ideal for one person may be ineffective for another. The consensus suggests that social intelligence is perhaps more critical than specific technical expertise, emphasizing interpersonal chemistry, communication style and shared interests as crucial. Participants consistently emphasized that successful mentorship relies on the alignment of expectations.

Consequently, a robust program cannot simply assign pairs at random. Rather, it should facilitate a matching process structured with an upfront yet flexible agreement on mentorship objectives and expectations to ensure both parties work toward shared goals. Communication styles, frequency of contact and channels as well as evaluation and troubleshooting mechanisms should also be clarified from the outset.

Whether through personality tests, trial periods or structured matching sessions, finding the right fit demands time and foresight. The approach must be guided by the actual progress of collaboration, its ongoing evaluation and adjustment rather than rigid timeframes. In practice, these necessary steps translate into additional workload and administrative labor.

Navigating Administrative Burden

It is important to acknowledge that instituting and implementing mentorship may entail significant administrative work and deplete resources. Paperwork related to embedding mentorship within an institution, setting it up, regulating it, establishing procedures, drafting forms, providing infrastructure and organizing training can overwhelm a single institution. Adding selection and matching requirements makes the burden heavier. Excessive bureaucracy can stifle the spontaneity essential to mentorship, while lacking clear tools can leave willing mentors uncertain about their duties. Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel

(MAK) shares her perspective that: "The CultHeRit program was very comprehensive... but it was difficult to implement in the day-to-day work of a large institution." To remedy this in a resource-efficient way by leveraging diverse experiences, models and knowledge, one proposal suggests creating methodologies and tools in partnerships, internationally or nationally, with help from relevant associations and institutions. This way, tasks and workload are distributed and, if coordinated well, the initiative and outcomes benefit from the knowledge and skills of all involved. The process must be participatory, not merely a matter of top-down mandates imposed by authorities or assigned by experts.

Complementary Models: Co-Mentoring and Alternatives

To ease the administrative burden and address the limitations of traditional one-on-one mentoring, especially in resource-constrained environments, a range of alternative and complementary models were identified. These include **co-mentoring, team mentoring, peer mentoring, work buddy systems, job shadowing, overlap periods with retiring colleagues** and similar arrangements. These complementary models distribute tasks and responsibilities and leverage different skill sets. Collaborative approaches shift the focus from individual reliance to collective support, ensuring that the mentorship process remains sustainable even when resources are limited. Andra-Cezara Comiati of the MNIT summarizes the possible solutions and proposals tested in CultHeRit and discussed at workshops: "To support overworked mentors and broaden learning opportunities, CHIM institutions can establish co-mentorship teams, peer mentoring circles, or structured 'buddy' systems," distributing the administrative load.

In CultHeRit, **co-mentorship** emerged as a strong alternative. Well-organized, structured co-mentorship is a resource-friendly model that covers the range of practices from administrative support to professional development and guidance.

For instance, in Prague, the Museum of Decorative Arts (UPM) implemented a model with one main mentor and two co-mentors. One co-mentor handled organizational and labor law issues, while the other focused on specific educational activities. This division reduced the time demands on the main mentor and allowed for specialized guidance. Lucie Vlčková, the main mentor from the UPM, clarifies that the co-mentor's role "consists primarily in systematically guiding the mentee through administrative and organizational processes... This role significantly contributes to reducing the time and organizational burden on the main mentor." Similarly, in Banja Luka, the IPC utilized a team of three mentors. A principal mentor coordinated strategic guidance, while co-mentors provided academic writing support and institutional navigation. Sara Đumić, their mentee from IPC, affirms that "a viable alternative or complement to traditional mentorship is a model that includes working with co-mentors alongside a main mentor." According to her team of mentors Milijana Okilj, Miroslav Malinović and Jelena Savić, such an approach is a viable and efficient way to maximize human resources without requiring additional funding. They noted that while defining roles initially takes dedication and significant effort, the complementary skill set offers comprehensive

and stable support that a single mentor might struggle to provide alone. Cooperative attitudes and teamwork are essential for the success of this mentorship arrangement. Equally critical is frequent communication and consultation to monitor the mentee's development and integration and to prevent conflicting instructions.

The **work buddy** system was proposed as a less formal alternative, particularly for lower-responsibility positions or initial onboarding. Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel from the MAK advocates for this, noting that "a model based more on trust and personal responsibility, such as a buddy system, would be more efficient and sustainable." In Romania, colleagues from the INP and the MNIT also identified a paid work buddy as a viable alternative to traditional mentorship. Ștefania Dogărel from the MNIT points out that "a viable alternative to mentorship is a paid work-buddy... for lower responsibility positions," while Erika Nagy from the INP proposes that "a paid work-buddy seems the best option" for alleviating initial confusion. These peer-support arrangements allow new employees to receive guidance without the full weight of a formal mentoring relationship, relying on spontaneous interaction and mutual interest rather than bureaucracy or formal evaluations.

Peer mentoring circles were also identified as a mechanism to foster collective learning. However, while peer support is indispensable for immediate orientation, junior colleagues may not yet possess the comprehensive field overview, networks or connections that seasoned professionals offer. Therefore, combining these flexible arrangements with formal mentorship can create the most robust support system.

Job shadowing was identified as a practical tool for observational learning. Participants suggested that job shadowing allows mentees to understand workflows without immediate pressure. Another effective arrangement involves an overlap period or semester with a colleague approaching retirement. Dalma Pszota from the MNMKK-IMM notes that "a transitional year with a colleague who is about to retire... brings a wealth of experience and valuable insight," though she cautions that they may come from a different working culture and require adaptation to the latest tools. This helps transfer institutional memory directly before the senior staff member leaves. In Serbia, Richárd Morvai Rácz, the mentee from IPCMS, highlighted the value of involving retired professionals in an official mentoring capacity. Their extensive experience, tacit knowledge and available time can have beneficial effects and even offer deeper insight than current staff who may be overworked. Reinforcing these findings, he states that "I am convinced that, in an official mentoring capacity, they could contribute even more meaningfully to the professional development of younger generations."

Responses and discussions during transnational working sessions in CultHeRit also explored the potential utility of **AI tools and digital administrative assistants** for handling routine tasks. Respondents noted that AI tools could assist with scheduling meetings, tracking progress and answering basic procedural questions. Milijana Okilj, Miroslav Malinović and Jelena Savić from the IPC observe that "AI tools could help with routine tasks... This support means mentors can save time for conversations and guidance," enhancing the mentorship experience without adding extra costs or work. Digital tools also facilitate

Mentors and mentees work jointly in Postojna, October 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit.

communication when co-mentors are based in different locations by enabling hybrid meetings and shared documentation. Proceeding with caution is also advised. Technology aids efficiency only if the risk of over-reliance is carefully assessed. Mentorship must remain a human-centered practice, not dominated by screen time.

Proposed models are not mutually exclusive; they can be combined to suit specific sociocultural, institutional and regulatory contexts. Flexibility is paramount. Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić from the MUO concludes that "mentorship should be flexible and adapt to the mentee's needs," suggesting that institutions could also explore combining in-house support with external models like "co-mentorship and external workshops." As a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach is likely to fail to meet the diverse needs of the sector even within the same country, policy frameworks should encourage flexible arrangements that acknowledge and adapt to contextual differences by, for example, recognizing that what works in a large national museum may differ significantly from a smaller rural institution.

Limitations and Realistic Expectations

Mentorship is a powerful tool, but not a panacea. It is unrealistic to task it with solving structural challenges in the cultural heritage sector. Doing so sets it up for failure. Achieving meaningful impact remains contingent upon institutional backing and complementary structural support. The inquiry and critical dialogues in the CultHeRit workshops identified eight specific areas where mentorship faces inherent limitations. Several were detailed earlier, while this section consolidates the full picture of identified constraints.

FIRST, mentorship cannot compensate for systemic deficits. Structural problems remain beyond its reach. While a mentor can guide a new employee, they cannot substitute for fair wages or stable contracts. In the words of Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel (MAK), "[m]entoring cannot compensate for systemic deficits, such as unclear role profiles, lack of recognition or unequal pay." If a sector or an institution suffers from these deep-seated problems, mentorship may only delay attrition rather than prevent it.

SECOND, when mentorship develops haphazardly, it becomes an informal arrangement dependent on voluntary goodwill and fluctuating availability. In many institutions, mentorship remains an informal activity absorbed into standard workloads without dedicated time or resources. This reliance on the goodwill of senior staff renders the practice vulnerable to burnout and inconsistency, particularly during periods of high workload. As Marija Jurkić-Flis from the MUO warns: "if mentorship is not supported institutionally, it risks burnout." Without formal recognition and time allocation, mentorship risks becoming counterproductive, a burden rather than a supportive tool.

Mentors and mentees work jointly in Postojna, October 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit.

THIRD, ambiguity of roles and potential conflicts of interest pose a significant limitation. As discussed in the section on internal institutional dynamics, when the roles of mentor and supervisor are not clearly distinguished, it can result in conflicting priorities, inhibit honest dialogue and lead to perceptions of favoritism. Without clear boundaries, the safe space required for mentorship may be compromised by the power dynamics of performance evaluation. Lucie Vlčková from the UPM notes that while a mentor can be a supervisor, "it is better if they have some distance" to maintain objectivity. This conclusion best illustrates the consensus on this topic reached during the CultHeRit workshops.

FOURTH, a lack of training and standardization is a common hurdle. Being an expert in a field does not automatically make one an effective mentor. Institutions often fail to provide training in communication skills, feedback mechanisms or boundary management to mentors. This lack of preparation can leave well-intentioned mentors ill-equipped to handle complex interpersonal dynamics, potentially causing unintended distress. To prevent this, Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel from the MAK advises dedicating time and resources for solid preparation, and identifies the need for "concrete methodological tools that would address the initial uncertainty and provide guidance and a clear idea of what duties and expectations [mentorship] would entail."

FIFTH, there is a risk of overdependence and stifled autonomy. If not managed correctly, mentorship can lead to a dynamic where the mentee relies too heavily on the mentor for decision-making. If the mentor is too controlling, it may stifle the mentee's creativity and confidence, ultimately defeating the purpose of the relationship. Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić from the MUO cautions that "if the mentor is too involved, the mentee may become overly dependent and struggle to develop independence." Thus, the ultimate goal must be to foster a relationship that empowers, supports and cultivates autonomy of the mentee.

SIXTH, resource constraints and administrative burden remain a challenge. As noted in the section on administrative burden, implementing a structured mentorship program requires significant administrative effort. For single institutions with limited resources, this setup can be overwhelming, potentially discouraging formalization and leaving them with ad-hoc arrangements that lack sustainability. For co-mentoring and other complementary or alternative arrangements, this is especially true. Milijana Okilj, Miroslav Malinović and Jelena Savić from the IPC note that "initially, it takes additional effort to define roles and coordinate the teamwork," which can be a hurdle if not anticipated and planned properly.

Mentors and mentees work jointly in Postojna, October 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit.

SEVENTH, mentorship alone cannot fully address demographic shifts. While mentorship remains vital for intergenerational knowledge transfer, it cannot single-handedly reverse the brain drain or the demographic shift. Nor can it fill the vacuum created by the rapid pace of senior staff retirement. Mentorship may serve as a temporary buffer, but it is unlikely to reverse the demographic shift. For that, broader policy interventions, such as improved salaries or societal shifts that restore the value of CHIM work, are needed. The question of the sector's long-term viability for the next generation also merits careful consideration. Dalma Pszota (MNMKK-IMM) captures this uncertainty when reflecting on the interest of young professionals for work in the CHIM sector. She raises a broader question: "Is it still meaningful for young people to plan a long-term career in this field?" Such inquiries are ideal for initiating conversations about wider interventions in the sectoral employment market.

FINALLY, variability in quality and experience should be accounted for. Vladimir Džamić from the RIPCM notes that "the quality of mentorship can therefore have a lasting impact." Because mentorship often depends on the individual characteristics of the mentor and the support from the institution, the quality of the experience can vary significantly. Without a standardized framework, some mentees may receive exceptional support while others receive little to no guidance, leading to inequitable outcomes.

Collectively, these limitations delineate the realistic scope and expectations for mentorship, as discussed throughout CultHeRit. Mentorship, therefore, has substantial potential, but it alone cannot make the sector attractive for early-career professionals. The identified limitations suggest that while mentorship serves as a powerful tool for professional development and workplace integration, it must be viewed as part of a broader ecosystem of support. It proves most effective when combined with structural reforms, adequate funding, clear policies and a culture that prioritizes professional development. Ultimately, its success also depends on a society that values cultural heritage, the work within it and the arts themselves. Nevertheless, even within a supportive societal framework, the immediate reality for mentors and mentees is shaped by the specific institutional environment.

The Institutional Ecosystem: Between Ideal and Challenging Contexts

The success of a mentoring relationship is contingent upon the institutional context in which it operates. While the personal commitment of mentors and mentees is vital, the structural environment determines if these efforts can be sustained or falter under the weight of systemic constraints. The responses indicate that an ideal institution treats mentorship not as an extra task but as a core professional competency embedded within the organizational framework. Such an environment is characterized by the formal recognition of mentoring roles in job descriptions, ensuring that the time and emotional labor required are accounted for in workload calculations. When institutions allocate dedicated hours for mentorship activities, they signal a commitment to the process that transcends reliance on voluntary goodwill. Capturing this vision, Andra-Cezara Comiati from the MNIT describes an institution that "proactively supports mentorship by allocating time, recognition, and possibly financial incentives for mentors."

Conversely, environments lacking this structural scaffolding may inadvertently undermine the very relationships they hope to foster. As described previously, a less favorable context is often marked by ambiguity regarding roles. In such settings, mentorship frequently devolves into an informal, ad hoc arrangement dependent on the personal capacity of individual staff. This lack of formalization can result in inconsistent experiences for mentees, where guidance quality fluctuates based on the mentor's workload and available energy rather than a well-planned commitment.

Furthermore, the absence of training for mentors may leave even well-intentioned senior staff ill-equipped to navigate the intricacies of intergenerational communication. Insights from the transnational learning interactions within CultHeRit suggest that the ideal institution strives to cultivate a culture of exchange, actively bridging the gap between senior staff and early-career professionals. This is critical in the CHIM sector, where the demographic shift and loss of tacit knowledge pose a significant risk to institutional memory. In supportive environments, mentorship is viewed not merely as an act of goodwill, but as a strategic mechanism for knowledge transfer.

Moreover, what distinguishes a robust system from a fragile one is the presence of mechanisms for regular evaluation and ongoing feedback loops. Erika Nagy from the INP recommends a systematic approach where "there is a systematic order or guide of teaching and introducing the new employee," accompanied by checklists and periodic meetings. When institutions implement structured, yet flexible check-ins and allow for the adjustment of goals, they create a dynamic space. Within this space, mentors and mentees can adapt to changing circumstances without feeling constrained by rigid protocols.

Yet, even within resource-constrained contexts, certain organizational practices can successfully integrate mentorship and offset limited funding. In the words of Dalma Pszota from the MNMKK-IMM, such an environment is "transparent, democratic, and well-organized," where colleagues "support one another." Workshops insights indicate that a culture of transparency and mutual respect can partially compensate for the absence of financial incentives, provided that leadership demonstrates a genuine appreciation for the mentoring role. However, supportive

organizational culture alone is insufficient without structural backing. At a minimum, an institution conducive to mentorship "formally recognizes it in job descriptions and allocates dedicated time for mentors to guide mentees without being overworked," as Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić from the MUO succinctly summarized. The most promising models appear to be those that combine a supportive ethos with tangible resources, such as access to training, clear policy frameworks and, where possible, financial recognition. Richárd Morvai Rácz from the IPCMS summarizes this vision: "An institution genuinely committed to mentorship creates conditions that actively support learning, integration, and professional independence." Ultimately, the distinction between conducive and hindering environments may lie in whether the institution views mentorship as an investment in its future vitality or allows it to devolve into an optional add-on to an already heavy workload.

The path forward, therefore, requires a shared commitment to building healthy ecosystems.

Emerging Directions for Policy

Honest discussions and exchanges throughout the CultHeRit workshops and learning interactions confirm that a modest investment of time and resources yields tangible gains in onboarding confidence, intergenerational knowledge exchange and institutional cohesion. Yet, assessing limitations remains essential. As explored in previous chapters, mentorship cannot rectify deep-seated structural issues, such as precarious employment contracts, inadequate salaries or the chronic underfunding. Moreover, without formal recognition and dedicated time, mentorship risks becoming a burden that exacerbates burnout rather than alleviating it. Furthermore, success depends on careful selection and matching of participants, as a poor fit can undermine trust and hinder professional growth. Despite these constraints, the pilot suggests that by recognizing mentorship formally, allocating a modest but sufficient budget and devising robust capacity-building measures, the approach can be refined into a sector-wide catalyst for retaining young talent and safeguarding collective heritage expertise.

Synthesizing insights from the CultHeRit participatory process yielded six emerging directions for policy, designed to navigate the identified limitations of mentorship and unlock its potential for broader impact.

ONE. Institutional Recognition and Formal Integration.

The workshops and findings suggest that the most critical direction is to move mentorship from the realm of voluntary goodwill acts to a formal professional competency. In this scenario, institutions would explicitly recognize mentorship in HR policies and workflows, ensuring that the time and effort are accounted for in workload calculations. This includes integrating mentorship responsibilities into job descriptions and establishing clear career-path integration for mentors. Without this structural scaffolding, mentorship remains vulnerable to daily pressures, leading to inconsistent experiences for mentees and potential burnout for mentors. Formalization legitimizes the activity, signaling that the institution views it as a core duty, not an optional add-on.

TWO. Securing Sustainable Funding and Fair Remuneration.

Financial recognition is a powerful driver of sustainability for mentoring programs. Policymakers and institution leaders can allocate modest funding streams to support mentor training, the production of tools and direct remuneration for mentors. This could take the form of salary supplements, stipends or reduced workloads. Small grant lines could serve as incentives for institutions to introduce mentoring programs, while cross-sectoral financial support for learning initiatives would act as a resource-saving measure. Compensation not only values the mentor's contribution but also increases the willingness of qualified professionals to take on these roles, ensuring a steady supply and broad pool of experienced guides.

THREE. Capacity Building, Digital Tools and Shared Resources.

As noted in the section on the human factor, being an expert in a field does not automatically equate to being an effective mentor. Therefore, developing specialized training programs for mentors is critical. These programs should, at minimum, cover communication skills, giving and receiving feedback, managing boundaries and navigating intergenerational dynamics.

Embedding these modules into existing staff-development programs would amplify their impact. Additionally, the sector would benefit from a shared repository of mentorship tools, such as templates for agreements, journals and evaluation forms, accessible to all cultural heritage institutions. Emerging patterns also suggest the potential utility of AI tools and digital administrative assistants for handling procedures, forms and paperwork, which can help mentors save time for conversations and guidance. The risk of over-reliance on digital tools and automated systems must be carefully assessed. Mentorship should remain a human-centered practice and not be dominated by screen time. Encouraging cooperation across sectors with established mentorship and apprenticeship schemes, such as higher education, medicine and vocational training, could further enrich these resources and provide diverse perspectives on mentorship practices.

FOUR. Structural Clarity and Role Differentiation.

To prevent conflicts of interest and to ensure a safe space for honest dialogue, institutions are advised to define the boundaries between mentorship and supervision. While combining these roles is possible in some contexts, it requires explicit protocols and strong interpersonal skills. Where feasible, separating the mentor from the direct supervisor allows for objective guidance and protects the mentee from the pressures of performance evaluation. Furthermore, collaboration and feedback exchange between the mentor and supervisor is beneficial and should be encouraged. Rather than applying one-size-fits-all generalizations, policies should mandate that institutions assess their specific context to determine the best approach. This ensures that the mentor-mentee relationship remains distinct from the chain of command. While the CultHeRit workshops did not arrive at the consensus on whether the mentor and supervisor roles should be strictly separated or can be combined, a cautious approach was recommended. Institutions must explicitly define the boundaries and potential conflicts of interest for each case, rather than assuming a single rigid model. The priority is to ensure the mentee has a safe space for honest dialogue, regardless of the administrative structure.

FIVE. Promoting Flexible and Alternative Models.

Policy frameworks should encourage flexible arrangements, including co-mentorship models where responsibilities are shared among a team, as detailed in the section on complementary models. This distributes the workload, brings diverse expertise to the table and mitigates the risk of over-reliance on a single individual. Alternative models such as peer mentoring, job shadowing and work buddy systems should also be supported as complementary strategies. This flexibility allows institutions to adapt mentorship to their specific resources and the unique needs of their staff, acknowledging that what works in a large national museum in a capital may differ from a smaller local museum. Formalization provides the legitimacy and resource allocation required for mentorship to thrive, while flexibility ensures that the model adapts to the unique needs of different institutions.

SIX. Monitoring, Evaluation and Research.

To ensure quality and inform future policy, institutions should implement regular evaluation mechanisms that are developmental rather than punitive.

Mentors and mentees work jointly in Postojna, October 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit.

This includes the use of reflective journals, monthly check-ins and quarterly reviews where mentors and mentees track progress, identify challenges and adjust goals. These mechanisms provide the data necessary to assess the program's effectiveness. Concurrently, funding research on mentorship programs and outcomes is vital. Studies should focus on retention rates, professional development trajectories, organizational cohesion, institutional memory and intergenerational solidarity. Understanding the long-term impact of these practices will provide the evidence base needed to advocate for sustained investment and refine the approach over time.

While these directions outline a strategic framework, real transformation occurs at the ground level, where mentorship is practiced daily.

From Policy to Practice: The Mentorship Lab

Bridging the gap between policy and practice demands more than good intentions. It requires accessible resources. To meet this need, Senka Gavranov formulated the *Mentorship Lab,* a package of conceptual tools designed as a response to the challenges discussed during the CultHeRit workshops. Prioritizing transparency, efficiency and human connection, the proposed tools draw on research and collective insights. The collection is not a prescriptive toolkit, but a modular menu of possibilities designed to spark local innovation. The tools address every phase of the mentorship lifecycle, from initial matching to ongoing evaluation and troubleshooting. Each proposal incorporates an interactive element, ensuring the process feels like collaborative discovery rather than a bureaucratic obligation.

Institutions can adapt these ideas or use them as inspiration for entirely new solutions. By pooling resources with umbrella organizations, they can also co-design ready-made templates and tailor them to their contexts.

Instead of a Conclusion: An Invitation

The optimal way to approach and operationalize mentorship is not as a standalone onboarding tool, but as a vital mechanism for institutional cohesion and continuity of expertise during this critical demographic transition. However, the call to expand and upscale it is not without reservations. The path forward necessitates further analysis, research and coordinated cooperation across institutions, alongside a sustained commitment from the sector to assess mentorship as a strategic investment in institutional memory and long-term sustainability. By addressing limitations honestly and anticipating challenges through well-targeted, supportive policies and accessible tools, the sector can build resilient workplace communities and forge a more inclusive, sustainable future.

Identified limitations of mentorship are not reasons to abandon the concept, but imperatives to approach it with honesty, realism and strategic foresight. Moving forward demands that mentorship be viewed not as a standalone solution, but as a vital component of a broader ecosystem of support. It must be integrated with structural reforms, adequate funding and complementary practices like job shadowing, peer coaching or co-mentoring. Success requires acknowledging the work involved: the time, effort and administrative labor it demands.

Nevertheless, the shift from acknowledgment to implementation is already underway. In three partner institutions, employees successfully convinced leadership to adopt mentorship. These examples demonstrate that employee-led initiatives can effectively navigate structural constraints to drive change.

This work was forged in collaboration. The insights presented in this volume emerged directly from the shared experiences, challenges and aspirations of mentors, mentees and practitioners across eight countries. The exchanges throughout CultHeRit underscore that while systemic challenges are significant, the human capacity for connection and professional growth remains resilient. As progress was not achieved in isolation, sustaining it also requires moving beyond fragmented efforts. It demands cooperation, discussion, honest feedback and alliance building to pool resources, fine-tune tools and advance knowledge.

This invitation extends to all colleagues, institutional leaders and policymakers. The conversation must move from theory to action: committing to the rigorous assessment of whether mentorship is the appropriate intervention for a specific context or how it can be optimally combined with other structural changes. This includes creating accessible and adaptable toolkits, developing practical forms, templates and procedures that alleviate the administrative burden on institutions and employees.

Achieving this requires patience, humility and a willingness to listen to voices from the field, especially young colleagues. By investing in the continuity of expertise, intergenerational solidarity and the ethical transfer of knowledge, the sector ensures the enduring vitality of the cultural heritage it stewards.

Further Resources and Annexes

The methodological framework, testimonies, evaluation summaries, practical tools and the mentorship rulebook are available in the annexes via the project website.

Annex I outlines the themes and tools that shaped the inquiry for the transnational working encounters. **Annex II** offers a granular view of the lived experience behind the analysis through the written testimonies of participating mentors and mentees. **Annex III** presents the summary evaluation of the mentorship component within the employment model. **Annex IV** introduces the Mentorship Lab, a modular menu with conceptual tools designed to inspire conversations and help planning mentorship programs. **Annex V** documents the formal mentorship rulebook drafted and adopted by the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Serbia (RIPCM).

Readers are invited to engage with these materials as both a resource and an invitation to build on CultHeRit's efforts and explore pathways for future-proofing the employment in the sector.

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Mentorship in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM)

Senka Gavranov

Anna Böhm-Vinceffy

Sebastian Boniș

Annex I

Methodology and Inquiry Framework – The Evolving Dialogue

Interreg Danube Region

Co-funded by the European Union

CultHeRit

Identifying Solutions for Labor Market Imbalances in the **Cultural Heritage Sector** in the **Danube Region** by Improving Its Accessibility to Young Professionals

CultHeRit

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Core Team

Senka Gavranov – Team Leader, Facilitator and Editor. Professional Coordinator of CultHeRit. Convened and designed the participatory process, facilitated workshops in response to participant needs and feedback, conducted desk-based research and designed the methodological instruments that shaped the inquiry, synthesized the collective input and conceptualized, authored and edited the publication.
Anna Böhm-Vinceffy (MNMKK-IMM) – Editorial Assistant. Collected and administered documents, centralized and edited material and written texts of the contributors (mentors and mentees) as part of preparation for the workshop in Postojna, October 2025 and for this companion document.
Sebastian Boniș – Editorial Assistant. Moderating the Individual Presentations session in Bucharest, organizing documents, photographs and captions.
Serioja Bocsok – Graphic Designer. Designed the visual identity and layout of the publication and prepared print-ready files.
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Hungarian National Museum Public Collection Centre | Museum of Applied Arts

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About This Companion Document

This Annex serves as a companion document to the publication *CultHeRit Insights: Mentorship in CHIM*. The five Annexes of the publication detail diverse aspects of the CultHeRit mentorship pilot and present insights from the transnational working encounters and peer learning exchanges mediated and facilitated by experts:

Annex I: Methodology and Inquiry Framework – The Evolving Dialogue
Annex II: Voices from the Field – Perspectives on Mentorship in the CHIM
Annex III: Mentoring Young Professionals – From Model to Practice and Evaluation
Annex IV: The Mentorship Lab – Concepts, Proposals and Activities
Annex V: The Mentorship Rulebook

The *CultHeRit Insights* series also includes:

Improving the Employment Situation and Accessibility of Jobs in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM),

Invisibility of Work in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM) with its two Annexes
Annex I: Beyond the Exhibit – A Catalogue of Good Practices for Improving Visibility of Work in CHIM
Annex II The Diagnostic Mini-Survey – A Step-by-Step Guide for Practitioners

Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM).

The series *CultHeRit Insights* and accompanying Annexes was elaborated within the CultHeRit project (1 January 2024 – 30 June 2026), funded by the Interreg – Danube Region Programme with a total budget of 2 043 590 EUR (80% EU support). The initiative united thirteen organizations from eight Southeastern and Central European countries to address structural barriers facing young professionals in the sector.

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Introduction

This publication emerged from an inquiry designed to be responsive, evolving alongside the mentors and mentees rather than imposing a rigid external checklist. The framework was shaped by the specific questions, needs for clarification and requests for support that surfaced during workshops, meetings and email exchanges throughout 2025. By prioritizing what the community identified as most pressing, the process ensured that the resulting insights remained grounded in the immediate practical realities of the CHIM sector. The following sections outline the thematic areas that arose from this dialogue, the investigative goals that guided the collective exploration and the specific questions posed to deepen shared understanding.

Senka Gavranov facilitating transnational working session with CultHeRit mentors and mentees in Postojna, October 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit

Generating Insights: A Participatory Approach

The development of these insights unfolded dynamically over the course of 2025, beginning with the initial pairing of mentors and mentees across ten institutions in eight countries. The journey was defined by a series of transnational encounters where the agenda was set by the participants themselves.

The Launch: Building a Community of Practice

The initial working encounter was held in April 2025 in Banja Luka, hosted at the University of Architecture. This event served as an introductory round, marking the first transnational encounter in-person for all the mentors and mentees involved in testing the employment model. Senka Gavranov facilitated a vivid exchange that led to the first major observations regarding the mentorship exercise within participating organizations. Participants also engaged in discussions about phenomena observed at the sectoral level, analysing the concepts such as tokenism, the phenomenon of 'revolving doors' through repeated and often unpaid or underpaid internships and the critical need for adjustment and a sense of belonging within the profession, institution and professional community.

Mentor-Mentee session in Banja Luka facilitated by Senka gavranov, April 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit

Structured Individual Presentations

The transnational working encounter in Bucharest in June 2025 served as a critical structural intervention following the introductory workshop in Banja Luka. This gathering aimed to move beyond surface-level introductions and establish a shared understanding and context for all participants, including mentors, mentees and HR experts from their institutions. By requiring everyone to present their specific institutional realities using standardized yet flexible slides, the project ensured that subsequent work, conversations, and the "Mentor's Forum" were grounded in a common understanding of challenges, hiring procedures, and initial mentorship experiences.

On the first day, every participating young professional, mentor and HR representative presented their story. For HR experts, the presentation detailed the full lifecycle of hiring a young professional, from identifying the need to signing the contract, highlighting how the pilot influenced standard local procedures and describing transparency measures. For mentees and mentors, the sessions functioned as a biographical and professional audit. Participants shared educational backgrounds, previous work experiences, current roles, assigned tasks and early challenges. This process transformed abstract concepts into concrete personal narratives, allowing peers to recognize patterns in attrition risks and support gaps. The session was moderated by Sebastian Boniș with assistance from Anna Böhm-Vinceffy.

Individual presentations during the meeting in Bucharest at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Romania, moderated by Sebastian Boniș with assistance from Anna Böhm-Vinceffy, June 2025. Photo credit: INP, Paul Soare

Senka Gavranov drafted the templates and guiding questions that structured these presentations, ensuring every voice was heard through a consistent lens. The themes and questions below paraphrase the original questions used in the presentation templates.

Themes and Questions for Mentees

Introduction: Who are you, where do you work and what is your specific position?

Education: What degrees, specializations, languages and transversal skills (IT, GIS, design) do you bring to the role?

Previous Work: What is your history of paid and unpaid experience, including volunteering, internships, job shadowing, temporary jobs and freelance gigs?

Current Position: What are the major tasks and job description you are fulfilling now?

Mentor: Who is your mentor, what is their position and how do you organize your mentoring relationship?

Sample of Work / Task: Can you share a specific artifact, photo or story representing work you have produced or a task you completed during the first half-year?

Challenges: What professional or administrative obstacles did you face, according to your opinion why did they occur and how did you overcome them?

Support: What support did you receive versus what support do you still feel is necessary and why?

Future Vision: What would you like to see and do less of in the workplace, and conversely, what would you like to see and do more of?

Workshop Proposal: If you could design and lead a training workshop for your colleagues, what would it be and why?

Themes and Questions for Mentors

Introduction: Who are you, what is your tenure at the institution, do you hold a supervisory role and how many people have you supervised previously? Why were you selected as a mentor?

Education: What are your higher education degrees and specializations?

Previous Experience: Have you engaged in prior mentorship, including in academic settings?

Mentee: What is the job description and major tasks of your mentee in this project?

Approach and Style: How would you describe your mentorship style? Can you illustrate this with a sample of a specific task or interaction?

Challenges: What specific situations, tasks or outcomes presented difficulties for you as a mentor?

Support: Which institutions, departments, tools or courses have helped you in mentoring? What additional resources would you like to try?

Peer Inquiry: What questions do you have for other mentors that could help you improve?

Recommendations: What wisdom or cautionary advice would you offer to fellow mentors, along with policy or institutional recommendations for improvement?

These presentations informed further inquiry, discussions and encounters designed to strengthen the emerging community of practice. A preparatory survey, designed by Senka Gavranov, was completed by CultHeRit mentors and mentees between July and September 2025. Results were centralized by Anna Böhm-Vinceffy and analyzed by Senka Gavranov. The findings directly informed the discussion at the subsequent mentor-mentee workshop in Postojna in October 2025. Following this, seven mentors and seven mentees adapted their responses, which were edited into *Annex II: Voices from the Field* by Senka Gavranov, Anna Böhm-Vinceffy and Sebastian Boniș in early 2026.

The Dialogues: Shaping the Framework Together

Approaching the final phase of testing the mentorship model, mentors and mentees gathered in Postojna in October 2025 for a joint workshop to discuss findings, refine definitions and share insights.

Transnational Mentor-Mentee workshop facilitated by Senka Gavranov and assisted by Anna Böhm-Vinceffy in Postojna, October 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit

Between December 2025 and April 2026, final input collection for this volume was administered and centralized by Anna Böhm-Vinceffy and analyzed by Senka Gavranov, ensuring that the final output reflected the matured collective wisdom of the group.

I. Conceptual Framework: Defining Mentorship

Investigative Goal: To establish a shared vocabulary and operational boundaries for mentorship, driven by the participants' need to distinguish the mentorship role from the roles of supervisors and trainers. This section aimed to map the expected trajectory of outcomes and identify potential risks, based on the real-world concerns raised by the community.

- **Role and Definition**
  - What and who is a mentor in an employment setting?
  - What are the goals or aims of mentorship in the CHIM sector?
  - What does a mentor do? (Please provide examples).
  - What should a mentor *not* do?

- **Timeline and Duration**
  - When does mentorship begin? When does it end?
  - Under what conditions can mentorship be interrupted or dissolved, and how are these handled?
  - What is the ideal duration of mentorship versus the reality in practice?

- **Outcomes and Results**
  - What are the expected results (short-term, mid-term, long-term)?
  - What are the desirable results beyond the minimum?
  - What unintended or potentially damaging side-effects should be avoided?

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

Investigative Goal: To define the 'ideal candidate' for a mentor by isolating essential traits, responding to the community's need to identify the soft skills and ethical stances necessary for effective guidance. This section differentiated between minimum requirements, optimal qualities, and ideal attributes, while also identifying behavioral red flags.

- **Personal and Professional Traits**
  - What characteristics, skills, and behaviors should a mentor have? (Minimally, Optimally, Ideally).
  - What characteristics or behaviors make a person unlikely to be a good mentor?

- **Professional and Educational Background**
  - How important is it for the mentor and mentee to have similar education or professional focus?
  - How does the mentor's experience, level of achievement and network access impact the relationship?
  - How important is it for the mentor to be well-informed and up-to-date?

- **Interpersonal Skills**
  - What interpersonal skills are essential? (Minimally, Optimally, Ideally).

III. Mentorship in Practice: Situational Dynamics & Models

Investigative Goal: To move from theory to application by examining how real-world variables influence the mentorship dynamic. This section was developed to document specific, replicable good practices and explore viable alternatives to traditional one-on-one mentoring, addressing the community's need for flexible models in resource-constrained environments.

- **Situational Dynamics**
  - How do factors such as familiarity, physical proximity, age difference and team structure influence mentorship?
  - How is the overlap between the roles of Mentor and Supervisor managed?
  - What is the distinction between Mentoring and Coaching in your context?

- **Good Practices**
  - What are examples of successful practices? (Please describe: Who, What, When, Where, How).
  - Can you describe the steps or phases of your mentorship practice?

- **Alternative and Complementary Models**
  - What are viable alternatives to traditional one-on-one mentorship?
  - How can mentorship be efficiently supplemented (e.g., tools, arrangements)?
  - (Specific to Co-mentorship): How is the team structured, how are responsibilities divided, and how does communication function?

IV. Institutional Vision: The Ecosystem of Support

Investigative Goal: To synthesize individual experiences into a collective blueprint for the ideal organizational ecosystem. This section addressed the community's urgent need to identify the policy frameworks, resource allocations and shifts in organizational culture required to sustain mentorship, framing it as a core strategic imperative for sustaining healthy institutions, integration of new employees and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

- **General Characteristics:** What does an institution committed to mentorship look like?

- **Sector Specificity:** How must the CHIM sector specifically adapt to support mentorship (e.g., addressing the demographic shift, preserving tacit knowledge, enhancing intergenerational solidarity and cooperation)?

V. Personal Reflections: The Human Dimension

Investigative Goal: This section was designed as an empathy-building exercise to foster bonding between mentor and mentee. Originally proposed by Tatjana Hvala, it served as a prompt to recall the confusion and anxieties of their own novice experiences, rebuilding the emotional bridge and grounding their guidance in remembered vulnerability. For mentees, it acted as an exercise in visualization and aspiration, encouraging them to imagine the kind of mentors they would become, transforming the relationship into an aspirational cycle of care and continuity. This exercise serves to deepen the sense of belonging to the profession and the institution, grounding the abstract concept of mentorship in the lived reality of personal growth and shared vulnerability.

> **The Novice Experience (For Mentors):** Describe your beginning in this field? What was the journey to professional independence? How does remembering this shape your approach to your mentee?
>
> **The Mentor I Aspire to Be (For Mentees):** What kind of mentor would you like to be? What values would you embody?
>
> **The Cycle of Belonging:** How does sharing these narratives build empathy and strengthen the bond within the professional community?

Concluding Note on Methodology

It is important to note that this framework was not a static instrument. It was a **responsive tool**, refined continuously as the project progressed. The questions listed above represent the culmination of an iterative process where the participants' feedback, emerging needs, and collective conclusions from previous workshops directly shaped the inquiry. This ensured that the resulting insights **and knowledge were** not merely an informative report *on* the community, but a resource *for* the community created *by* the practitioners themselves.

Explore Further: Companion Documents

The five Annexes of *CultHeRit Insights* detail diverse aspects of the mentorship pilot and present insights from transnational working encounters and peer learning exchanges. This document functions alongside the following publications:

Annex II: Voices from the Field – Perspectives on Mentorship in the CHIM presents individual narratives submitted by mentors and mentees. These testimonies offer a granular layer of reflection, ranging from the conceptual to the practical, providing researchers and HR specialists direct access to the lived experiences underpinning the main volume.

Annex III: Mentoring Young Professionals in Cultural Heritage Institutions and Museums – From the CultHeRit Employment Model to Practice and Evaluation presents findings from the assessment of the employment model piloted in 2025 with a specific focus on mentorship. This document traces the mentorship element from its conceptual foundation through reported experiences to lessons distilled during evaluation.

Annex IV: The Mentorship Lab presents twelve conceptual proposals and activities. Rather than offering definitive tools, this section provides a starting point for institutions to co-design and adapt structured mentorship programs to their specific contexts. The list acts as a pick-and-choose menu and conversation starter to guide planning, structuring and formalizing mentorship practice within CHIM.

Annex V documents the formal mentorship rulebook drafted and adopted by employees at the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Serbia (RIPCM) following implementation of the mentoring pilot.


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CultHeRit Insights

Mentorship in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM)

Senka Gavranov

Anna Böhm-Vinceffy

Sebastian Boniș

Annex II

Voices from the Field – Perspectives on Mentorship in the Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM)

Interreg Danube Region

Co-funded by the European Union

CultHeRit

Identifying Solutions for Labor Market Imbalances in the **Cultural Heritage Sector** in the **Danube Region** by Improving Its Accessibility to Young Professionals

CultHeRit

2.043.590 €	1.634.872 €	1/2024 - 6/2026
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Core Team

Senka Gavranov – Team Leader, Facilitator and Editor. Professional Coordinator of CultHeRit. Convened and designed the participatory process, facilitated workshops in response to participant needs and feedback, conducted desk-based research and designed the methodological instruments that shaped the inquiry, synthesized the collective input and conceptualized, authored and edited the publication.
Anna Böhm-Vinceffy (MNMKK-IMM) – Editorial Assistant. Collected and administered documents, centralized and edited material and written texts of the contributors (mentors and mentees) as part of preparation for the workshop in Postojna, October 2025 and for this companion document.
Sebastian Boniș – Editorial Assistant. Moderating the Individual Presentations session in Bucharest, organizing documents, photographs and captions.
Serioja Bocsok – Graphic Designer. Designed the visual identity and layout of the publication and prepared print-ready files.
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About This Companion Document

This Annex serves as a companion document to the publication *CultHeRit Insights: Mentorship in CHIM*. The five Annexes of the publication detail diverse aspects of the CultHeRit mentorship pilot and present insights from the transnational working encounters and peer learning exchanges mediated and facilitated by experts:

Annex I: Methodology and Inquiry Framework – The Evolving Dialogue
Annex II: Voices from the Field – Perspectives on Mentorship in the CHIM
Annex III: Mentoring Young Professionals – From Model to Practice and Evaluation
Annex IV: The Mentorship Lab – Concepts, Proposals and Activities
Annex V: The Mentorship Rulebook

The CultHeRit Insights series also includes:

Improving the Employment Situation and Accessibility of Jobs in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM),

Invisibility of Work in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM) with its two Annexes:
Annex I: Beyond the Exhibit – A Catalogue of Good Practices for Improving Visibility of Work in CHIM
Annex II The Diagnostic Mini-Survey – A Step-by-Step Guide for Practitioners

Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM).

The series *CultHeRit Insights* and accompanying Annexes was elaborated within the CultHeRit project (1 January 2024 – 30 June 2026), funded by the Interreg – Danube Region Programme with a total budget of 2 043 590 EUR (80% EU support). The initiative united thirteen organizations from eight Southeastern and Central European countries to address structural barriers facing young professionals in the sector.

This publication was supported as part of CultHeRit, an Interreg Danube Region Programme project co-funded by the European Union.

This project is supported by the Interreg Danube Region Programme co-funded by the European Union.

Introduction

This publication emerges from a timely and insightful (self-)reflection within the cultural heritage sector, deeply rooted in an ongoing organic dialogue. It is the result of the CultHeRit project, a transnational initiative that brought together thirteen institutions across eight countries to address challenges in employment and professional development. This companion document functions best as a complementary record of a participatory journey of mentors and mentees during the CultHeRit employment pilot. The inquiry was driven by the participants themselves. Its structure is shaped by the needs for support, areas improvement and questions raised by mentors and mentees during workshops, email exchanges and conversations. By prioritizing what the community deemed useful, necessary and beneficial, the facilitators ensured that every insight remained firmly rooted in the practical realities of the CHIM sector.

Seven mentors and seven mentees generously chose to expand their workshop contributions into detailed written testimonies for this volume. Their accounts capture the nuances, emotional depth and contextual specificities that aggregated data often obscures. Senka Gavranov served as the driving force behind this initiative, bringing the community together at every phase while maintaining open dialogue and adjusting objectives to match the participants' evolving needs and group's shifting priorities. Her role extended beyond conventional facilitation. She acted as the project's connective thread, ensuring that no voice was lost between sessions and that collective insight and wisdom were accurately reflected in these pages. Complementing this effort, Anna Böhm-Vinceffy managed the consolidation of all survey data and participant inputs, providing the foundation for the analysis.

Senka Gavranov and Böhm-Vinceffy Anna facilitating transnational work shop with CultHeRit mentors and mentees in Postojna, October 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit.

Initial get-together of mentors and mentees building a community of practice, facilitated by Senka Gavranov in Banja Luka, April 2025. Photo credit: CultHeRit.

Throughout 2025, transnational encounters and working sessions allowed findings to mature through continuous dialogue. Insights were tested, challenged and refined over time rather than captured at a single point and ossified as static knowledge. These sessions functioned as spaces of inquiry and support, allowing mentors and mentees to share challenges and brainstorm solutions together. Notably, the request for these interactions came directly from the participants themselves, who viewed them as vital for professional development. By encouraging contributors to shape the agenda, select the tools and define the metrics of success, the project fostered a deep sense of agency and ensured that conclusions remained grounded in lived reality.

What follows is not a scientific study or a formal evaluation report of the transnational employment model. Rather, it is a synthesis of insights, definitions and lived experiences gathered from the workshops and surveys of 2025. This text is organized thematically to guide the reader through the landscape of mentorship. It begins by defining the boundaries of the relationship, moves to the human qualities that make it work, explores the practical models that sustain it and concludes with a vision for the institutional ecosystems that must support it. The goal is not to prescribe a single "correct" way to mentor but to offer a rich tapestry of options and insights that can be adapted to diverse contexts. The reader is warmly invited to explore the full breadth of individual responses in the subsequent sections, where the nuances of each voice can be fully appreciated.

I. Conceptual Framework: Defining the Mentorship

The first section of the inquiry served as the foundational bedrock. Its primary purpose was to establish a shared vocabulary and operational definition of mentorship. The goal was to agree on the boundaries between mentorship, supervision and training, ensuring that all participants, from seasoned curators to early-career researchers, were speaking the same language.

The collective responses revealed a shift away from the traditional "expert-to-novice" hierarchy. Mentorship is widely defined by participants not as a static administrative task but as a dynamic, reciprocal journey of mutual learning where knowledge flows in both directions. As Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel (MAK) notes, "[m]entorship is not a purely administrative or educational process, but an interpersonal practice that strongly depends on trust, empathy, and communication." This relational aspect is central. Mentorship is frequently described as a "joint journey" where both parties are transformed. It is distinct from supervision, which focuses on performance and accountability. Instead, mentorship prioritizes long-term development, integration and the fostering of a sense of belonging to the institution, community of practice, profession and the field.

Among the respondents and participants of the workshops, the timeline of mentorship is viewed with significant flexibility. While many participants suggest an ideal duration of six months to a year, others, such as Vladimir Džamić (RIPCM), argue for a longer period of two to three years to ensure full professional independence. The reality ranges from brief informal guidance to long-term professional friendships. It begins with a commitment to support, often starting on or just before the first day of work, and concludes when the mentee achieves autonomy or the mentorship relationship ends.

The outcomes are stratified. Short-term results involve the achieved ability of the novice to orient within the institution; mid-term results focus on gaining confidence and skill acquisition to manage tasks;

and long-term results aim for full professional independence. The participants highlight the need to approach mentorship with intentionality, open-minded and honest communication and caution about risks. Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić (MUO) warns that if "[m]entorship becomes overly task-focused, leaving little room for learning, reflection, or development," while Vladimir Džamić (RIPCM) cautions against treating the role as a "mere formality" or delegating one's own tasks to the mentee. Neda Džamić (IPCMS) emphasizes that the process requires clear boundaries, stating that "[i]nterruptions and terminations of mentorship can be addressed through open and honest communication, along with flexibility and clearly defined, healthy boundaries." Ultimately, mentorship is seen as a vital mechanism for intergenerational knowledge transfer, but it requires intentionality to avoid becoming an additional burden and source of stress.

II. Profile of the Mentor: The Human Element

Moving from the mentorship relationships to the characteristics of people engaging in them, the second section was designed to construct a composite portrait of the ideal, and also optimal, mentor. The intent was to move beyond the assumption that technical expertise alone qualifies one for the role. The questions sought to stratify the necessary traits, distinguishing between minimum requirements, optimal qualities and ideal attributes of a mentor.

The analysis of participant responses highlights a clear distinction between the baseline and the ideal. While professional competence and experience are the universal baseline for a mentor, the most valued traits appear to be interpersonal: patience, active listening, empathy and the ability to provide constructive feedback. Participants emphasize that a mentor should be approachable, respectful and willing to invest time.

Regarding educational background, there is a nuanced view. A similar educational background is helpful but not strictly necessary, while diverse educational and professional perspectives often enrich the relationship. Milijana Okilj, Miroslav Malinović and Jelena Savić (IPC) effectively summarize that "[q]ualities such as genuine engagement in the mentor-mentee relationship, respect for the mentee's individuality and avoiding authoritarian approach are even more important than professional and educational background." Participants point out that the mentor's level of achievement is important for credibility and networking, but it must be balanced with relatability. A highly accomplished mentor may lack time, while an emerging mentor may lack strategic insight, suggesting that a team approach can strike the right balance. Additionally, the willingness to share contacts and networks is highly valued.

Disqualifying traits are consistently flagged: rigidity, arrogance and an authoritarian mindset. A mentor who is unwilling to share knowledge or who views the relationship as a burden will likely fail. Additionally, Ștefania Dogărel (MNIT) cautions, "[a] person with intense micro manager behaviour would not make a good mentor, as they could never build trust with a mentee and offer constructive criticism." Conversely, social intelligence and the ability to recognize which communication style suits the mentee best appear to be generally sought after and appreciated. As Dorotea Ašćerić (RIPCM) observes, "[a] mentor should have social intelligence to recognize which communication style suits the new employee best. Optimally, they should be fair, specific, and clear." Erika Nagy (INP) adds a poignant note on humility: "[I] think a good mentor is confident enough to admit that they do not have all the answers."

III. Mentorship in Practice: From Theory to Reality

While the first two sections dealt with definitions and ideals, the third section was grounded in the complex reality of the workplace. Its purpose was to examine how situational variables influence the effectiveness of the relationship and to uncover concrete methodologies which can be replicated across different employment settings and even sectors. Like the employment model itself, the questionnaire and workshops also sought to identify scalable, flexible models that could function effectively even when a traditional one-on-one pairing was not feasible.

Based on the participants' responses, the practical application of mentorship programs appears to be influenced by situational dynamics. Physical proximity in the office and shared departmental context emerge as significant facilitators, but are not critical for the success of mentoring. Being in the same office tends to lower communication barriers and allows for spontaneous consultation. Dalma Pszota (MNMKK-IMM) notes that sharing an office "[h]as facilitated day-to-day interactions," whereas remote arrangements would require more deliberate effort and result in delayed interactions.

The debate on the mentor-supervisor overlap is significant and interesting. While some argue for strict separation to prevent conflicts of interest, others suggest that combining roles can be effective if the individual possesses strong interpersonal skills. By the end of the project, the debate was not resolved and remains an open question.

Good practices identified include structured yet flexible approaches. These range from mentoring journals and regular check-ins to phased task delegation, where the mentee moves from observation to independent execution. Co-mentorship has emerged as a particularly strong alternative. In Banja Luka, the Institute for Protection of Cultural Heritage of Republika Srpska (IPC) formed a co-mentoring team of three mentors. Their mentee, Sara Đumić, supports this, stating that "[a] viable alternative or complement to traditional mentorship is a model that includes working with co-mentors alongside a main mentor." Similarly, in Prague, the Museum of Decorative Arts (UPM) used a model with one main mentor and two co-mentors handling different aspects. Lucie Vlčková, the coordinating mentor at UPM, highlights the utility of such a model, noting that the co-mentor's role "[c]onsists primarily in systematically guiding the mentee through administrative and organizational processes… This role significantly contributes to reducing the time and organizational burden on the main mentor."

Alternative models are gaining traction. The "work-buddy" system is proposed for lower-responsibility positions, relying on trust rather than formal evaluation. Job-shadowing and overlap years with retiring colleagues are effective for transferring tacit knowledge. Furthermore, the IPC co-mentoring team (Okilj, Malinović and Savić) recognized the potential utility of AI and digital admin mentors for handling routine tasks like scheduling and tracking progress, freeing up mentors for meaningful guidance. This and other forms of institutional support and investment can significantly help to reduce administrative burden and improve mentoring outcomes. Marija Jurkić Flis (MUO) reminds that "[m]entorship should not replace supervision or training," and warns that "[i]f mentorship is not supported institutionally, it risks burnout."

Ultimately, the practice is most effective when it is intentional and structured but allows for learning interactions, professional growth and constructive dialogue. The relationship should be built on mutual respect, with the mentee seen as a future peer empowered through real-world tasks.

IV. Institutional Vision: The Ecosystem of Support

Finally, the last section synthesized all previous insights into a strategic blueprint for the future. The purpose was to move beyond individual relationships and examine the structural and organizational conditions necessary for mentorship to thrive. It asked participants to envision the ideal institution conducive to mentorship and, overwhelmingly, participants defined it as one that formally recognizes mentorship in job descriptions, allocates dedicated time and funding and provides relevant and effective training.

The responses also reveal a gap between the current reality in many institutions in the sector and the aspirational model proposed by the CultHeRit project. While individual mentors and mentees often succeed through personal resilience and informal networks, the data suggests that long-term sustainability requires systemic intervention. For this, the recurring theme of recognition is paramount. Without formal acknowledgment of mentoring efforts and tasks in job descriptions, time sheets and career progression frameworks, mentorship remains vulnerable to the pressures of daily operations and workloads. Milijana Okilj, Miroslav Malinović and Jelena Savić (IPC) state this clearly: "[a]n institution that truly supports mentorship creates a clear structure for it: mentorship is recognized as part of the job, time is allocated for it, and roles are well defined." Similarly, Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić (MUO) imagines an institution that "proactively supports mentorship by formally recognizing it in job descriptions and allocating dedicated time for mentors to guide mentees without being overworked."

Furthermore, the specific context of the CHIM sector adds a layer of urgency to this vision. The sector faces a unique demographic challenge where decades of tacit knowledge reside in aging workforces. The participants articulate a vision where mentorship serves as the primary mechanism for intergenerational knowledge transfer, ensuring that ethical standards, technical skills, institutional values and professional contacts and networks are not lost with the retirement of seasoned professionals, but remain in the institution. Marija Jurkić Flis (MUO) envisions an institution that "would need to pair across generations by linking senior archivists, curators or restorers with early-career professionals; encourage interdisciplinary mentorship within institution; promote international and cross-institutional exchanges."

Moreover, the emerging image of the ideal institution as described by the CultHeRit mentors and mentees is one that balances structure with flexibility. It provides the necessary scaffolding, training, clear roles and resources, while allowing the mentor-mentee relationship to evolve organically based on individual needs. This dual approach addresses the voiced fear of bureaucracy stifling authenticity and replacing genuine learning interactions and human connections, while ensuring that the process remains accountable and effective.

Finally, the financial and evaluative dimensions are critical. Erika Nagy (INP) points out that "[t]he mentorship does not feel like a second thought but it is incorporated within the institution's processes," noting that having multiple trained mentors also allows for choice based on professional interest. From an operational perspective, Andra-Cezara Comiati (MNIT) emphasizes the need for "clear guidelines, training for mentors, and an evaluation system to ensure quality," while Lucie Vlčková (UPM) highlights the importance of financial recognition, suggesting that institutions should provide "financial compensation for mentors' work (or providing non financial benefits)" to sustain the effort. Ultimately, the collective wisdom from CultHeRit encounters on mentorship suggests that a robust mentorship culture is the hallmark of a healthy, forward-looking institution, one that values its employees as its most significant asset.

Conclusion: Toward a Shared Future

The journey through the definitions, profiles and practices of mentorship reveals a clear picture of mentorship which is not a simple administrative task, but a complex, relational and deeply interactive endeavor. It is a bridge between generations, a mechanism for transferring tacit knowledge and a vital source of professional identity and support for professional growth. Yet, as the participants have candidly shared, it is also fragile. Without structural support, clear boundaries and a culture of mutual respect, even the most well-intentioned mentorship can falter or become a burden.

The collective voice of the CultHeRit community underscores that there is no single recipe for success. The ideal mentor is not defined by a specific title or age, but by a combination of professional competence, social intelligence and a genuine willingness to share. The ideal mentorship model does not stubbornly adhere to a rigid one-on-one pairing, but promotes a flexible ecosystem that includes co-mentoring, peer support and the wisdom of retired professionals. And the ideal institution is one that recognizes mentorship not as an optional extra, but as a core professional competency worthy of time, resources and formal recognition. Ideal versions are hardly attainable, and this can be discouraging. These profiles can, however, serve as guidance and aspiration, directing collective efforts to devise optimal mentorship models for institutions optimally calibrated to support them.

It is important to reiterate that this text represents only one way to synthesize and analyze the contributions from the mentors and mentees of the CultHeRit project. The insights presented here are a curated selection, designed to highlight key themes and common threads across the cohort. They are not an exhaustive evaluation, nor do they capture the full depth of every individual experience. Personal narratives cannot be fully condensed into a summary. Therefore, the publication invites the reader to turn to the full opinions and testimonies of the mentors and mentees that follow. These individual accounts offer a more granular view of the challenges and triumphs encountered in the field. By engaging with the described experiences of the participants, a deeper understanding emerges of the complexities involved in building a sustainable mentorship culture in CHIM.

Voices from the Field

This annex presents the written testimonies of the mentors and mentees who chose to document their experiences for this publication. While all participants were integral to the CultHeRit pilot and workshops, these pages feature the narratives of those who contributed their reflections in text. These accounts move beyond abstract theory to capture the lived reality of professional guidance within the CHIM sector.

The insights presented here were gathered from a community of practitioners who generously shared their time and expertise. All contributors listed below participated in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

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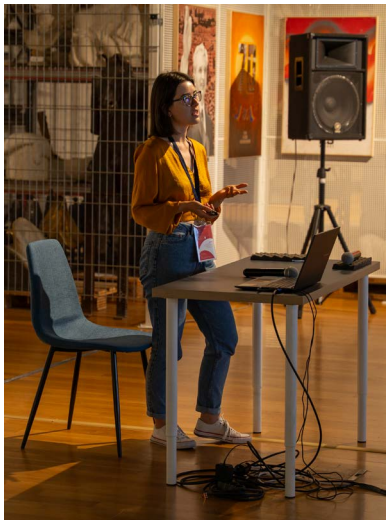
The following contributions outline practical challenges, successful strategies and institutional visions that together define what an optimal mentorship model could look like in practice. By engaging with these distinct voices, the reader gains a granular understanding of the complexities involved in building a sustainable mentorship culture, seeing the human reality behind the data.

Lived Experiences and Insights: The Collective Wisdom of CultHeRit Mentors and Mentees

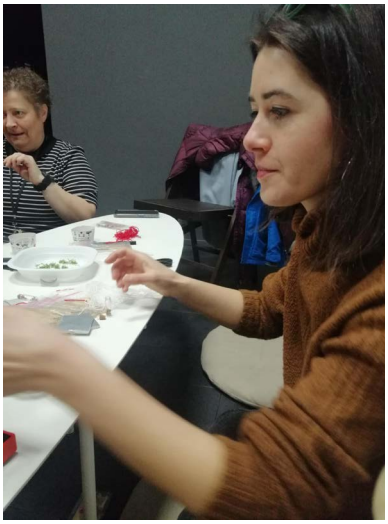
MENTORS and CO-MENTORS

Ștefania Dogărel

Ștefania Dogărel, Conservator at the National Museum for the History of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca, Romania (MNIT), co-mentor in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.
Monica Bodea was the co-mentor.



Ștefania Dogărel at the project workshop in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.



Ștefania Dogărel at an educational workshop in MNIT. Photo credit: Andra-Cezara Comiati.

Andra-Cezara Comiati (left) and Ștefania Dogărel (right). Photo credit: Ștefania Dogărel.

Monica Bodea, co-mentor in MNIT, facilitating an outdoor educational workshop in MNIT
Photo credit: MNIT.

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Role of a mentor A mentor is a person whose role is to guide a new employee in the work environment. The goals of mentorship in CHIM are, ideally, to introduce the new person to the work environment (physical space, colleagues, bureaucracy), to the guidelines of conduct in the work environment (people of contact, paperwork circuit, etc.), and to the general aspects of the position (daily activities, priorities, supplies, etc.). The relation should involve supervising the mentee in their daily activities, offering constant feedback and support as needed, in such a manner that would not take advantage of the unexperienced mentee, overworking or undervaluing them.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship

The mentorship begins, formally, with employment of the mentee and it ends when a certain, agreed on, time period goes by, depending on the complexity of the job (ex. one year). Of course, it can be interrupted or dissolved if the mentee no longer requires supervision or support, but only upon mutual agreement. Interruptions and dissolutions of mentorship can be handled and solved by the manager or HR representatives.

Results of mentorship Ideally, a fruitful mentorship relationship should result in an independent mentee, that feels confident to take up tasks on their own, make decisions and handle the outcome. Furthermore, an increase in productivity for the respective department is to be expected, as it supposedly gained a new, fully functional, member of staff. Of course, as with any relation, some unintended or even damaging results and possible side-effects can exist and should be thought upon in order to best be avoided: either the mentor or mentee are under- or not paid, or the mentee is taken advantage of and overloaded with tasks unwanted by other employees.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

A mentor should have: Minimal requirements of a good mentor are good people skills, patience, and distributive attention. Optimally, this person has enough time to dedicate to the mentorship, and, ideally, an open-door policy that builds trust and closeness. Reversibly, a person with intense micro manager behaviour would not make a good mentor, as they could never build trust with a mentee and offer constructive criticism.

Professional and educational background I believe a fruitful mentorship relationship has a few ground points. For example, a similar educational background might not seem very important, but it helps if the job is related to a specific education field (ex. archaeology). Likewise, the same or a similar professional focus may prove important, as the back-and-forth feedback becomes more specific. The mentor's experience and overall overview of the field is very important, as this improves their capacity to guide the mentee through job and field hardships. The mentor's level of achievement is relevant only to the point where the mentor's experience makes them more ready to face upcoming challenges. On this note, sharing contacts and providing access to the professional network and opportunities, as well as being well-informed and up-to-date is extremely important on the mentor's part, as it offers professional and personal growth possibilities for the mentee, as well as enabling communication.

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability Ideally, a mentor should possess good time management skills, a certain level of leadership is optimal, while the minimal requirements would be good communication skills and a well-developed problem-solving ability.

III. Mentorship in Practice

Mentorship at work Based on my experience, mentorship is best done when there is a pre-existing level of familiarity, physical proximity (close, but not the same, office), and both mentor and mentee are part of the same department; this ensures opportunity for communication. It is my belief that the mentor is at the same time a supervisor, or should become one in time, as the mentee gains more independence in the work environment. The age difference, if it exists, is not an issue as long as there is availability on both sides.

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship A good, fruitful mentor-mentee relation is one that slowly transitions from supervising to collaborating: at first, the mentor devises a task and leads its development (ex: museum education activities, research project, etc.), then the mentee is given the opportunity to handle the task by themselves, so that, finally, the mentee handles their own activity from beginning to end; this can best be achieved through discussions and feedback sessions at the end of each activity. In MNIT's case, we could see this process through our museum education programmes that the young professional was hired to undertake:

Step 1: Devise an educational activity and show the mentee how it's carried out.

Step 2: Devise an activity and solve it together with the mentee.

Step 3: Ask the mentee to come up with a task; solve it together.

Step 4: Ask the mentee to come up with a task and let them carry it out by themselves.

In the end, the mentee became an independent and very reliable department member, well integrated and adjusted to working with all their colleagues, irrespective of the department.

Supplemental & alternative arrangements I think that a viable alternative to mentorship is a paid work-buddy, someone who has been in the institution long enough to know what's what and can offer some guidance to a new employee. However, this arrangement would work best on lower responsibility positions, where learning can happen faster. Likewise, mentorship can be efficiently supplemented by an overlap year with a colleague due to retire, that can pass on their knowledge and skills to a new employee who would take up the same position and, presumably, the work of the older employee from where they left off.

IV. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship

Generally, institutions with a proactive, hands-off leadership, are more prone to providing a safe mentorship environment, as the people involved can dedicate more time and resources to passing on knowledge, skills and general know-how. In the CHIM sector, additional criteria come in handy, such as financial stability and sufficient manpower, so that (at least) one employee can take up the (ideally) full-time mentorship position.

V. Personal Reflections: I as a Novice

I first entered the National Museum of Transylvanian History on a different position than the one I am in now, knowing only one or two people and only in passing. I started out as a secretary, a position which, by default, involves working with a lot of people. Therefore, the beginning was extremely overwhelming, everybody expected me to already know people by name, know their schedules, the bureaucratic circuit, vast legal and economic terminology, as well as to do paperwork in their stead. I didn't have an official mentor or buddy, but I did get help from many people from other departments that I was most often in contact with, making a great difference. The fact that the manager and deputy director were patient also helped a lot, and helped me build self-aware and confidence in my abilities. Even so, it took around six months to start accommodating, and having had some time with someone on the same position (such as the person I took over from) would have been of great help and would have reduced a lot of the initial anxiety and unnecessary stress.

Neda Džamić

Neda Džamić, Research Conservator – Advisor Grade at the Intermunicipal Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments – Subotica, Subotica, Serbia (IPCMS), Co-Mentor in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Klara Evetović was the Co-mentor.

Neda Džamić, Richard Morvai Rácz and Klara Evetović. Photo credit: Neda Džamić.

Neda Džamić. Photo credit: Neda Džamić

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

The role of a mentor is much more than merely assigning tasks or explaining procedures. A mentor is a colleague and professional guide who introduces the mentee to the work through sharing knowledge, experience, and understanding of the very essence of work in the field of cultural heritage. They are a person the mentee can rely on when expert support, advice, or confirmation that they are on the right path is needed, but also a professional role model whose behavior and decisions demonstrate what responsible and ethical work looks like.

The goal of mentorship within CHIM is that, upon its completion, the mentee is capable of working independently and effectively in the field of cultural heritage protection. This involves not only technical expertise but also the ability to think critically, understand the broader social context, and be aware of the responsibility this work carries toward the community and future generations.

In this process, the mentor emphasizes the importance of an ethical approach and making decisions that respect professional standards, the local context, and cultural identity. Through daily work and conversation, they foster in the mentee a sense of responsibility toward the heritage being preserved and the community to which it belongs. Knowledge, skills, and experience are transmitted through practical insights into the processes of protection, restoration, conservation, documentation, and presentation of cultural heritage, as well as through explanations of why these processes are important.

An important part of mentorship is also introducing the mentee to the legal framework and applicable standards in the Republic of Serbia, as well as to international norms and conventions, such as those established by ICOMOS and UNESCO. At the same time, the mentor encourages independent research, questioning, and the development of critical thinking, guiding the mentee toward understanding the complexity of this field.

Cultural heritage is an interdisciplinary field, and the mentor familiarizes the mentee with the various disciplines involved: archaeology, architecture, ethnology, and art history, while encouraging collaboration and openness toward colleagues from other professions. This builds the understanding that quality heritage protection cannot be the result of the work of a single person or a single discipline.

At the same time, the mentor does not take over tasks from the mentee nor impose their own opinions as the only correct ones. Their role is not to stifle initiative but to encourage dialogue, openness to change, and thoughtful introduction of innovations, including new technologies, in accordance with the local context and identity. The mentor must not overload the mentee, nor use them for professional or personal purposes, nor manipulate, deceive, or claim their ideas. The relationship between mentor and mentee is based on trust, respect, and a shared goal: responsible and sustainable protection of cultural heritage.

A mentoring relationship can arise in different ways, and its beginning, duration, and end depend on the circumstances in which it develops. In a formal sense, mentorship begins when the mentor and mentee are connected through an institution, project, or specific program, such as a professional internship, traineeship, or programs implemented by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia. However, mentorship often also develops informally, spontaneously, through working together in the same institution or collaborating on a project, when a more experienced professional naturally assumes an advisory and supportive role.

A mentoring relationship ends when the mentee achieves the set goals and becomes capable of independent work, upon the completion of a formal program or project, or by mutual decision of the mentor and mentee to conclude the collaboration. Sometimes mentorship ends due to disagreements between the participants, if it becomes evident that working together is no longer possible or productive.

Under certain circumstances, mentorship may be temporarily interrupted or completely terminated. Reasons for this can include a lack of time or resources, institutional changes, failure of the mentee to fulfill obligations, as well as force majeure circumstances, such as health issues. Likewise, the mentoring relationship may be terminated in the case of a serious, irreconcilable conflict between the mentor and mentee.

Interruptions and terminations of mentorship can be addressed through open and honest communication, along with flexibility and clearly defined, healthy boundaries. Mutual respect and willingness to engage in dialogue play a key role, while in extreme cases, the involvement of a third party to resolve issues, such as legal or institutional services, may be considered.

The duration of mentorship, under ideal conditions, should be tailored to the individual and depend on multiple factors, such as contractual obligations or the length of the project. The optimal period should be one year, or at least six months, to allow for a meaningful and high-quality mentoring process.

In practice, however, there are certain limitations. The Intermunicipal Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Subotica is introducing a mentoring program for the first time, and the duration of mentorships in the CHIM sector in Serbia is currently not legally regulated. Therefore, mentoring relationships are shaped according to the specific circumstances, needs of the participants, and available resources.

The results of mentorship can be observed in the short, medium, and long term. In our case, short- and medium-term results largely overlap and are reflected in the successful completion of everyday tasks and professional duties. Long-term results, however, carry deeper significance and involve the professional and ethical maturation of the mentee, who develops into a responsible, competent, and skilled professional in the field of cultural heritage protection.

Additionally, an important outcome of mentorship can be connecting the mentee with experts and professional networks that may benefit their further career development.

It is desirable that, beyond the minimally expected results, the mentoring relationship develops to the point where the mentor and mentee in the future continue to collaborate as equal partners on shared tasks, which is, in fact, the ultimate goal.

At the same time, it is important to be aware of possible unwanted or harmful consequences of mentorship, which should be avoided. These include transmitting inaccurate or illegal practices that could negatively affect cultural heritage, neglecting the mentee when support is needed, encouraging gossip or undermining professional relationships, as well as poorly defined goals and tasks that leave the mentee without necessary guidance.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

A good mentor is primarily characterized by empathy and a willingness to share knowledge with others. Under optimal conditions, these traits are accompanied by patience and assertive communication, while an ideal mentor also stands out through enthusiasm and optimism in working with the mentee. Conversely, individuals who are narcissistic, impatient, or uninterested in the development of others are unlikely to fulfill the mentoring role effectively.

Regarding professional and educational background, it is desirable that the mentor and mentee have the same or similar education and professional focus, with the mentor possessing greater experience and a higher level of expertise. Such similarity facilitates knowledge transfer and understanding of specific practical challenges. However, the amount of experience alone is insufficient if the mentor cannot convey it in a clear and encouraging manner.

It is also important for the mentor to be professionally accomplished and satisfied with their own achievements, so that personal frustrations do not affect the mentoring relationship. A quality mentor willingly shares contacts and introduces the mentee to professional networks, providing access to new opportunities and diverse professional perspectives. Finally, the mentor should be informed and up to date with contemporary practices in their field, or at least know where and from whom to obtain reliable information, in order to provide the mentee with adequate and timely support.

Interpersonal skills, approachability, and availability are key elements of quality mentorship. A mentor should demonstrate kindness and respect, be able to listen and communicate clearly, while maintaining professional boundaries. Ideally, these qualities are accompanied by empathy, patience, adaptability to different cultural contexts, and objective provision of feedback. Ideally, the mentor actively fosters an open and stimulating work environment, encourages critical thinking and professional development of the mentee, conducts dialogue instead of monologue, and at the same time remains deeply connected to the local cultural context while being open to global perspectives.

III. Mentorship in Practice

In practice, workplace mentorship functions best when relationships are based on mutual respect, open communication, and clearly defined roles. Initial trust is more easily established if the mentor and mentee already know each other, but this is not essential, as a mentoring relationship often develops successfully even when they meet for the first time at the beginning of the collaboration. A shared workspace further facilitates daily communication, while age differences can be beneficial but are not crucial, since understanding and mutual respect are far more important.

Good mentoring practice involves regular meetings between the mentor and mentee, either in person or online, usually once a week. These meetings can be pre-planned or occasionally informal, depending on needs, and during them, goals, progress, challenges, and next steps are discussed. While there is a basic agreement on the structure, it is important to maintain flexibility regarding the content and dynamics of the meetings. Notes and conclusions from the meetings can be recorded in a shared mentoring journal or through simple records, with the most important aspect being that the information is clear, accessible, and free from cumbersome documentation.

As a complement or alternative to classical mentorship, it is particularly useful when a new employee can work for a period with a colleague approaching retirement, as the absence of such a transition can seriously affect the functioning of the institution. Models of co-mentoring or team mentoring, in which mentoring responsibilities are clearly divided, are also beneficial. This approach is significant both for mentors, who can rely on each other, and for young professionals, who receive broader and more stable support. Mentorship can be further enriched by involving retired colleagues as honorary or occasional mentors, provided it is legally and institutionally feasible.

V. Personal Reflections: I as a Novice

When I started working at the institution, the adjustment period was extremely stressful. I did not have a formal mentor or a person I could easily turn to for help, although there was an older colleague in the institution who was approaching retirement. Occasionally, she could provide some information or guidance, but she was not particularly interested in mentoring. The field of cultural heritage was relatively new to me, as we had only dedicated a single course to it during my studies. Nevertheless, I was able to relatively quickly understand the nature of the work and its key requirements, relying mostly on my own initiative.

I stopped feeling like a beginner after passing the professional exam, approximately one year after starting work. Although I then considered myself equal to my colleagues, the sense of truly belonging to the team developed only a few years later. This experience shaped my approach to mentorship, and because of it, I strive to be open, accessible, and supportive when working with mentees, fully aware of how important such support can be in the early stages of a professional career.

Vladimir Džamić

Vladimir Džamić, Research Conservator – Advisor Grade at the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments, Belgrade, Serbia (RIPCM), Mentor in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

ABOVE: Vladimir Džamić at the project meeting in Cluj-Napoca, June 2024. Photo credit: Zoltán Szalontai.

ABOVE / DOWN: Vladimir Džamić at the project meeting in Cluj-Napoca, June 2024. Photo credit: Zoltán Szalontai.

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Role of a mentor The primary goals of mentorship in CHIM are to ensure the successful integration of the mentee into the team and the organisation, to help the mentee clearly understand and appreciate the significance of their work, particularly its role in serving the public interest, and to support the mentee in becoming independent in their work as efficiently as possible. Mentorship also aims to encourage continuous professional development and to help anticipate and prevent potential obstacles or difficulties that may arise during the mentee's early professional engagement.

In practice, the mentor provides guidance and direction without imposing personal working styles or limiting the individuality of the young professional. The mentor designs and assigns tasks with clear objectives, appropriate structure, and a level of complexity suited to the mentee's current abilities. They actively identify the mentee's strengths and potential, as well as areas that may need further improvement or support. The mentor directs the mentee toward relevant professional literature, examples of good practice, and colleagues whose experience and expertise can contribute to the mentee's learning and development. The mentor's overall role is to support and encourage the young professional, enabling them to grow, gain autonomy, and fully demonstrate their professional capabilities.

At the same time, the mentor must observe clear professional boundaries. The mentor should not delegate tasks assigned to the mentor to the mentee, should not treat the mentoring role as a mere formality, and should not behave in a harsh, dismissive, or inappropriate manner. Professional conduct, respect, and responsibility are essential elements of effective and ethical mentorship.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship Formal mentorship begins once a young professional enters official employment with the institution. In parallel, informal mentorship may also develop when a team member is identified as having the appropriate professional qualifications, experience, and personal aptitude to serve as a mentor. Such a role requires not only subject-matter expertise but also well-developed interpersonal and communication skills, which are essential for providing effective guidance, support, and feedback.

The formal mentorship process is expected to be completed within 2 to 3 years, depending on the mentee's level of engagement, development, and overall progress. Informal mentorship, however, is not bound by a fixed time frame and may continue beyond the formal mentoring period, particularly when a strong and lasting relationship of mutual trust and professional respect has been established between the mentor and the young professional.

Any interruption or premature termination of the mentorship process may be addressed by appointing and selecting a new mentor, ensuring continuity of professional support and guidance for the mentee.

In practice, outside the framework of this project, a structured mentorship system in our Institute does not currently exist.

Expected results and achievements of mentorship

In the short term, the primary objective of mentorship is to establish a relationship of trust, mutual respect, and open communication between the mentor and the mentee. This foundation is essential for effective learning, constructive feedback, and professional growth.

In the medium term, the mentor's goal is to encourage the mentee's creativity, initiative, and professional curiosity, while also ensuring that the mentee clearly understands their role, responsibilities, and performance expectations. At this stage, the mentee should begin to apply acquired knowledge more independently and with increasing confidence.

In the long term, the objective for the mentee is to perform their work to the best of their abilities and to feel professionally fulfilled and satisfied with both the quality of their work and their contribution to the institution. The outcome of a successful mentorship process is the mentee's achievement of professional independence, self-confidence, and responsibility in their work, within the shortest reasonable timeframe.

The desirable outcomes of mentorship include the effective transfer of knowledge and experience from the mentor to the mentee, as well as the purposeful use of that experience to enable the mentee to develop more efficiently and at a higher professional level than would be possible through independent learning alone.

Potentially damaging outcomes or adverse side effects may arise if a toxic or dysfunctional relationship develops between the mentor and the mentee, leading to negative consequences for both parties and the working environment. In such cases, the first corrective measure should be replacing the mentor to protect the mentee's professional development. If a similar situation occurs again after this intervention, termination of the young professional's engagement may be considered as a final measure.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

A mentor should possess a combination of professional competence, personal integrity, and interpersonal skills that enable effective guidance and support of a young professional's development. At a minimum, a mentor should be highly experienced and competent in their field, and capable of clearly and effectively transferring knowledge, skills, and professional practices to others. Ideally, a mentor demonstrates the ability to understand and analyse complex professional problems and situations, and possesses strong social intelligence. This includes awareness of interpersonal dynamics, the ability to adapt communication to different individuals, and sensitivity to the broader working environment.

At the highest level, a mentor possesses advanced problem-solving abilities combined with a high degree of empathy and emotional sensitivity. Such a mentor can respond thoughtfully to challenges, support the mentee's professional and personal growth, and foster a safe and encouraging learning environment.

Characteristics incompatible with effective mentorship
Individuals who exhibit the following traits or behaviours are unlikely to be effective mentors:

- insufficient professional knowledge or experience in the relevant field;
- a tendency to dominate, control, or impose authority rather than guide and support;
- an inability or unwillingness to listen attentively to others;
- resistance to differing opinions or alternative perspectives;
- a lack of openness to dialogue and constructive discussion;
- poor understanding of interpersonal relationships and social dynamics within a team or organisation.

Professional and educational background

Educational background

The mentor and the mentee should have the same or a comparable level and type of education. While identical educational backgrounds are not strictly required, a sufficiently similar educational foundation is necessary to ensure effective communication, guidance, and mutual professional understanding.

Professional focus and position

The mentor and mentee should ideally work within the same professional field or hold the same position. Where this is not possible, their professional roles should be closely related or comparable, allowing the mentor to provide relevant and practical guidance aligned with the mentee's responsibilities.

Professional experience and field overview

The mentor should possess significantly greater professional experience and a comprehensive overview of the field than the mentee. In cases where the mentor is supervising a newly defined or evolving role, the mentor is expected to remain open to continuous learning and to actively develop understanding in areas where their own experience may be limited.

Level of professional achievement

Ideally, the mentor should hold the highest level of professional achievement within their field. At our Institute, professional advancement includes three levels: *Junior Associate*, *Senior Associate*, and *Advisor*, with *Advisor* representing the final and highest attainable career rank. Whenever possible, mentors should hold the rank of *Advisor or at least Senior Associate*.

Access to professional networks and resources

An essential responsibility of the mentor is to share relevant professional knowledge, contacts, institutional insights, and access to professional networks, opportunities, and resources with the mentee.

A person who is unwilling to share such information openly and responsibly should not assume the role of mentor.

Professional currency and awareness

The mentor is expected to remain well-informed and up to date with current developments, standards, and practices in their field, as this is a fundamental prerequisite for providing meaningful and credible guidance.

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability

At a minimum, a mentor should be intelligent, open-minded, and fair, demonstrating sound judgment, objectivity, and respect in all professional interactions. At an optimal level, a mentor is principled and socially intelligent, with a clear commitment to continuous learning and ongoing professional development. Such a mentor actively seeks to improve their own knowledge and skills while supporting the growth of others. At the ideal level, a mentor embodies all the qualities listed above and demonstrates a high degree of empathy and personal charisma. These qualities enable the mentor to build strong, trust-based relationships, inspire confidence, and positively influence the mentee's motivation and professional engagement.

III. Mentorship in Practice

Mentorship at work

Based on professional experience, mentorship is most effective when the mentor and the mentee have no prior personal or professional relationship and when they work within the same department on similar or closely related tasks. While shared office space or day-to-day physical proximity is not necessary, working within the same organisational and professional context enables more relevant guidance and a clearer understanding of expectations and workflows.

It is generally beneficial for the mentor to be older and to bring a broader range of professional and life experience, while remaining sensitive to and aligned with the mentee's mindset, needs, and perspectives. In this sense, the mentor's role extends well beyond that of a supervisor. Rather than focusing solely on quantitative performance indicators, the mentor should primarily monitor the mentee's professional development, provide constructive feedback, and actively support the mentee in realising their full potential.

An important responsibility of the mentor is also to facilitate the mentee's integration into the team, helping them understand both formal responsibilities and informal dynamics within the working environment. In rare cases---though ideally---the mentor may also serve as a source of professional inspiration, offering an example of commitment, integrity, and excellence that the young professional can aspire to emulate.

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship

- Good mentorship practice requires the mentor to maintain a continuous awareness of their mentoring role, while avoiding excessive insistence or control. The mentor should offer support and assistance when it is genuinely needed, while at the same time allowing the mentee sufficient space to develop independence.

- A mentor should observe the mentee's work, without unnecessary interference, and respond thoughtfully when guidance or clarification is requested. Respect for the mentee's professional autonomy is essential, including acceptance of the mentee's right to make mistakes as part of the learning process.

- The mentor must always make time for the mentee and treat mentorship as a professional responsibility rather than an optional or secondary task. Unprofessional behaviour, disrespect, or neglect undermines the mentor's integrity and compromises the trust on which effective mentorship is based, and must therefore be avoided under all circumstances.

Supplemental & alternative arrangements

There is no effective substitute for mentorship. Much as a mentor plays an indispensable role in postgraduate studies -- guiding the student through the research process and the preparation of a thesis -- a cultural institution requires a designated mentor to support newly hired employees. This role involves introducing the new employee not only to their immediate tasks and responsibilities, but also to the broader organisational structure, working methods, and institutional values.

Such mentorship is particularly demanding, as it takes place alongside the mentor's full-time professional responsibilities and significantly influences how a new employee adapts to their position, integrates into the working environment, and develops a professional attitude toward their work. The quality of mentorship can therefore have a lasting impact on the employee's performance, motivation, and long-term engagement within the institution.

In certain cases, mentorship may be effectively complemented by co-mentorship, provided that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. However, co-mentorship is not suitable for all situations and should be applied selectively, based on the specific needs of the mentee and the organisational context.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship

General perspective

Human resources, and the knowledge and expertise they hold, constitute the most valuable capital of any institution. This value surpasses all other assets the institution may possess, including its tradition or material resources. Consequently, the transmission of knowledge and experience, as well as the development of independent, skilled, and capable young professionals, are among the institution's most critical responsibilities.

In the CHIM sector

The work of institutions dedicated to protecting cultural heritage carries a strong ethical dimension, as it serves the public interest and contributes to society as a whole. In this context, an employee's salary is not only a material benefit but also a source of professional fulfilment, rooted in the understanding that their work has a meaningful impact beyond personal gain.

This guiding principle -- the commitment to serving the public through ethical, high-quality work -- can only be effectively transmitted across generations through personal contact, from more experienced colleagues to newer ones, from mentor to mentee. Mentorship, therefore, serves as a vital link, ensuring that institutional knowledge, values, and professional standards are preserved and strengthened over time.

V. Personal Reflections: I as a Novice

When I joined the Institute, there was no formal mentorship program in place (and none exists to this day), leaving employees largely to navigate their roles independently. At that time, the workload was lighter, and in my particular case, as an art historian, more colleagues were working in the same field.

The current situation has changed significantly: workloads have increased, while the number of art historians has decreased. This shift has inevitably led to more mistakes and, perhaps more importantly, to a substantial loss of time, as much of the learning process occurred through trial and error or by experiencing the consequences of adverse situations. I quickly realised that the knowledge I had acquired at university was insufficient for the tasks I was expected to perform, and that the true process of professional learning lay ahead.

Fortunately, some of my senior colleagues were willing to share their knowledge and experience, which provided valuable guidance, though this was not universal. Conversely, some colleagues were unwilling to collaborate, and in certain cases, even obstructed the work that needed to be completed.

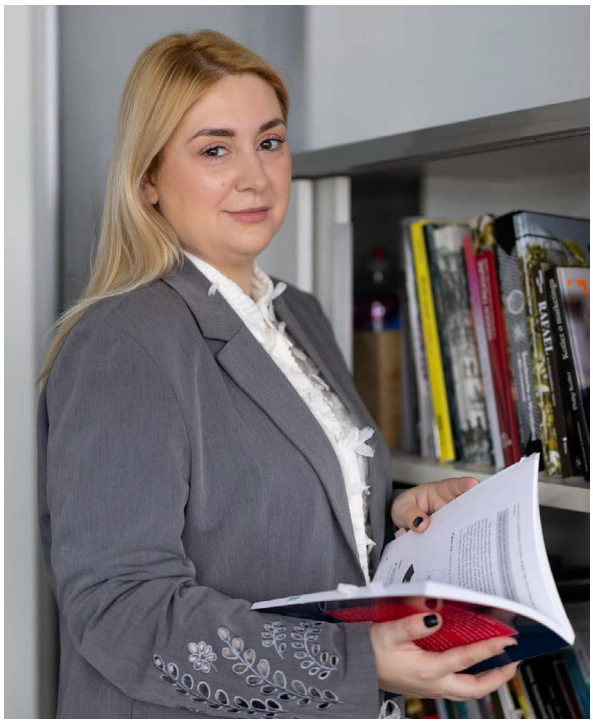
Reflecting on these experiences, it is clear that the presence of a formal mentorship program at that time would have greatly facilitated adaptation, accelerated the achievement of results, and ensured that the effort invested yielded far more effective outcomes than was actually the case.

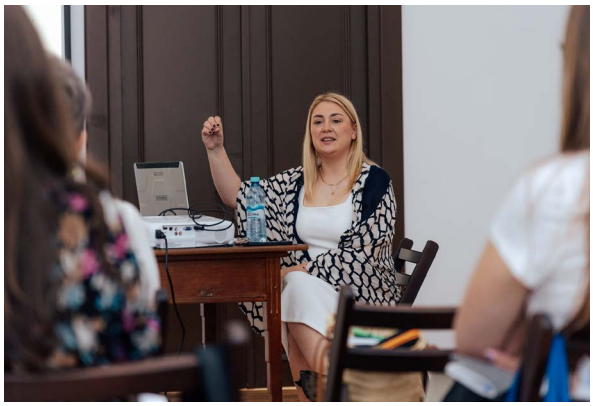
Marija Jurkić Flis

Marija Jurkić Flis, Marketing & PR Associate at the Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb, Croatia (MUO), mentor in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Marija Jurkić Flis during the individual presentations session in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

Marija Jurkić Flis at the MUO Advocacy Campaign in Zagreb, June 2026. Photo credit: Srećko Budek (MUO), 2026.





ABOVE: Marija Jurkić Flis at the project meeting in Cluj-Napoca, June 2024. Photo credit: Zoltán Szalontai

LEFT: Marija Jurkić Flis, coordinator of the communication activities of the project CultHeRit. Photo credit: Vedran Benović (MUO), 2026.

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

For me, mentorship is a structured yet personal relationship focused on supporting the growth, integration, and professional development of the mentee. Ideally, it should function as a bridge between institutional knowledge, professional development, and personal growth.

For the best results, a formal program should last at least 12 months while it can evolve into collegial partnership over time. A mentor is a guide, advisor, and facilitator who supports a less-experienced colleague in navigating their role, developing skills, and growing professionally. A mentor usually explains institutional culture, informal norms, and "unwritten rules" as well as introduce the mentee to other colleagues and help the mentee integrate into the professional community. In my opinion, mentors should always provide constructive feedback on tasks, skills, and approaches but do not micromanage or control the mentee's choices or use mentee as personal assistant. During the mentorship, mentor and mentee should establish trust between them, set clear goals and role clarity and do not breach of trust or share information without given permission (even to the director). Therefore, mentors should encourage mentees to develop independence over the time and do not let them rely too heavily on mentors. Of course, mentors, sometimes can be too prescriptive which brings to that the mentee feels pressured as well as the mentor can impose their way rather than supporting exploration. By the end of mentorships, mentees should be able to have smooth onboarding and understand institutional culture, processes, and expectations.

One thing is for sure; mentorship should not replace supervision or training but also if mentorship is not supported institutionally, it risks burnout.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

A good mentor must be committed and available while having relevant experience and willingness to share knowledge openly. Listening, instead of just focusing on the answer is something that, nowadays, seems very cherished to me. Openly providing constructive feedback and having the ability to see from the mentee's perspective makes any mentor a superhero of their own kind. Staying calm and positive, and willing to focus only on good things, but acknowledging the bad while being diplomatic is like winning the lottery. However, choosing a mentor who has this skill should be one of the criteria for the institution.

A desirable mentor should be flexible and, when possible, adapt to the mentee's learning style. Encouraging critical thinking rather than simply providing answers can be highly valuable for the mentee's future professional development. When mentors view mentorship as a process of mutual learning, I believe stronger and more meaningful connections with young professionals can be built, both at present and in the future. In contrast, low-effort mentorship may be reflected in arrogant behaviour, a sense of superiority, excessive control, or the imposition of the mentee's career path. It can also include cancelling meetings or failing to recognise the mentee as a valued member of the institution.

III. Mentorship in Practice

Steps / phases of the practice

Here are some steps and recommendations that should be followed in CHIM sector and what should be considered before starting mentorship within institutions :

· *Set goals*

Every institution should set goals, objectives and boundaries and make sure that mentors and mentee are following it.

· *Focus on matching match process*

While being chosen as a mentor it is very important that mentorship, when possible, is chosen based on interests, goals, expertise, and personality fit.

· *Build long term relationship*

During the mentorships trust should be established through initial conversations.Ideally mentor & mentee should agree on communication style such as regular meetings, email check-ins, informal chats etc. In my example, besides regular check-ins, I send out a questionnaire to my mentee once in 3 months to track mentees' development as well as to monitor all potential challenges or issues.

· *Track the progress*

Progress should be evaluated regularly, and even small achievements should be celebrated. The mentorship should be formally finished when all objectives are met. After mentorship is officially done, the mentor and the mentee can optionally continue their relationship as colleagues.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship

In General, an institution that proactively supports mentorship would:

An institution that proactively supports mentorship would need to:

- establish a clear mentorship framework with defined objectives, roles, and expectations for mentors and mentees;
- provide formal training;
- allocate dedicated time by recognizing mentorship as valuable work, not an "extra," by building it into schedules;
- gather feedback regularly and adapt the program to evolving needs;
- celebrate success of any kind (formal / unformal).

In CHIM sector: An ideal CHIM institution would:

An ideal CHIM institution would need to:

- pair across generations by linking senior archivists, curators or restorers with early-career professionals;
- encourage interdisciplinary mentorship within institution;
- promote international and cross-institutional exchanges.

V. Personal Reflections: I as a Novice

How did it feel?

- Unreal, my dream came true (I always wanted to work at MUO)

Did you have previous knowledge on how to perform some tasks? Any task?

- Yes. Before being mentee in MUO I spend a year doing professional practice at NMMU (National Museum of Modern Art)

Did you receive guidance? From whom? Was it official, formal, informal?

- Yes. My mentor was kind of my boss, besides the director of MUO. Her approach was something I try to recreate in my work today. She made me, in some way, the person I am today. She was always there for me, willing to help & guide me through all areas of the Museum life.

When can you say that you actually stopped being a 'novice' 'new employee' (moment, feeling, fulfilled task?

> It's cliché, but after 6 months. I got a really big task to do -- moderate the press conference for a big exhibition. The media response was amazing. I remember the pride on her face looking at me doing it. I still shed a tear when I think about it.

Have you maintained contact with people who helped you / guided you?

> Yes. Today we are very good friends even though we don't work together anymore.

Any other information / feeling / description that you may find relevant or good to mention?

> Believe in yourself but listen to what the mentor is telling you. They were in your shoes & they really want to guide you in the best way (well, most of them). I will always cherish the years spent with my mentor, my friend, who appreciated me and made me feel worthy and stronger.

Milijana Okilj; Miroslav Malinović; Jelena Savić

Milijana Okilj, Milijana Okilj, Head of Department for Protection of Cultural-Historical Heritage at the Institute for Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Republic of Srpska, Full Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (UBL) Co-mentor in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

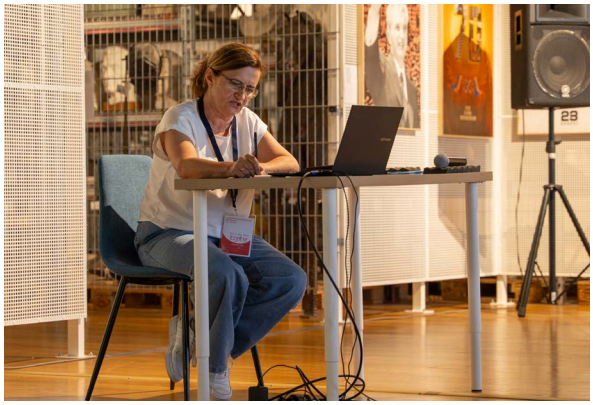
Miroslav Malinović, Associate Professor, Head of Chair for History and Theory of Architecture and Building heritage preservation, at the University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (UBL), Co-mentor in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Jelena Savić, Architect and design researcher; Invited lecturer at IPAM Porto (formerly Expert associate for built heritage at the Institute for Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Republic of Srpska), Co-mentor in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Jelena Savić

Miroslav Malinović

LEFT: Milijana Okilj at the archeological site Monastery Papraća. Photo credit: Milijana Okilj



Milijana Okilj during the individual presentations in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

Milijana Okilj during the project meeting in Cluj-Napoca, June 2024. Photo credit: Zoltán Szalontai.

Milijana Okilj during the project meeting in Cluj-Napoca, June 2024. Photo credit: Zoltán Szalontai.

Milijana Okilj with the team and students at the archeological site Monstery Papraća. Photo credit: Milijana Okilj

Institute for Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Republic of Srpska, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina (IPC)

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Role of a mentor Mentor is a person / colleague whose role is to offer support, guidance and share knowledge with a less experienced colleague the mentee.

Goals or aims of mentorship in CHIM are to support the mentee's growth as a professional and help them navigate specific institutional practices.

Mentor, for example, helps the mentee build skills relevant for work in CHIM sector, provides orientation and support within the institution and broader professional network, offers regular feedback and reflection on the mentee's progress.

Mentor does not or should not complete tasks on behalf of the mentee, or impose their own views and approaches rather than encouraging the mentee's own professional identity and growth.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship

The mentorship begins with the commitment to support and learn (formally or informally).

It ends when the support is no longer needed (= the project or fellowship has ended; or the need for support fades out once the mentee has gained knowledge and confidence; or it transforms, with time, into a professional friendship/collegial connection). It can be interrupted or dissolved, for example, due to lack of commitment by either side, or change in job roles, or conflict of personalities or values causing loss of trust and mutual respect.

Interruptions and dissolutions of mentorship can be handled and solved by acknowledging the issue, tackling it in a transparent and respectful way, involving third party to help mediate or find alternative. Duration of mentorship ideally would be a semester or up to a year (a good balance between thorough and meaningful support and long-term commitment). In reality, duration may vary from brief informal guidance to evolution into long-term professional relationships.

Results of mentorship

Expected results and achievements:

short-term: clear orientation regarding mentorship goals and structure, the institutional and professional environment;
mid-term: clear progress in professional skills, improved confidence and independence
long-term: strong understanding of CHIM sector, capacity of working independently

Desirable results of mentorship in addition to minimum are active participation in the ongoing projects and activities, development of specific interests within the field and production of knowledge (publications, presentations, conference papers and alike).

Unintended or even damaging results and possible side-effects are lack of a structured mentorship plan with regular feedback, overdependence on the mentor and work overload which could be an issue for both mentee and mentor.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

A mentor should have

- minimally: support the mentee's integration and professional growth in a respectful manner (solid knowledge in the field, able to provide constructive feedback, respectful, trustworthy, supportive, reliable)

- optimally: help the mentee grow professionally, expand horizons and understand complexity of the sector (in addition to the above empathetic, empowering, adaptable to the mentee's goals and learning dynamics, fosters the mentee's critical thinking)

- ideally: a professional role-model (in addition to the above professional acknowledged at a broader scale, visionary, good communicator and listener, devoted rather than just involved)

An unavailable or uncommitted mentor and a person with a rigid an directive mindset is not likely to be a good mentor

Professional and educational background Some inputs regarding:

the same / similar education of mentor & mentee: This is helpful, as long as it does not limit broader cross-discipline exploration

the same or similar professional focus / jobs (positions): This enables providing concrete and relevant advice and reinforcing skill-building

mentor's experience & overview of the field: Thorough understanding the field helps map potential new pathways and emerging roles/opportunities in the field for the mentee

mentor's level of achievement: A highly accomplished mentor will provide long-term career insights and networking opportunities but may lack time and be less relatable with a beginner in the field; an emerging mentor may be less able to offer strategic support and advice -- having a mentorship team may help strike the right balance here

sharing contacts and providing access to the professional network, opportunities, possibilities: An essential function of a mentor -- it's about opening doors for the mentee

importance of the mentor being well-informed and up-to-date: This is a must -- lifelong learning mindset!

any other: qualities such as genuine engagement in the mentor-mentee relationship, respect for the mentee's individuality and avoiding authoritarian approach are even more important than professional and educational background

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability A mentor should have these interpersonal skills:

- minimally: acting in a professional and respectful way (through clear communication, reliability, active listening, empathy)

- optimally: acting in a supportive and adaptable way (warm, providing constructive and non-judgmental feedback, communication adjusted to the mentee's background and learning style)

- ideally: acting in an empowering and transformative way (helping the mentee find their own voice, builds trust and empowerment, builds long-term professional relationship, sensitive to the mentee's cultural context or views)

III. Mentorship in Practice

Mentorship at work Based on my experience, mentorship is best done when / if / ...

- It is intentional and structured, but allows space for natural dialogue (in case of our mentee, we combined structured working calendar with milestones reflected in a mentorship journal, and informal consultation when needed, on case-to-case basis)

- Mentorship roles are clearly defined; in our case it was possible to involve co-mentors, who offered a diversity of perspectives, as well as relatability

- The relationship is built on mutual respect and learning went both ways. The mentee was encouraged to share her views, ideas and perspectives at all times

- The mentee is seen as a future peer and empowered through involvement in real-world tasks.

- Institutional support is of importance for the mentee's involvement (resources, coaching for specific needs, logistics for field trips and alike)

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship

A good mentorship practice is to:

Who: Principal mentor (within the Institute) and co-mentors (outside the Institute, but closely linked to the principal mentor and the institution -- a former employee and mentee, a former student and current colleague at the University of Banjaluka)

What: goal-setting based on the mentee's involvement in real-life tasks in the Institute, followed by regular feedback, reflection and adjustments

When: journal entries on a weekly basis by the mentee; monthly meetings with the mentors, structured around the inputs and questions from the journal

Where: In-person and virtual, given that co-mentors work outside the Institute/abroad, sharing documents beforehand

How: Mentee reflects weekly (15-30 minute work on the journal); mentors give feedback and resources at brief monthly check-ins (30-45-minute meetings); real-time support by the principal mentor as needed; co-mentors also get involved informally as needed between the meetings. Final reflection at the end of the official mentorship, continuation of contacts and informal support as needed

The journal template we used:

To complete by the mentee every week:

Date of Entry (week)

Key activities and tasks this week: (short description)

Learnings and insights: (New skills, concepts, insights and alike)

Achievements: (Positive outcomes, fulfilment of weekly goals)

Challenges: (Difficulties, obstacles and alike)

Topics to discuss with the mentors: (Questions, doubts, insights and alike)

To complete together during the monthly meeting: Mentors' Feedback; Next weekly goals; Suggested resources

Supplemental & alternative arrangements I think that a viable alternative to mentorship, in our context, is the co mentorship, which we applied in this project. Distributing responsibilities among a small team of mentors (in our case, a team of 3) offered a good alternative to traditional one-on-one mentorship by reducing individual workload and maximizing our human resources. Moreover, complementary expertise of the mentoring team members contributed to the comprehensive, multidimensional and timely support to the mentee. Initially, it takes additional effort to define roles and coordinate the teamwork.

Mentorship can be efficiently supplemented by AI tools, which can help with routine tasks (scheduling meetings, keeping track of progress, answering basic questions and alike). This support means mentors can save time for conversations and guidance, making the mentorship experience better without adding extra costs or extra work for anyone

***Co-mentorship**

The number of co-mentors in our team is 3.

The principal mentor acts as the coordinator and main contact, providing strategic guidance, overseeing the mentee's overall progress and linking with the international project team. The two co-mentors complement her by bringing additional strengths, such as academic writing experience, help to navigate the institutional context, day to-day practical advice, access to international resources, professional networks, and alike.

Tasks and responsibilities are divided based on expertise, availability and location (local principal mentor and one of the co-mentors, another co-mentor abroad). The mentee knows to approach the principal mentor for overall questions or project related issues but can reach out to co-mentors for advice in their areas of expertise.

Regular communication includes monthly joint meetings (hybrid) to discuss progress and align, with additional separate meetings or informal contacts as needed. An initial joint planning session was key to establish tasks and boundaries and ensure a smooth mentorship experience.

Note: The co-mentorship model that was possible in our case could work as an example of good practice for institutions with limited resources: effective mentorship can be achieved through well-planned teamwork, not necessarily through additional funding.

Unanswered question(s): Exploring way(s) for collecting honest feedback from the mentee, and to implement it to improve future mentorship experiences.

Resources: Local and international access (institutional knowledge, local and international professional networks, international conferences, research opportunities) digital tools (the team uses tools like video conferencing, shared documents and group messaging platforms to maintain regular communication, share feedback and track progress efficiently, regardless of location)

Trainings to attend: Mentorship skills training, Digital tools for mentorship, Remote/hybrid mentoring, Career development and networking

Possibilities for the mentorship to improve, adapt, evolve: It would be good to recognize mentorship roles formally in job descriptions, including defining the scope (ex. mentoring interns, early-career staff, project team members), expected time commitment and key responsibilities (ex. guidance, feedback, progress tracking). This kind of institutional support would help prevent work overload and ensure accountability within the team.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship

An institution that truly supports mentorship creates a clear structure for it: mentorship is recognized as part of the job, time is allocated for it, and roles are well defined.

New employees or young professionals are matched with mentors or co-mentors based on their needs and goals. The institution provides tools to track progress and keep everyone aligned.

It offers basic mentorship training and encourages open communication between mentors and mentees. Importantly, the institution values mentorship not as extra work, but as an investment in people, and makes sure mentors are supported

Constructive, positive ideas and characteristics of an institution committed to supporting and facilitating productive and efficient mentorship relationship / program:

In general: Mentorship is formalized – clearly defined roles, time allocation, and recognition in job descriptions. Support structures exist – basic training and tools are provided. Mentorship is valued -- seen as part of professional development and included in workload.

In CHIM sector:

Connects practice and knowledge – mentorship includes real-life tasks (taking part in fieldwork, research, projects, public presentation).

Preserves and shares expertise – mentors pass on both institutional memory and field-specific knowledge.

Encourages global and local networking – mentors help mentees access both local communities and international opportunities.

V. Personal Reflections: I as a Novice

- Entering the field felt overwhelming, with many unknowns about how things really worked in practice

- Had some theoretical knowledge from university studies and limited professional experience as a beginner-architect, but little practical experience performing specific tasks in build heritage preservation

- Initially received informal guidance from senior colleagues rather than a structured mentorship program

- Being proactive and seeking advice from more experienced peers (including colleagues from the Institute, heritage professionals from the region, former professors), was necessary to tackle specific cases and key for the professional growth and confidence

- the transition from “novice” to “competent professional” happened gradually, marked by moments like successfully managing a project independently or presenting such case studies at professional gatherings and events at regional and eventually global scale

- Experienced moments of self-doubt and uncertainty, mixed with personal passion for cultural heritage, which, seen in retrospect, helped develop resilience and encouraged professional growth

Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel

MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria (MAK)

Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel, Head of the Library and Works on Paper/Archive at the MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria (MAK)

Mentor in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel at the project workshop in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel and Jenny Unterkofler at a mentor-mentee meeting at the MAK Library, May 2025. Photo credit: Carlotta Schiller.

LEFT: Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel with the team in the MAK Library. Photo credit: Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel

Jenny Unterkofler at the mentee workshop in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

When I was asked to take on the role of mentor for a young professional starting out in the cultural heritage sector as part of the Interreg project CultHeRit, I accepted the task with great interest, but also with a certain amount of uncertainty. At that point, mentorship was a term I was familiar with, but not a concept I had put into practice. I had no concrete methodological tools and no clear idea of what duties and expectations it would entail.

Looking back, this lack of theoretical and structural preparation was one of my biggest initial challenges. Especially in the first few months, I felt that a longer introductory phase, accompanying discussions, or a practical handbook for mentors would have been very helpful. Because mentoring, as I learned during this time, is not a purely administrative or educational process, but an interpersonal practice that strongly depends on trust, empathy, and communication.

Mentorship as a personal learning process

In my view, mentoring does not begin with imparting specialist knowledge, but with listening---with a willingness to understand the other person's motivation, uncertainties, and individual approach to work. For me, this attitude was the key to a successful mentoring process. I now see mentorship less as a hierarchical relationship and more as a process of mutual learning.

While I was supposed to accompany and support my mentee on her journey, I also learned a great deal myself: about how young people today view work in the cultural sector, what expectations they have of institutions, and how professional socialization differs between generations. This "two-way" learning was one of the most formative experiences of the entire project for me.

I increasingly understood mentorship as a balance between closeness and professional distance. It required providing guidance without being patronizing and giving trust without fearing a loss of control. At several points in time, it became apparent that this balance cannot be taken for granted. Especially when uncertainties, health issues, or personal challenges arose, I realized how closely emotional and professional development are linked in such a mentoring relationship. I learned that empathy and attentiveness are key competencies for a mentor---not only with regard to work processes, but also in terms of sensitivity to the individual well-being of young employees.

I learned that empathy and attentiveness are key competencies for a mentor---not only with regard to work processes, but also in terms of sensitivity to the individual well-being of young employees.

Team culture, integration, and institutional learning opportunities

From my perspective, one of the greatest successes of this project was that my mentee was fully integrated into the team and the structures of the MAK from the very beginning. This was by no means a given. Mentorship only works if it is not seen as an isolated additional task, but as a collective process that also involves the environment of an institution.

In our case, the integration went exceptionally well. Our mentee quickly established social and collegial relationships, was warmly welcomed by all team members, and gained a high level of trust through her open and communicative nature. Of course, it was noticed that I, as her mentor, paid her special attention at the beginning---a circumstance that can certainly create tension in work contexts. It was all the more remarkable that our team saw this additional focus as an opportunity to learn from each

other. For me, this demonstrates a key potential of institutional mentoring programs: they can not only stabilize team cohesion but even strengthen it if they are carried out transparently and understood as a joint learning process.

Furthermore, it became apparent that mentoring enabled my mentee to become familiar with a very broad spectrum of activities at the museum---from collection management and press relations to exhibition organization. I consider this diversity to be crucial for developing a realistic understanding of a career in the cultural heritage sector.

Mentoring can thus---as has become clear to me---build a bridge between the often separate spheres of education, knowledge transfer, and practical work.

Challenges and limitations of institutional mentoring models

Despite the positive experiences, I can clearly see the limitations of complex mentoring systems. The CultHeRit programme was very comprehensive in terms of methodology, with numerous discussions, standardized evaluation forms, and process documentation. In my opinion, this structure did lead to a certain degree of transparency, but it was difficult to implement in the day-to-day work of a large institution such as the MAK.

In my view, a model based more on trust and personal responsibility---such as a buddy system---would be more efficient and sustainable. The focus here is less on formal evaluation and more on direct, straightforward exchange. Mentorship must not be stifled by bureaucracy; it thrives on spontaneity, authenticity, and mutual interest.

Impact, sustainability, and personal conclusion

From my perspective, mentorship in the cultural heritage sector has considerable potential to achieve lasting effects---both at the individual and institutional levels. It can increase the retention rate of young professionals, facilitate integration into existing teams, promote intergenerational dialogue, ensure knowledge transfer, and reinforce institutional coherence.

In my experience, these effects are particularly noticeable when mentoring is understood not as a temporary project but as an integral part of a team-oriented leadership culture.

For me personally, participating in the CultHeRit program was a crucial learning process: I gained a new perspective on young colleagues, reflected more consciously on my leadership behaviour, and learned to appreciate the value of empathy and communication in leadership. This experience has also had an impact on my private life---it has shown me how important it is to treat young people with trust but also provide clear structures.

In conclusion, I consider mentoring within CultHeRit to be an experiment with lasting significance. I am convinced that the future of cultural heritage can only be secured if knowledge, responsibility, and commitment are actively passed on and shared. For me, mentorship is not just a tool, but an expression of an attitude: the willingness to contribute one's own experience, to question it, and thereby enable joint learning.

In this sense, I understand mentorship as a bridge---between generations, between disciplines, between institutional hierarchies. Building this bridge has not always been easy for me personally, but it has permanently changed the way I think about my work, my colleagues, and the role of cultural institutions as lively learning spaces.

Challenges and limitations of institutional mentoring models

A second critical point concerns the structural framework. Mentoring cannot compensate for systemic deficits---such as unclear role profiles, lack of recognition, or unequal pay. If institutions want to retain young professionals in the long term, these fundamental issues must be addressed. Mentorship can accompany this process, but it cannot replace it. In my opinion, the goal should therefore be less about “retention through support” and more about cultivating institutional openness---a culture that takes young voices seriously and strengthens trust through mutual respect.

Lucie Vlčková and Michaela Neškerová

Lucie Vlčková, Director of Collections and Research at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, Prague, Czech Republic (UPM), Co-mentor in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Michaela Neškerová, Head of the Secretariat at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, Prague, Czech Republic (UPM), Co-mentor in the pilot action testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Michaela Neškerová and Lucie Vlčková at the CultHeRit project meeting hosted in the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague. February 2026. Photo credit: UPM

LEFT: Lucie Vlčková during the individual presentations in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

Lucie Vlčková and Michaela Neškerová at the CultHeRit project meeting in Cluj-Napoca. June 2024.
Photo credit: Zoltán Szalontai

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Role of a mentor Mentor is a person / colleague whose role is to: help new employees familiarize themselves with the structure of the institution, established rules and procedures, and integrate them into the team and the professional community.

Goals or aims of mentorship in CHIM are: a focused, motivated, and satisfied employee who is capable of working independently and as part of a team on assigned tasks and who is beneficial to the employer.

Mentor does: provides support, assistance, guidance, personal example, practical examples, provides feedback to the mentee and also to the existing team on issues related to the integration of a new employee.

Mentor does not or should not: be a direct chief, so that he/she can maintain distance and evaluate mentee with greater objectivity. At the same time, he/she should not be a colleague who performs the same tasks in the same position, so that he/she is not a competitor.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship The mentorship begins: Informally, it can begin even before the employment contract is signed---typically in the case of interns. Formally upon starting employment.

It ends when: when the mentee is sufficiently integrated into the team and can orient themselves in the work entrusted to them. However, the mentor should also be informally available later on, when the employee wants to develop further and plan their professional goals.

It can be interrupted or dissolved: for various reasons, including that the mentee and mentor are not compatible in terms of personality.

Interruptions and dissolutions of mentorship can be handled and solved by: HR manager

Duration of mentorship, ideally would be: 6 months

In reality, duration: 1-3 months

Results of mentorship Expected results and achievements:

- short-term: A mentee who is familiar with the basic functioning and structure of the institution, knows their colleagues, and understands the institution's main priorities.
- mid-term: A mentee who is integrated into the team, performs their tasks, and considers opportunities for professional development and growth.
- long-term: Mentee as an employee with personal responsibility for assigned tasks and a vision for their personal development and contribution to the institution.

Desirable results of mentorship: A motivated employee who knows their strengths and uses them to the benefit of their employer while working on their career growth.

What can go wrong and should be avoided: When mentorship does not lead to employee growth and development of their skills and their use for the benefit of the institution.

II. Profile of the Mentor

Characteristics & Background

A mentor should be:

- minimally: experienced, communicative, open-minded
- optimally: see above, plus warm-hearted, helpful, loyal to the institution, and non-competitive
- ideally: see above, plus has a vision for the development of the institution and the potential of its employees; a successful and self-developing professional

A person who has these characteristics is not likely to be a good mentor: lacking team spirit, competitive, not working on self-development, lacking vision and loyalty to the institution

Professional and educational background The same / similar education of mentor & mentee: Important, but not essential, a mentor with the same education knows what to expect professionally from the mentee.

The same or similar professional focus / jobs (positions): Essential, as only a mentor with the same professional profile can be a knowledgeable helper in building the mentee's professional growth.

Mentor's experience & overview of the field: Essentially, a mentor should be someone from whom you have something to learn and want to learn.

Mentor's level of achievement: sharing contacts and providing access to the professional

mentor's level of achievement: Essential for professional growth -- a successful mentor can share their know-how and also point out all the pitfalls they had to overcome.

Sharing contacts and providing access to the professional network, opportunities, possibilities: Very beneficial for the mentee, as the mentor has the potential to help them integrate into the professional community.

Importance of the mentor being well-informed and up-to-date: An important factor, as can be seen from the above answers.

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability

Minimally: honest, communicative, helpful

Optimally: In addition to the above, he / she should have perspective, be empathetic, but not overly emotional.

Ideally: In addition to the above, he / she should be enthusiastic, supportive, balancing the interests of the mentee and the institution.

III. Mentorship in Practice

Mentorship at work Based on my experience, mentorship is best done when: the mentor and mentee know each other from previous successful collaborations (internship, professional community), where the mentor has several years of experience in the field and in the given position, but does not necessarily have to be from the same team as the mentee. It can be an advantage if the mentor is older, as they have a greater perspective on potential failures.

Mentorship is done well when it balances the interests of both the mentee and the institution and helps build good relationships in the workplace.

A mentor can be a direct supervisor, but it is better if they have some distance. The role of a supervisor is not to take care of the mentee's career growth. The role of a coach is primarily focused on the mentee's development, but not on their integration into the field and institution.

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship:

Step 1: The mentor familiarizes the mentee with the institution's operations, main tasks, and rules, introduces them to the teams and their job descriptions, and assigns a supervisor and, if necessary, a co-mentor.

Step 2: The mentor or co-mentor personally introduces the mentee to individual colleagues, attends the first meeting between the mentee and supervisor, and helps to strike a balance between the tasks assigned, taking into account the mentee's experience and skills and the interests of the institution.

Step 3: Setting up the mentoring process -- availability of a mentor, monitoring of the integration process, training, mentor supervision of the scope and nature of assigned tasks, together with the supervisor setting a monthly work plan, reviewing tasks and reports on task completion, and evaluation -- once a month.

Step 4: Evaluation of the mentee and the results of their work in the form of a meeting between the mentor, mentee, co-mentor, supervisor, HR manager, and, if applicable, the head of the team in which the mentee works- quarterly. Provision of recommendations for further development.

Step 5: Evaluate the employee's prospects for the institution (internally); if the result is positive, propose motivational tools---financial rewards, offers to participate in other development programs (e.g., internships abroad, participation in the Erasmus program), training opportunities, participation in conferences, publishing opportunities.

Step 6: In case of failures during integration and task completion, assistance with remediation and recommendations for best practices. Suggestions for improving competencies, recommendations for further education and training.

Step 7: Integrate the mentee into the professional community, assign independent tasks, and present a vision for career growth within and outside the institution.

Supplemental & alternative arrangements

Mentorship is irreplaceable, but its goals can also be achieved through alternative tools---a combination of coaching and HR management, sharing experiences within the team, and job shadowing.

***Co-mentorship**

We chose co-mentoring at our institution with regard to the position for which the mentee was hired. The main mentor is responsible for aligning the professional goals and mission of the institution with the mentee's professional goals, as this is a highly specialized field. Co-mentors mainly handle organizational issues---compliance with rules and procedures. This solution helps reduce the time demands on the main mentor, who can then focus more on professional development issues. We have two co-mentors---one for organizational and labor law issues and one for a specific area of the mentee's work---educational activities, as this is a specialized activity requiring pedagogical training. The roles of the main mentor and both co-mentors are so different that the mentee naturally knows which person to approach with which problem or question. Meetings between the main mentor and co-mentors take place once a month, but they are available to each other at any time.

The number of co-mentors in our team is 2.

The role of co-mentor within the mentoring system of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague is conceived as a supportive and methodologically defined position whose main objective is to ensure the smooth adaptation of the mentee to the institutional, administrative, and operational framework of the organization. The co-mentor acts as a guide to the museum's internal processes and provides systematic support in navigating the organizational structure, internal regulations, and established work procedures of the institution including the administrative process for all documents.

The co-mentor focuses primarily on the administrative functioning of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague including familiarizing the mentee with the rules of labor relations, internal guidelines, operating rules, approval processes and the basic principles of institutional communication. Their activities also include support in the area of work planning, orientation in documentation and record-keeping systems as well as practical arrangements for cooperation across the museum's departments.

This role contributes significantly to the effective integration of the mentee into the institution's work environment and to their ability to navigate the museum's administrative framework independently and competently. At the same time, the co-mentor ensures that the mentee's professional and educational activities are in line with internal rules and above all with the long-term goals of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague.

A clear definition of the co-mentor's role allows for a functional division of responsibilities within the mentoring team and reduces the time and organizational burden on the main mentor. This allows the main mentor to focus primarily on the strategic guidance of the mentee their professional development and the fulfillment of professional goals in line with the institution's mission. The co-mentor is available to the mentee on an ongoing basis and in coordination with the main mentor and other co-mentors participates in regular evaluation meetings which take place once a month.

Measurable outputs of the co-mentor role

The role of the co-mentor in the area of administrative and organizational support will be evaluated on the basis of the following measurable outputs which reflect the effective integration of the mentee into the operational and administrative processes of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague:

1/ Organization and administrative support for lectures and educational activities

- number of professional and educational lectures or accompanying programs prepared by the mentee in accordance with the institution's internal procedures,

- provision of complete administrative documentation for the activities carried out (approval processes, schedules),

- compliance with established internal deadlines and procedures in the preparation and implementation of educational programs.

2/ Reporting work activities and administrative agenda

- regular and accurate record-keeping of working hours and activities in accordance with the internal guidelines of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague,

- timely and complete submission of documents for internal reporting and grant reporting (monthly activity reports, evaluation report documents),

- reduction in the number of administrative errors during the mentoring period (e.g., the need for additional corrections or additions to documentation).

3/ Coordination of cooperation with internal and external collaborators

- number of coordinated collaborations with internal museum departments (curators, production, technical support, marketing),

- effective communication with external lecturers, teachers, and other professional collaborators according to the needs of educational activities,

- adherence to approved budgets, timetables, and division of roles in the implementation of programs.

4/ Adaptation of the mentee to institutional processes

- ability of the mentee to independently perform administrative and organizational tasks related to their job description after the end of the mentoring period,

- positive evaluation of the adaptation process based on regular meetings of the mentoring team,

- reduction of the time needed for the mentee to fully orient themselves in the administrative and operational processes of the institution.

5/ Ongoing evaluation and quality of cooperation

- holding regular monthly meetings between the main mentor and co-mentors,

- keeping brief records of evaluation meetings with an assessment of the goals achieved,

- feedback from the mentee on the contribution of the co-mentor's role to their professional and organizational development.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship

Mentoring included in internal work regulations. Defined code of ethics for mentors. Defined mentoring process (duration, frequency of contact, mentor availability, evaluation, and feedback). Support provided to mentors---within the institution (HR department), training, courses. Financial compensation for mentors' work (or providing non financial benefits).

Mentoring in such a complex institution enables the effective transfer of knowledge not only at a professional level but also in the area of administrative procedures and interdepartmental cooperation. A clear definition of the roles of the main mentor and co-mentors contributes to the transparency of the system and allows for an individualized approach to the mentee's needs.

V. Personal Reflections: I as a Novice

When I joined the museum more than twenty years ago, I wasn't a complete newcomer - for a year, I had been volunteering there once a month, and during that time I had become at least somewhat familiar with the environment, the type of work, and some of my colleagues. After I started working there, my colleagues were helpful, but they left the initiative entirely up to me, which suited me fine. I was very enthusiastic and active, and I'm not surprised that some of my colleagues found me a little too active :-).

I also learned a lot from colleagues in the field who worked at other institutions and from my university professors, with whom I am still in contact today, as I am involved in activities in the field outside the institution where I work.

I have been working at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague for 10 years and in the initial phase I encountered a complex institutional environment characteristic of such an institution with clearly defined administrative processes, internal regulations and specific procedures resulting from the nature of a public cultural institution. For effective adaptation it was crucial to gradually familiarize myself with the museum's organizational structure the responsibilities of individual departments and the administrative tools necessary for day-to-day work.

At this stage it proved essential to have methodological and personnel support available which enabled quick orientation in internal rules work reporting and the administrative support of professional and sometimes educational activities. Systematic guidance contributed to gradual independence in administrative tasks and reduced the uncertainty typical of the adaptation period.

Instead of Conclusion Mentoring is often underestimated, but it is an excellent tool for developing valuable employees. For mentees, it is a path to professional growth and the formation of their own career vision and goals that lead to its fulfillment. However, this only applies if mentoring is done correctly.

From the perspective of a co-mentor in the field of administration mentoring is perceived as a tool for strategically supporting the adaptation process of new employees and as a means of increasing the effectiveness of their involvement in the running of the institution. The role of the co-mentor consists primarily in systematically guiding the mentee through administrative and organizational processes providing practical orientation in the environment and ensuring that work activities comply with the internal rules of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague.

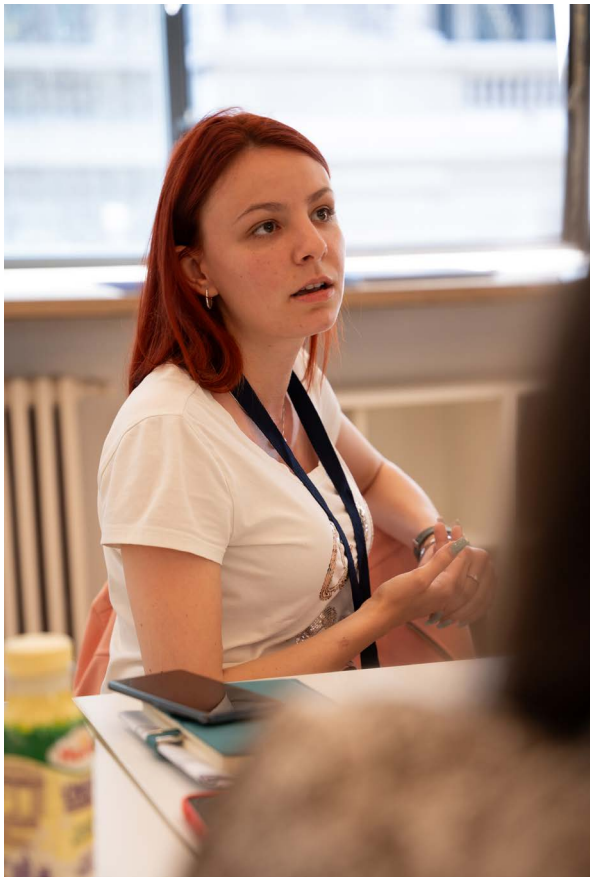
The co-mentor also acts as a stable contact person for resolving operational and administrative issues and as a communication bridge between the mentee and the individual departments of the institution. **This role significantly contributes to reducing the time and organizational burden on the main mentor and supports the effective distribution of responsibilities within the mentoring team. This is one of the most important points**. Due to the heavy workload of all those involved the role of co-mentor is very useful and also reveals certain imbalances that are unfortunately sometimes completely invisible due to a certain "corporate blindness." This also points to certain improvements in communication within the entire institution and in terms of specific needs.

MENTEES

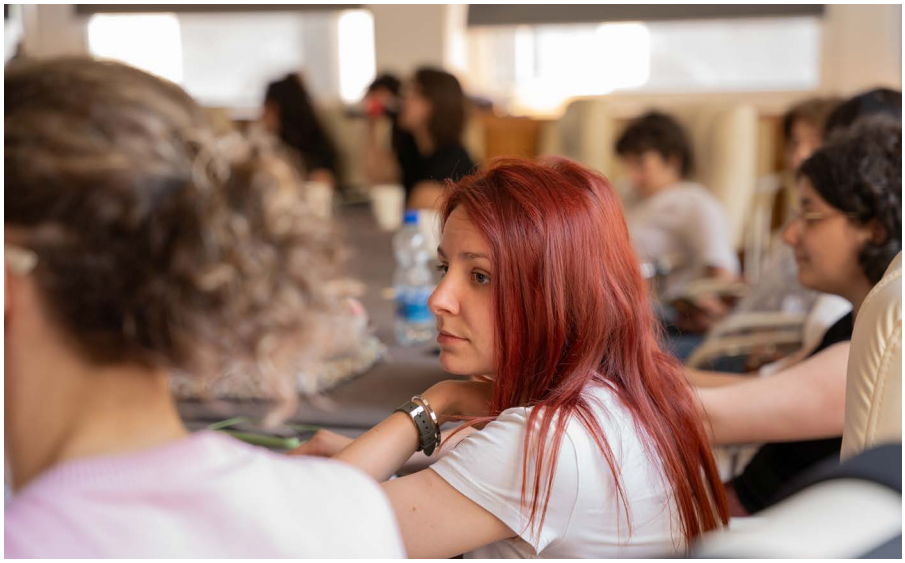
Dorotea Aščerić

Dorotea Aščerić, mentee, young professional employed for the [position] at the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments, Belgrade, Serbia (RIPCM) as part of the pilot testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Dorotea Aščerić during the individual presentations in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.



RIGHT: Dorotea Aščerić at the project workshop in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.



Dorotea Aščerić at the project workshop in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Role of a mentor The mentor should guide the new employee in understanding how the institution and the team function. They should help the newcomer integrate into the team, explain the tasks, monitor work progress, maintain regular meetings, communication, and provide clear feedback. The mentor should not assign unclear tasks or set overly short deadlines. The result of mentorship should be that the new employee becomes fully independent in their work.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship The mentorship begins on the new employee's first day at work. It ends once the agreed period is over (a few months, six months, a year), but if their relationship has been normal and functional, it will continue informally. Mentorship can be interrupted or dissolved if the new employee is transferred to another position, in which case it is more appropriate for them to be mentored by someone with compatible knowledge of that position. In my personal experience duration of mentorship should ideally be six months, but in reality duration of mentorship programme depends of organizational culture.

Results of mentorship In the short term, progress and achievements should be measurable based on regular weekly tasks. In the mid and long term, it should be assessed according to a joint agreement established at the start. Simply put, the goals defined at the beginning are compared against the outcomes, going through them point by point to see what has been achieved and what has not. If something hasn't been achieved, the reasons should be considered---whether they are objective or personal.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

A mentor should have strong command of their work, know how to listen, provide support, be open, and make time for their mentee. At least mentor need to have strong command of their own work; optimally, they should be able to make some time for their mentee; and ideally, everything that is said above. If someone doesn't want to share their knowledge, they are not likely to be a good mentor.

Professional and educational background When we talk about mentor's and mentee's education they should have the same or similar education background. That is always a plus, but that not be necessary. That helps mentor to guide new employee and recognize their potential and not making mini version of themselvs. It is important that the new employee can look up to their mentor and see them as a good example. That serves as strong motivation. If the mentor is sincere about mentorship, that is the only right way. Base of good communication is that mentor is being well-informed and up-to-date.

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability A mentor should have social intelligence to recognize which communication style suits the new employee best. Optimally, they should be fair, specific, and clear. Ideally, they should look out for the person they are mentoring in a protective way.

III. Mentorship in Practice

Mentorship-at-work It's not important for the two people to know each other beforehand. What matters is that they understand each other well in the new work environment. I believe it's essential for them to be in the same department, but there's no need for them to be on the same team. It's also not necessary for them to share the same office, but it is important that the mentee feels comfortable enough to always knock on the door and ask questions when needed. The age difference also doesn't mean much in the workplace, as long as people are willing to understand each other. Mentorship should include both supervising and coaching, because that way the newcomer is trained and learns. Mentorship works well when the mentee knows exactly (which values) they will gain after completing the programme, and each person should choose the model that best fits their own sensibility and life stage. There is no single recipe or one-size-fits-all solution. In the student phase, greater flexibility is often preferred, while at later stages, more structured and rule-based frameworks become more appropriate. Mentorship is a two-way street. Gratefully, during my volunteer internships, previous jobs, and in my current position, I've been fortunate to have great mentors. But I'd like to emphasize one thing --- mentee should also be appreciative of the knowledge and time their mentor invests in them.

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship Given that my previous position was that of an HR Assistant in a corporation, I had the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the procedures essential for proper work in the field of human resources -- from recruitment and selection processes, through onboarding, to mentoring and monitoring.

I was therefore genuinely pleased to realize that many sound and effective practices come naturally to my mentor, who clearly possesses a strong skills for mentoring. Well-established practices include initial support during the first days of onboarding, the preparation of materials and literature through which a newcomer can gain a theoretical understanding of their role, the gradual introduction of tasks accompanied by monitoring the pace of their completion, as well as regular communication and reporting on everyday developments. Openness and transparency are always desirable and, over time, lead to the trust that is essential for successful collaboration. It is essential to foster an environment in which a newcomer feels encouraged to ask any work-related question, and where the mentor, even when an immediate answer is not available, is committed to seeking a solution together. No matter how tight the schedule and deadlines may be, it is crucial that the mentor is able to set aside dedicated, high-quality time in which to give their mentee adequate and focused attention.

It is therefore highly valuable that, as a result of the CultHeRit project, numerous good practices will be documented, subsequently helping to facilitate the work of many other mentors and young professionals in the CHIM sector.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship First of all, this implies a stable system for hiring new staff. Mentorship could be compensated through an addition to the mentor's salary, but at the same time one person should not mentor more than 2--3 newcomers per year. There should be documents (work logs, work orders, reports, ect.) that support continuous monitoring of the commitment of both the mentor and the mentee. The goal should be an independent and fully trained person ready to work. In Serbia, after one year, a state exam for conservators or curators is taken, which also provides an opportunity to assess how much the mentor has contributed to helping the newcomer learn the job.

V. Personal Reflections: I as a Mentor

In an ideal world, my mentoring style would borrow a page or two from *Dead Poets Society*: not necessarily standing on desks, but constantly inviting others to shift their viewpoint and see things differently.

As a mentor, my primary goal would be to recognize which style of communication suits my mentee best. Some people prefer a more friendly tone, while others prefer a more formal one. I would make an effort for them to get to know me as a person first, and then we would talk about work. I would assign clear tasks and set realistic deadlines. If a deadline is short, I would encourage the mentee to complete it on time. I would praise their effort and a job well done in front of others. If the mentee makes a mistake, I would talk to them privately, ask what they think went wrong, and what should be done better next time. I would try to have contact with them almost daily; if that's not feasible, then at least once a month to receive an update on completed tasks. Over time, I would increasingly encourage independence. Throughout the whole process, I would observe whether the person wants to stay in my company or if this is just a temporary stop for them.

Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić

Tessa Bachrach-Krištofic, mentee, young professional employed as the Program Associate / Visual communication designer at the Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb, Croatia (MUO) as part of the pilot testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić during individual presentations in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić at the project meeting in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

Tessa Bachrach-Krištofić at the project workshop in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Role of a mentor A mentor is a colleague who shows patience and a genuine willingness to support the mentee by helping them integrate into the institution, transferring knowledge, and guiding them in understanding the institution's values. A mentor supports the mentee in navigating everyday challenges that arise in different tasks and projects, and in the CHIM sector specifically, mentorship aims to foster professional growth, provide constructive feedback, connect the mentee with relevant colleagues and networks, and guide them through institutional culture and bureaucracy. In practice, a mentor introduces the mentee to different departments, explains internal processes, helps them understand workflows and communication within the museum, and shares their own knowledge and experience. A mentor should not assume that the mentee already understands everything or possesses all the expected knowledge, nor should they act aggressively or impatiently; instead, mentorship should provide a safe space for asking questions, learning, and gradual professional development.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship Mentorship typically begins within the first working days at the institution, often overlapping with the onboarding process. Formally, it ends when the contract concludes, but informally it can continue if both sides wish. Mentorship can be interrupted or dissolved if, for example, the mentor changes position or workload pressures become too heavy. In such cases, co-mentorship or assigning a substitute mentor, along with clear communication, can help bridge the gap and prevent disruption. Typically, mentorship lasts between 6 and 12 months, although in practice this depends on project timelines, contract length, and, most importantly, the level of engagement and the quality of the mentor -- mentee relationship. In my case, I expect to remain in contact with my mentor even after the official period ends, especially if my contract is extended.

Results of mentorship The expected results and achievements of mentorship can be observed on several levels. In the short term, the mentee understands how the institution functions, learns everyday workflows, and knows how to collaborate with different departments. In the mid-term, knowledge transfer takes place, the mentee gains professional confidence, and builds a reliable network of colleagues within the institution. In the long term, the mentee achieves smoother integration into the cultural sector, develops independence in handling all tasks and projects in his field, and becomes a valuable professional and member of the institution and the cultural sector. Desirable results include the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills when approaching institutional tasks. Over time, the mentee should also become more adaptable and resilient in navigating the challenges of a dynamic museum environment, and be able to contribute original ideas and creative solutions that support the institution's mission. Ultimately, mentorship should encourage the growth of a strong professional identity and a deeper sense of belonging within the cultural heritage sector. While mentorship is designed to support professional growth, there are risks and possible negative side effects if it is not well structured. One risk is that mentorship becomes overly task-focused, leaving little room for learning, reflection, or development. If the mentor is unavailable or overloaded with other responsibilities, the mentee may feel undervalued, excluded from meaningful projects, or unsupported, which can reduce motivation. On the other hand, if the mentor is too involved, the mentee may become overly dependent and struggle to develop independence. Miscommunication is another common challenge, as unclear instructions, lack of feedback, or inconsistent guidance may lead to mistakes, frustration, or even conflicts within the team. In some cases, the mentor may also be unwilling to share knowledge, contacts, or opportunities, which limits the mentee's growth and undermines the

purpose of mentorship. Finally, mismatched expectations, such as a mentor assuming the mentee already possesses the required knowledge or a mentee expecting the mentor to solve all problems, can cause disappointment for both sides, and these risks can be minimized through regular communication, clear feedback, well-defined roles and responsibilities, and by ensuring that both mentor and mentee understand the balance between support and independence.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

At a minimum, a good mentor should be approachable, willing to answer questions, and knowledgeable about institutional workflows. Optimally, a mentor demonstrates sensibility, communicates clearly, provides constructive feedback, and offers professional advice beyond daily tasks. Ideally, a mentor inspires confidence, motivates the mentee, opens doors to new opportunities, and maintains long-term contact. A person who displays arrogance, unavailability, lack of interest, or micromanagement is unlikely to be a good mentor.

Professional and educational background In my view, it is not always necessary for a mentor and mentee to have the same professional background. In my case, I work in the design sector while my mentor works in marketing and PR, and although she cannot guide me in the technical aspects of design, her perspective is still very valuable. However, for some young professionals it might be more helpful to have a mentor in the same profession, especially when learning specific job requirements. What is more important is an overlap in professional focus, and since we both work in the museum and cultural sector, we share similar interests and values, which makes the mentorship relevant and meaningful and allows us to discuss and think about new solutions if needed. My mentor's experience and overview of the field provide me with insights into communication strategies, bureaucracy, and institutional positioning, and it is crucial that a mentor remains well-informed and up to date with current cultural and museum trends, as this increases both the mentor's confidence and the mentee's trust in the guidance provided.

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability A mentor should possess certain interpersonal skills: at a minimum, respect, clarity, and a willingness to help. Optimally, a mentor demonstrates these qualities along with patience, open communication, and availability for questions. Ideally, a mentor combines all of these with empathy, encouragement, constructive criticism, and flexibility.

III. Mentorship in Practice

Mentorship-at-work Mentorship works best when the mentor is approachable, empathetic, and easy to ask questions without hesitation. Sharing the same institution is especially valuable, as it helps the mentee understand cross-departmental collaboration and institutional dynamics. Age can influence mentorship differently. An older mentor may provide wisdom and professional experience, while a mentor closer in age may better understand the perspective and needs of younger professionals. Both can be effective, depending on the context. Being part of the same team is advantageous, as it allows for regular communication and ongoing guidance in day-to-day work. In my case, my mentor cannot guide me in the technical skills of design, but she supports me in important areas such as communication, planning, and teamwork. This shows that mentorship can be effective even when mentor and mentee have different professional focuses. It is also important to distinguish mentorship from supervision. A supervisor assigns tasks and oversees their completion, while a mentor provides guidance, encouragement, and advice to support long-term growth.

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship Good examples of mentorship were shown through guided introductions, where I was introduced to colleagues across different departments and informed about their responsibilities, including marketing, curatorial, and education teams. I was encouraged to ask questions directly and build working relationships, which helped me feel more integrated and confident in contacting colleagues. Another valuable mentorship practice was sharing resources, such as past promotional materials and examples of communication strategies, along with guidance on what had been successful and what could be improved. This helped me connect my design work with the broader institutional strategy. In terms of administrative support, good mentorship involved guiding me through bureaucratic and institutional procedures. The mentor explained steps and provided examples, such as filling out forms or planning annual leave, checked documents before submission, and clarified relevant regulations. This saved time, reduced mistakes, and helped me navigate museum administration smoothly. Also, good mentorship included giving advice on adapting communication styles to different colleagues, explaining when to use formal or informal tones, and how to approach senior staff or external partners. Applying this guidance in daily interactions improved my confidence in professional communication within the museum. Finally, the use of evaluation questionnaires was another strong mentorship practice. Regular evaluations allowed reflection and feedback between mentor and mentee, with results shared with the director at set intervals. This created transparency, improved the quality of mentorship, and supported professional growth.

Supplemental & alternative arrangements I believe that mentorship can be divided between two people, especially in cases where no single person can fully cover all aspects of the role, and in my case co-mentorship could work well, for example by having one mentor in PR and marketing and another who is a curator of the design collection, which as a graphic designer would allow me to gain insights both from the perspective of institutional communication and curatorial practice, combining the two for a deeper understanding of the material I work with, while also dividing the workload so it does not fall on one person. Additionally, new mentors could benefit from the experience of senior colleagues who have already been in a mentorship role, creating a system of knowledge transfer not only for mentees but also for mentors themselves.

***Co-mentorship** In our team there is no co-mentorship, so I cannot provide direct experience, but I can imagine how it could be applied in the CHIM sector, especially when one mentor cannot cover all aspects of a role such as design, PR, and curatorial work, in which case two mentors from different

departments could share responsibility. However, questions remain about how the division of responsibilities would be formalized, whether one mentor would act as the lead or both would have equal weight, and how mentees would avoid confusion about who to approach for specific issues. Useful resources could include case studies from institutions that already apply co-mentorship and guidelines for structuring shared mentorship with clear roles and communication channels, as well as workshops for mentors on collaborative mentorship methods and courses on leadership and team communication. Mentorship could improve, adapt, and evolve by introducing pilot co-mentorship programs in CHIM institutions, especially where staff expertise is highly specialized, such as PR, curatorship, and design.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship I imagine an institution that proactively supports mentorship by formally recognizing it in job descriptions and allocating dedicated time for mentors to guide mentees without being overworked, while encouraging co-mentorship across departments to provide broader perspectives and diverse knowledge. Such an institution would offer structured training programs for mentors focused on communication and leadership, as well as courses and learning opportunities for mentees, and would enable both mentors and mentees to visit other institutions to learn new methods and approaches and bring this knowledge back. Regular evaluation and feedback structured by the HR department would be an integral part of the program, supporting growth for both mentors and mentees. In the CHIM sector specifically, this institution would emphasize knowledge transfer, particularly considering that many employees are nearing retirement, ensuring that valuable expertise and institutional memory are preserved and passed on to younger generations of professionals.

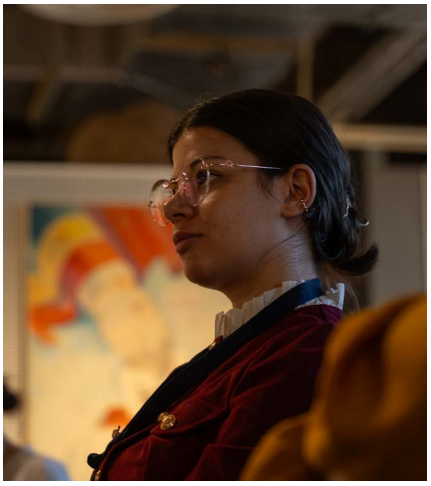
V. Personal Reflections: I as a Mentor

As a mentor, I would start by helping my mentee get to know the institution and its way of working, ensuring they feel welcome and supported from the beginning, and I would encourage them to grow into independence, trust their own skills, and build confidence step by step. I would check in regularly to see how they are doing without hovering or micromanaging, and I would share everything I know, gladly passing on my experience and opening doors to opportunities through projects and collaborations. I would be present when challenges arise, offering practical support and encouragement, and I would respond with empathy when difficulties occur. Most importantly, I see mentorship as more than a temporary role, and I would hope to remain in contact even after the program ends, continuing the relationship as professional colleagues and peers.

Instead of Conclusion Mentorship should be flexible and adapt to the mentee's needs, and institutions should provide resources and training to improve mentorship, including the possibility of combining mentorship with peer learning, co-mentorship, and external workshops. My experience shows that even if the mentor and mentee are not in the same professional field, mentorship can still be very valuable.

Andra-Cezara Comiati

Andra-Cezara Comiati, mentee, young professional employed as the Museum Educator at the National Museum for the History of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca, Romania (MNIT) as part of the pilot testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.



LEFT TO RIGHT:
Andra-Cezara Comiati during the individual presentation session in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Andra-Cezara Comiati facilitating educational workshops at MNIT. Photo credit: Andra-Cezara Comiati

Andra-Cezara Comiati leading a guided tour at MNIT. Photo credit: Andra-Cezara Comiati

Andra-Cezara Comiati. Photo credit: Andra-Cezara Comiati

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Role of a mentor In the CHIM field, a mentor is a more experienced colleague who guides and supports less experienced professionals as they integrate into the workplace. The mentor's role is to provide practical advice, model good practices, and help the mentee understand both the formal and informal aspects of the institution. The goals of mentorship in the CHIM sector are to accelerate professional development, encourage ethical and evidence-based practice, and nurture a sense of belonging in the sector. A mentor should not replace a supervisor nor take over the mentee's tasks, but rather offer guidance and constructive feedback.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship Mentorship ideally begins during the onboarding or orientation phase but can also start informally before the first day of work.

It ends when the mentee has achieved a satisfactory level of autonomy, or when a mutually agreed-upon period concludes.

Mentorship can be interrupted by changes in personnel, workload pressures, or institutional restructuring; when that happens, it is important to provide a substitute mentor or a co-mentoring arrangement to avoid gaps.

Ideally, mentorship should last between six months and two years, depending on the complexity of the role, but shorter or longer periods may be realistic in practice.

Results of mentorship A successful mentorship leads to increased confidence , technical and interpersonal skills improved, and a better understanding of institutional procedures and standards. In the short term, mentorship should enable the mentee to perform key tasks competently.

In the medium and long term, mentorship should build professional identity , broaden networks, and support career progression.

Unintended or damaging results---such as overdependence on the mentor or perpetuation of outdated practices---should be consciously avoided through regular feedback and evaluation.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

A good mentor in the CHIM sector should have sound professional expertise, patience, and a collaborative mindset. They should be approachable, respectful of diversity, and willing to invest time in developing others. Ideally, a mentor combines technical knowledge with strong communication and interpersonal skills, acting as both a guide and a role model. Conversely, a mentor who is dismissive, unavailable, or overly critical can undermine the learning process.

Professional and educational background It is helpful when the mentor and mentee share at least a similar professional focus or area of expertise, as this increases relevance and trust. However, diversity of background can also enrich mentorship by exposing the mentee to new perspectives. The mentor's level of achievement and experience adds credibility, and their willingness to share contacts and professional opportunities strengthens the mentee's integration into the wider field.

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability Soft skills such as active listening, empathy, and constructive feedback are essential to effective mentorship. In the CHIM sector institutions, where interdisciplinary teams and cross-cultural collaboration are common, a respectful and open communication style builds trust. Ideally, mentors are regularly available for short consultations and periodic in-depth meetings, while maintaining a balance that supports the mentee's independence.

III. Mentorship in Practice

Mentorship-at-work Based on my experience, mentorship is most effective when it combines clear structure with enough flexibility to adapt over time. In addition to conversation-based guidance, mentorship becomes richer when it includes practical elements such as joint problem-solving sessions, shadowing opportunities, and exposure to relevant professional literature, fieldwork, or real-world cases. Ultimately, I believe mentorship works best when both mentor and mentee communicate openly, revisit expectations when needed, and take time to reflect together on development and outcomes.

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship Mentorship works best when it is structured yet flexible. Examples of good practice include having a written mentorship agreement, scheduling regular meetings, and keeping a mentorship journal to track progress. Joint problem-solving sessions, shadowing opportunities, and access to professional literature or fieldwork also enrich the experience. In my view, mentorship is most effective when both parties clearly communicate expectations and reflect together on progress.

Supplemental & alternative arrangements To support overworked mentors and broaden learning opportunities, CHIM institutions can establish co-mentorship teams, peer mentoring circles, or structured "buddy" systems. Retired professionals or external experts could be contracted part-time to provide guidance.

Digital tools and online communities can complement in-person mentoring by offering administrative support, knowledge bases, or networking platforms.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship An ideal institution proactively supports mentorship by allocating time, recognition, and possibly financial incentives for mentors. It would have clear guidelines, training for mentors, and an evaluation system to ensure quality. In the CHIM sector, it would also facilitate cross-institutional exchanges, field visits, and networking opportunities, thus embedding mentorship into the culture of professional development.

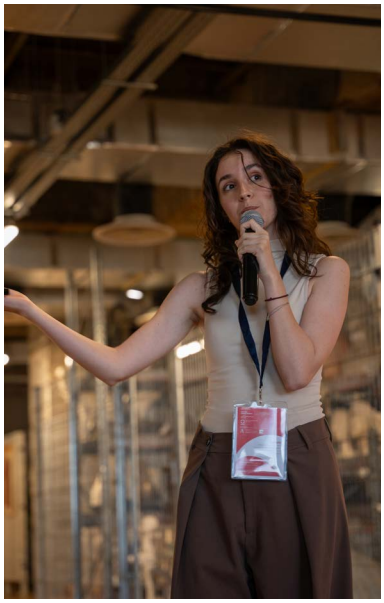
V. Personal Reflections: I as a Mentor

If I were to become a mentor in the future, I would strive to be approachable, patient, and proactive. I would set clear goals with my mentee, encourage their independence, and maintain periodic follow-up even after the formal mentorship ends. I would also aim to create a supportive environment where questions and feedback are welcomed.

Sara Đumić

Sara Đumić, mentee, young professional employed as an Associate for Built Heritage at the Institute for Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Republic of Srpska, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina (IPC) as part of the pilot testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Institute for Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Republic of Srpska, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina (IPC)



LEFT TO RIGHT: Sara Đumić at the individual presentation session in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

Sara Đumić at the workshop in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

Site visit at the archeological site Monstery Papraća. Photo credit: Sara Đumić.

Sara's colleagues, mentor Milijana Okilj and father Nektarije at the archeological site Monastery Papraća. Photo credit: Sara Đumić.

Site visit with her mentor Milijana Okilj. Photo credit: Sara Đumić.

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Role of a mentor A mentor is a person or colleague whose role is to guide, support, and teach the mentee.

In the context of CHIM, the main goals of mentorship are to demonstrate how work is carried out properly and efficiently, and to help the mentee understand how the institution functions as a whole.

A mentor helps the mentee develop both practical work-related skills and interpersonal skills, such as effective communication and collaboration with colleagues.

At the same time, a mentor should not discourage the mentee by failing to acknowledge their initial inexperience, nor by completing all the tasks themselves instead of showing the mentee how the work is done.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship Mentorship begins when both the mentor and the mentee are genuinely engaged and interested in working and learning together, whether the relationship is formal or informal.

It typically ends when a project or contract is completed, or when the mentor has shared all the relevant knowledge and skills they can offer.

A mentorship can be interrupted or dissolved if conflicts arise or if the working dynamic proves to be ineffective. Such interruptions can be addressed through open communication, the establishment of clear ground rules, and a mutual effort to resolve any issues.

Ideally, the duration of mentorship lasts until the mentee feels confident and capable of performing the job independently. In reality, however, the length of mentorship often varies depending on circumstances.

Results of mentorship

The expected results of mentorship can be understood across short-, mid-, and long-term stages.

In the short term, mentorship should provide the mentee with reassurance and help them build confidence in their work. In the mid term, the mentor should be able to assign parts of the work to the mentee without needing to constantly intervene. In the long term, the mentee should be capable of working independently and, ideally, of managing a small team within larger projects.

Beyond these minimum expectations, desirable outcomes of mentorship include the mentee developing a genuine interest in the job, gaining confidence, and acquiring strong, well-rounded knowledge.

However, mentorship can also have unintended or damaging side effects if not handled carefully. For example, the mentee may become overwhelmed with excessive responsibilities, or, conversely, may end up doing very little beyond a narrowly defined job description. Both extremes should be avoided to ensure a balanced and effective learning experience.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

A mentor should possess a range of characteristics, skills, and personal qualities that support the mentee's learning and development.

At a minimum, a mentor should understand the mentee's position and initial lack of experience, be patient, communicate clearly, and provide reassurance.

Optimally, a mentor should actively support the mentee's professional growth, demonstrate different ways of approaching the work, and help broaden the mentee's knowledge.

Ideally, the mentor collaborates with the mentee on projects, explains each step of the process and how to manage it, and actively involves the mentee by asking for their opinions, recognizing that they may offer fresh perspectives and ideas.

On the other hand, a person who feels jealous of younger colleagues, takes credit for the mentee's work, behaves selfishly, or mocks the mentee's lack of knowledge is unlikely to be a good mentor.

Professional and educational background Having the same or a similar educational background as the mentee can be very helpful, as it allows the mentor to better understand the mentee's starting point and learning process.

A similar professional focus or job position between mentor and mentee may sometimes be perceived as a source of competition. In reality, however, those responsible for hiring are aware of what they are looking for, and shared expertise can instead become a valuable basis for guidance and support.

The mentor's experience and broad overview of the field are particularly beneficial for the mentee, who can gain insight into what to expect and learn from the mentor's past mistakes and achievements. Similarly, the mentor's level of professional achievement helps the mentee understand the possible career path, challenges, and successes they may encounter.

Sharing contacts and providing access to professional networks, opportunities, and possibilities is also extremely valuable, often perceived as "opening doors" for the mentee.

It is essential for a mentor to be well-informed and up to date in their field. Remaining open to new ideas and current developments is a basic requirement for meaningful professional and personal growth.

Finally, one of the most important qualities is the mentor's genuine investment in the mentee's development: a true desire to teach and an awareness of the positive impact such guidance can have on a young professional's growth.

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability A mentor should demonstrate strong interpersonal skills that foster a positive and supportive learning environment.

At a minimum, a mentor should act professionally, treat the mentee with respect, and offer consistent support.

Optimally, a mentor should be warm and welcoming, ask questions, and make an effort to initiate conversations that go beyond work-related topics, helping to build trust and rapport.

Ideally, a mentor becomes a stepping stone in the mentee's career and a source of motivation, encouraging the mentee to develop confidence and find their own professional voice.

III. Mentorship in Practice

Mentorship at work Based on my experience, mentorship works best when the mentor is open to communication and does not overload the mentee with work. It is often helpful if the mentor and mentee already know each other (for example, a student and a professor at university), since they are familiar with each other's work ethic and approach.

Both parties should remain open to learning from and with one another, because in this relationship they are not just colleagues, but are working closely together.

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship A good mentorship practice involves both the mentor (and, when applicable, co-mentors) and the mentee, who are typically brought together through the employment process.

The core of this practice is the mentee's active involvement in real work at the institute, working alongside the mentor and other colleagues.

Over the course of each week or month, the mentee gathers topics, questions, or challenges to discuss. These are then addressed during a dedicated meeting with the mentor.

Such meetings are preferably held in person, although online meetings can also be effective when necessary.

The format resembles a regular work meeting, but it is less formal and more discussion-oriented, ideally taking place as a weekly or monthly catch-up.

Supplemental & alternative arrangements

A viable alternative or complement to traditional mentorship is a model that includes working with co-mentors alongside a main mentor. Co-mentors who are readily available online and familiar with the mentee's work at the institute can provide advice and support that is both practical and timely.

Mentorship can also be effectively supplemented by tools and practices that help the mentor and mentee remain efficient and in close contact, particularly when in-person interaction is not possible.

***Co-mentorship**

Our team includes three co-mentors in addition to the principal mentor.

The principal mentor acts as the coordinator and main point of contact, providing strategic guidance, overseeing the mentee's overall progress, and maintaining connections with the international project team. The two co-mentors complement this role by contributing additional strengths, such as experience in academic writing, support in navigating the institutional context, day-to-day practical advice, access to international resources, and professional networks.

Tasks and responsibilities are divided according to each mentor's expertise, availability, and location. The principal mentor and one co-mentor are based locally, while the other co-mentor is abroad. The mentee knows to approach the principal mentor for broader, project-related questions, and to contact the co-mentors for guidance within their specific areas of expertise.

Regular communication includes monthly joint meetings, held in a hybrid format, to discuss progress and maintain alignment. Additional separate meetings or informal contact take place as needed. An initial joint planning session was essential for defining tasks, setting boundaries, and ensuring a smooth mentorship experience.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship A good institution ensures that mentorship is clear, structured, and integrated into the professional environment. It treats mentorship as part of the job, allocates time for it, and clearly defines the roles of both mentors and mentees.

New staff or young professionals are paired with mentors who match their needs and professional goals. The institution provides tools to track progress and keep mentorship on course, and offers basic training for mentors while promoting open communication between mentors and mentees. Most importantly, mentorship is not seen as extra work but as an investment in people, with mentors receiving appropriate support.

In general, effective mentorship is structured with clearly defined roles, dedicated time, and formal recognition as part of the job. Support is provided through training and practical tools, and mentorship is valued as an essential component of professional growth, included within the regular workload.

Specifically in the CHIM sector, mentorship links theory with practice through hands-on tasks such as fieldwork, research, projects, and presentations. It preserves and transmits knowledge, from institutional memory to specialized expertise. Mentors also facilitate networking, connecting mentees with local communities as well as international opportunities.

V. Personal Reflections: I as a Mentor

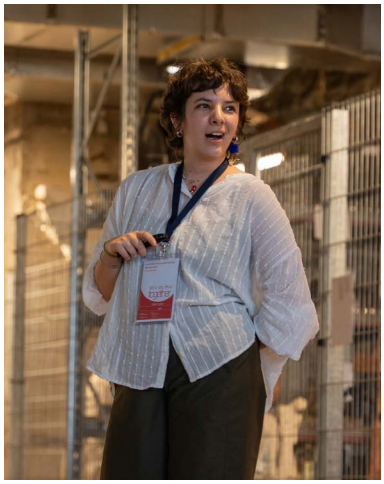
I would like to be a mentor whom my mentee can rely on and approach without hesitation. I would create space to talk about topics beyond work so that the mentee feels comfortable and never afraid of being judged for their lack of knowledge. At the same time, I would maintain structure and ensure that the work is completed responsibly. I would encourage the mentee, involve them in fieldwork, and have the patience to explain everything they need to understand in order to contribute meaningfully to the project.

I would let this person move on when I am confident that they are ready, self-assured, and prepared for a new chapter in their professional life---whether that means working in a new environment or stepping into a new position.

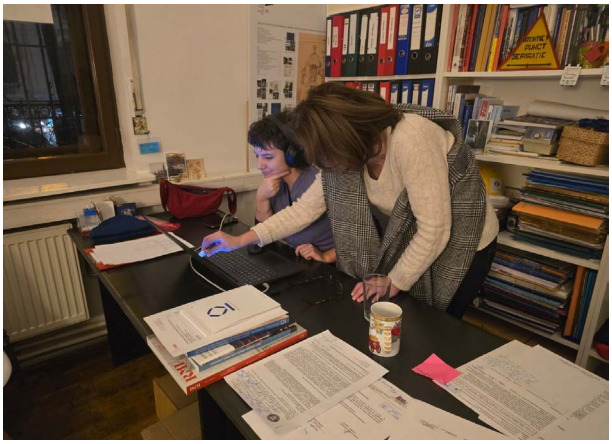
I would certainly maintain contact and follow up. Especially if we continue working in the same field, the former mentee would become a colleague with a valuable perspective for the institute and the profession. We could continue to support one another and potentially collaborate again in the future.

Erika Nagy

Erika Nagy, mentee, young professional employed as the Bibliographer at the National Institute of Heritage, Bucharest, Romania (INP) as part of the pilot testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.



Erika Nagy during the individual presentation session in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.



Erika Nagy works with her mentor Ioana Petrescu.

Photo credit: Erika Nagy

Erika Nagy works in the office and during the site visit. Photo credit: Erika Nagy

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Role of a mentor A mentor is most commonly a colleague whose role is to guide the new hire through the work processes in the office. Often times, somebody becomes a mentor organically, through mutual projects, interests and similar education backgrounds. In an institutionalized setting, the mentor should make the initial introductory period easier for the mentee in terms of integrating with the other colleagues as well as the work proccesses.

The mentor has their mentee come along the process of their work tasks and slowly introduce them into the work procedures. Eventually, as the mentee gets accustomed to their role, the mentor takes a step back and works as a pillar of reassurance and advice.

The mentor should not do the entirety of the mentee's tasks and should not always be necessarily available. Healthy boundaries should stimulate the mentee in first clarifying to themselves what is it they that they need help with.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship The mentorship begins in the first three months of being hired but it does not have to happen from the first day of work. A good time for the mentorship relationship to start is sometime after the first week of employment.

The mentorship ends formally at the end of the mentee's contract but in reality, a mentorship relationship can go beyond the institution in which you first met.

I think interruptions or dissolutions of mentorships can happen for various reasons, the ending of a contract, starting a new project within the same institution or mismatched opinions. I believe an employee can have more than one mentor and that the end of a mentorship does not always require "closure".

Mentors can be specific to certain projects and/or professional chapters.

Results of mentorship - Expected results and achievements of the mentee

Short term -- first 3 months - good understanding of the internal work hierarchy, work processes and of their role within the institution + tagging along on smaller tasks related to the mentor's projects.

Mid term -- after 6 months -- getting more independence when it comes to working on tasks, still needing the mentor's guidance but they can pivot to working on projects with other colleagues.

Long term -- after 10 months -- being involved in more projects, being responsible to tasks from start to finish, having more of a say in the internal scheduling of the task completion and deadlines

Desirable results of mentorship An independent and confident mentee who knows when they need to ask for help and when they can complete the task based on their learned skills.

Unintended or even damaging results and possible side-effects (what can go wrong and should be avoided) The micromanagement of the mentee is something that should be avoided.

Avoiding an extremely codependent relationship between the mentor and the mentee. There should be an understanding that the mentor is not the only one that holds all the answers and solutions of all problems. The mentee should be integrated well enough that they feel comfortable to seek help from their other colleagues as well.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

A mentor should have the following traits:

Minimally - patience, honesty and good experience in teaching or an understanding of efficient teaching methods

Optimally - accepting that they cannot know everything and that the mentorship is a growth opportunity for both parties involved

Ideally -- openness, willing to make time even when their schedule is busy

A person who has these characteristics/ behaviors is not likely to be a good mentor:

1. Unwilling to make the time to train and teach and advise the mentee

2. Lack of patience and unwilling to understand that new hires make mistakes even if they already have experience in the domain

Professional and educational background

Mentor vs Mentee For a fruitful mentorship, I think it is best for the two parties to have similar background education first of all. The mentor's experience should be of at least 5 to 7 years in the domain as well as in the teaching/mentoring department.

Apart from these two, I do not think it is as important to share a similar professional interest although it can be helpful in helping the mentee set future professional goals.

In my opinion, a good mentorship does come with wanting the best for your mentee. Being well informed about their expectations as well as putting them in contact with other specialists from their domain of interest will lead only to the best of results.

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability A mentor should have these interpersonal skills:

Minimally - patience, friendliness and availability in different forms online/offline

Optimally - a structured system of working, good presentation/teaching skills

Ideally - healthy work-life boundaries

III. Mentorship in Practice

Mentorship at work Based on my experience, mentorship is best done when:

- There is an age difference between the parties involved but this criterion actually is related to the assumption that a mentor older than the mentee would have more work experience.

- The two parties involved are part of the same department, helps with problem solving and understanding the nature / background of the projects.

- The mentor does not work as a supervisor for the mentee's work but rather as a guide, someone that offers assistance / advice- The mentor should encourage the mentee to get acquainted with with other colleagues and play a role in facilitating the first encounter/meeting

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship From my experience, working in a department where there is not always time for scheduled periodic meetings, good mentorship practices are hands on and based on good communication. It is imperative that as soon as the mentee encounters a problem that they have tried to solve and failed; they request the assistance of a colleague or mentor.

Some preferred mentorship practices, used depending on the nature of the task/issue, are:

- Joint troubleshooting analysis and problem-solving

- Fieldwork, observation and practical demonstrations of a task

- Offering relevant literature, videos, platforms

Besides the examples above, keeping a record of the work done on different projects, in the form of a journal or a table, can be helpful in having an overview of the things learned and achieved.

Supplemental & alternative arrangements Mentorship can be efficiently supplemented by co-mentorship or team mentorship as well as having a well thought out guide book explaining the basic steps of standard procedures within the department.

As a viable alternative to mentorshipp, a paid work-buddy seems the best option but I think that the solution of a well thought out guide book for new hires can alleviate the confusion of the introductory first three months. This guide book can also be transformed into an online version, maybe something that would vork with the help of AI.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship - In general and in the CHIM sector The mentorship does not feel like a second thought but it is incorporated within the institution's processes. There are at least 4 to 5 employees trained to fill in as a mentor, so the mentee has a choice depending on their education and/or professional interest.

There is a systematic order / guide of teaching and introducing the new employee into the work processes, accompanied by case studies or a list of tasks that have to be completed to establish that the mentee has got a general good grasp on the information. A check list of things to be learned and taught within specific timeframes (first 3 months, after 6 months etc.). I say this because I have had direct contact with this whilst working in an architecture practice after my bachelors. It is a good system to see the achievements you have made however big or small for a new employee.

Within the heritage domain, there are rarely any set times for celebrating wins.

Periodic/monthly meetings (30/60 minutes) in which the mentor and the mentee discuss the tasks they have worked on, what they have learned, would they want more of a certain type of work or would they not, planning the work for the following month and setting achievable targets.

V. Personal Reflections:

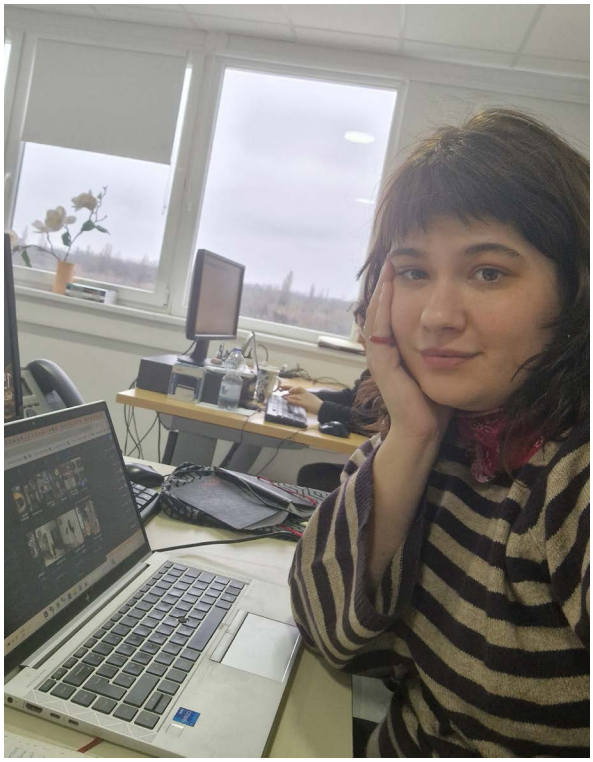
'I as a Mentor' - What kind of a mentor would you (like to) be? I think that I would like to come off as open so that my mentee feels comfortable to approach me with their issues/confusions as soon as they appear. Something important for me is also them knowing they can always get back to me for support/brainstorming.

I think a good mentor is confident enough to admit that they do not have all the answers. I would like to be someone like that as a mentor.

Our domain still works as a bubble, and I know how hard it can be to pave your path especially at the very start.

Dalma Pszota

Dalma Pszota, mentee and zoung Professional employed as the Research Project Assistant at the Hungarian National Museum Public Collections Center, Budapest, Hungary (MNMKK-IMM).



Dalma Pszota at work in the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest Photo credit: Dalma Pszota.

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Role of a mentor A mentor is a colleague whose role is to support a new employee in navigating the institution by offering practical advice and professional guidance.

The aim of mentorship in CHIM is to foster smooth institutional integration and provide a positive model for new colleagues. Mentors regularly check in with new employees and offer support with both professional and integration-related matters.

A mentor should remain approachable and supportive, avoiding excessive distance or a hierarchical atmosphere.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship Mentorship begins with an introductory conversation between the mentor and mentee before the new employee's first day of work. It gradually concludes once the employee has settled into their role and can confidently navigate the institution.

In some cases, mentorship may be interrupted or discontinued due to serious work-related or personal conflicts. Such situations can be addressed and resolved by colleagues or, in our case, by the CultHeRit team.

Ideally, mentorship lasts around one year, although it may be slightly shorter or longer. In practice, a one-year duration has proven to be particularly beneficial.

Results of mentorship Expected results: Mentorship helps the mentee understand their role and responsibilities, supports them in navigating the institution, and assists in addressing a wide range of work-related and interpersonal situations over time.

Desirable results of mentorship (beyond the basics): Workplaces are also important spaces for social interaction, where employees must learn how to cooperate and work effectively with colleagues from different educational, emotional, and personal backgrounds. A mentor can actively support this process, and a strong relationship between mentor and mentee is an especially valuable outcome of mentorship.

Unintended or potentially negative results: Mentorship may also involve certain risks, including misunderstandings, an unaddressed age gap, overly high expectations, or a lack of empathy.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

Characteristics of a Good Mentor A mentor should possess a balanced personality, communicating in a calm, patient, and clear manner. Ideally, they are understanding, welcoming, active, and open-minded, while at their best they are also professionally motivated and cheerful. Conversely, certain traits make someone unsuitable for the role of a mentor, including being conceited, narrow-minded, or prejudiced, as these characteristics hinder the development of a supportive and constructive mentor-mentee relationship.

Professional and educational background Key factors in matching mentors and mentees include several important considerations. Education is one, as the broad field and level of education should

be aligned to facilitate understanding. Professional focus and positions also matter, since similar roles help both parties comprehend each other's work, tasks, responsibilities, and challenges. The mentor's experience and perspective can significantly shape and guide the mentee's outlook, and ideally, the mentor should have reached a higher level of achievement than the mentee. Networking plays a crucial role, with mentors sharing contacts and providing access to professional networks, opportunities, and possibilities. It is also essential that the mentor remains well-informed and up-to-date in their field. While it is not necessary for the mentor and mentee to work on exactly the same research or professional topics, having common ground helps establish a productive and supportive mentoring relationship.

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability A mentor should possess a range of interpersonal skills. At a minimum, they should be approachable and polite. Optimally, they are friendly, open, and communicate in a relaxed, informal manner. Ideally, a mentor is warm, curious, and naturally talkative, fostering a welcoming and engaging relationship with the mentee.

III. Mentorship in Practice

Mentorship-at-work Several factors have influenced my mentorship experience. Initially, I did not know my mentor personally, although I had heard her name in a professional context. Interestingly, my former teacher and my mentor already know each other. We share an office, which has facilitated day-to-day interactions and communication. There is a significant age difference of about 25--30 years; she could be the age of a parent. Personally, I appreciate working with older women who bring both substantial professional expertise and life experience as female professionals in the field.

Institutionally, we belong to the same department and team, which provides a shared context for understanding responsibilities and expectations. My mentor also serves as my supervisor, as I assist with her work. Depending on the task or situation, our interactions involve both mentoring and coaching. I feel that my tasks are assigned in line with my abilities, and since this is my second job and I already have project management skills, I am entrusted with responsibilities in that area.

Overall, I am satisfied with my mentorship experience. As an experiment, I am curious to explore how mentorship would function in different circumstances, such as with less connected roles, a smaller age gap, or a more distant working arrangement.

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship I believe that expecting a mentorship journal or other high-effort practices is overly idealistic and does not align with the realities of different working environments. In Central Europe, the cultural sector's working culture has not yet fully embraced this kind of self-monitoring, with the possible exception of the independent or civil scene.

In practice, our best approach is open conversation---discussing each other's professional achievements, plans, current projects, and opinions. These discussions can broaden both parties' perspectives, while the mentor can also recommend relevant events, resources, or materials to the mentee. If a task is unclear or requires supervision, we review it together, ensuring understanding and guidance as needed.

Supplemental & alternative arrangements I believe a viable alternative to traditional mentorship is a transitional year with a colleague who is about to retire, or having a retired colleague act as a part-time mentor. Both options come with challenges: colleagues nearing retirement often come from a different era and working culture, and may be less familiar with current tools or practices. However, they also bring a wealth of experience and valuable insight.

Another effective approach is having two mentors---one older and one younger. The older mentor can provide guidance and strategic direction, while the younger mentor may be closer to the mentee, offering support with day-to-day situations and acting as a companion. For example, I often feel that my other mentor is Anna.

Mentorship can also be effectively supplemented through recommendations for events, opportunities to observe colleagues' work, and learning from the broader institutional community, ensuring a rich and diverse learning experience.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship An institution that proactively supports mentorship is quite different from IMM Budapest. However, I believe mentorship is both possible and important at IMM as well. An ideal institution for mentorship is transparent, democratic, and well-organized, where everyone understands their roles and responsibilities and acts accordingly. Colleagues support one another, are eager to learn, open to new situations, foster communication across generations and departments, and regularly participate in professional development opportunities, such as stress management, new IT tools, and organizational development trainings.

Although I do not embrace the neoliberal corporate emphasis on efficiency and productivity, the cultural heritage and arts sector could benefit from adopting some tools and practices from that sector to enhance its appeal and long-term sustainability.

Instead of Conclusion My thoughts on the program: Overall, I believe it is a highly important and beneficial initiative, addressing the long-standing need for a comprehensive integration process for new employees in the CHIM sector. The challenges it faces are rooted in the long-term decline in the perceived value and reputation of cultural work in Europe.

This raises several questions: How can we respond to the evolving needs of a sector in transformation? Is it still meaningful for young people to plan a long-term career in this field? How can we address the risk of burnout? And how might a program like this foster small-scale changes that could ultimately influence the future of the entire sector?

V. Personal Reflections: I as a Mentor

I aim to be a friendly and approachable mentor, treating the mentee as an equal and fostering a democratic working relationship. I believe this approach builds trust, creates a positive office atmosphere, and motivates the mentee. Depending on how closely I work with the mentee, I would check in regularly to understand how they are feeling, what is going well, and what challenges they are encountering. In closer working relationships, I often already have a good sense of these dynamics.

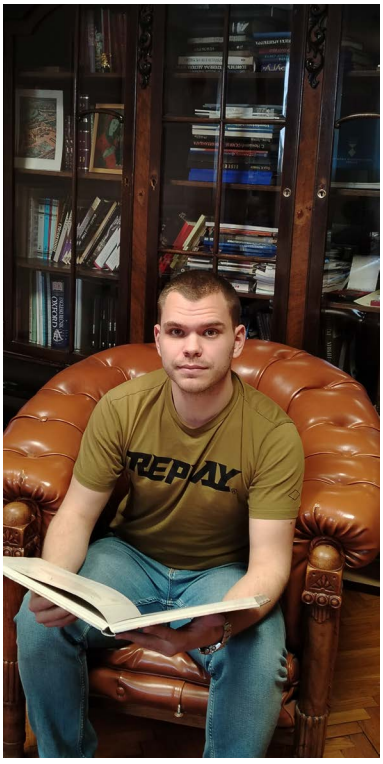
If I notice that the mentee is making strong progress, I would check in less frequently, whereas more regular support would be provided if needed. The frequency of these interactions depends on both the individual and the situation. Maintaining contact is important when the relationship is positive, but it is also essential to have occasional follow-ups even after the official mentoring year has ended.

Richárd Morvai Rácz

Richárd Morvai Rácz, mentee, young professional employed as the historian at the Intermunicipal Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments – Subotica, Subotica, Serbia (IPCMS) as part of the pilot testing the Transnational Aspirational Employment Model during 2025.

Richárd Morvai Rácz during the individual presentation session in Bucharest, June 2025. Photo credit: INP. Paul Soare.

Richárd Morvai Rácz (middle) with his mentors Neda Džamić (left) and Klara Evetović (right). Photo credit: Richárd Morvai Rácz



Richárd Morvai Rácz working in the archive. Photo credit: Richárd Morvai Rácz

I. Conceptual Framework: What is Mentorship?

Mentorship is not merely a formal academic arrangement but a lifelong process of learning, exchange, and intellectual growth. It serves as a vital source of knowledge and experience, fostering meaningful connections within institutions and across the wider academic community. Although mentorship programs are often confined to defined periods, their influence extends far beyond these temporal boundaries, shaping professional trajectories and scholarly perspectives over a lifetime. Through mentorship, emerging researchers gain smoother integration into academic environments, access to accumulated expertise, and a rich array of formative experiences that continue to inform their work long after the formal relationship has ended.

Role of a mentor The mentor, beyond serving as a supportive and attentive guide, is often the mentee's first point of contact with the institution. For this reason, it is essential that the mentor's area of expertise aligns with the mentee's interests and that the mentor possesses a working familiarity with the mentee's academic discipline.A mentor is a recognized expert in their field whose primary objective is to prepare the mentee for independent and responsible work within the institution, while supporting their development into a focused, self-reliant professional. This process may include the acquisition of previously unfamiliar skills---such as reading maps and technical drawings---an introduction to local history, and the cultivation of aesthetic awareness and an appreciation of cultural and visual values. In this context, the mentor is a colleague whose role is to educate, to support professional growth, and to facilitate the mentee's first steps within the institutional and professional environment. The overarching goal of mentorship within CHIM is to ensure the successful integration of future generations into the sector, thereby contributing to its continuity and long-term development.At the same time, mentorship should be understood as a structured professional relationship: mentors should not be expected to make personal sacrifices or to assume responsibilities that properly belong to the mentee.

The beginning, duration and end of mentorship Mentorship begins with the moment of introduction, yet genuine collaboration truly takes shape on the first day of work---or more precisely, when the mentee encounters their first substantive professional challenge. While mentorship programs may be formally defined by institutional timelines, the mentoring relationship itself rarely has a clear endpoint. It is an ongoing experience, a continuous learning process, and a source of knowledge that often remains influential throughout one's professional life. Informally, mentorship may be considered complete when the mentee takes their first independent steps; formally, it concludes with the end of the program. In practice, however, the duration of mentorship varies and is best understood as a function of the mentee's integration process. Independence is reached at different paces, depending on both the individual and the institutional context, but it most commonly occurs within a period of six months to one year. When obstacles arise, the co-mentor plays an important supportive role. Nevertheless, the responsibility for addressing and overcoming challenges ultimately rests with the mentee, who is expected to engage actively and responsibly in the process. In my view, co-mentors should come from different academic disciplines. Such interdisciplinary pairing enriches the mentoring process by offering complementary perspectives, broadening methodological approaches, and encouraging more holistic professional development! Mentorship is considered complete once the mentee is fully integrated into the professional environment. At the same time, it may be interrupted or, in certain cases, dissolved due to work-related constraints or broader institutional or political circumstances. Such situations can often be resolved through joint effort, perseverance, and the committed involvement of the co-mentor.

Ideally, the duration of mentorship should be guided by the progress of integration rather than by fixed timeframes. In essence, while mentorship may formally conclude, its influence and value endure well beyond the program itself.

Results of mentorship As far as I am concerned. This approach fosters full integration, encourages commitment and independent work, and enables the mentee to adapt more smoothly to the institutional environment, encountering fewer obstacles along the way.

II. Profile of the Mentor: Characteristics & Background

Professionalism, a sense of community, mutual respect, and the sharing of knowledge are (more than!) fundamental to any successful mentorship. An effective mentor combines personal qualities, professional expertise, and appropriate communication skills that support the mentee's development. At a minimum, a mentor should be kind, caring, attentive, and understanding. Ideally, they are open-minded and communicative without being overly talkative, and they possess demonstrated professional experience. At the highest level, a mentor is a recognized expert in the field---goal-oriented, reflective, and capable of offering constructive, thoughtful criticism. Conversely, individuals who exhibit manipulative behavior, excessive zeal, or a tendency toward destructive or overly harsh criticism are unlikely to be well suited to the role of mentor, as such traits can hinder trust, learning, and professional growth.

Professional and educational background A shared or closely related educational background and professional focus between mentor and mentee significantly strengthens the mentoring relationship. The mentor's experience, professional achievements, and broad perspective on the field offer essential guidance, while the sharing of contacts and access to professional networks can open valuable opportunities for the mentee. Equally important is the mentor's commitment to staying well informed and up to date, ensuring that the support provided remains relevant, informed, and effective.

Interpersonal skills, approachability and availability A mentor should possess a well-developed set of interpersonal skills that support effective guidance and professional growth. At a minimum, the mentor should be open-minded, understanding, and communicative. Optimally, they are sociable and supportive, and able to provide constructive feedback that encourages learning and development. Ideally, a mentor also acts as an advocate and a practical instructor---competent, capable, and confident in guiding the mentee through both theoretical and applied aspects of their work.

III. Mentorship in Practice

Based on my professional experience and personal reflection, mentorship proves most effective when it is embedded in everyday work practices and supported by open, transparent professional relationships. Several factors significantly shaped the quality and success of the mentoring process I encountered, including physical proximity, institutional context, generational dynamics, and clearly defined professional roles. Beyond shared professional interests, the physical closeness of our offices played a decisive role in enabling frequent, informal, and productive consultations. This proximity lowered communication barriers and allowed questions and challenges to be addressed promptly. While the generational gap between mentor and mentee occasionally introduced differing perspectives, it ultimately enriched my understanding of both daily workflows and the deeper values of the profession. Over time, my mentor assumed multiple roles---not only as a guide, but also as a supervisor and coach---supporting my development on professional, practical, and strategic levels. Although I later shaped my relationships with colleagues according to my own working style and professional needs, their early guidance was essential in helping me integrate into the institution, understand its internal dynamics, and establish durable professional connections.

Examples of good practices useful for mentorship Based on my experience, mentorship functions best when it is grounded in collaborative, hands-on work. The most effective aspect of the mentoring relationship was learning through practice---working together on real tasks, addressing concrete problems, and reflecting jointly on outcomes. This approach fostered both professional confidence and independent thinking. A successful mentorship should primarily aim to support early integration into the institution, guided by collegial collaboration and aligned with the mentee's specific field of interest. Clear structure, combined with flexibility, allows the mentoring process to adapt to individual needs while maintaining professional standards. In my opinion, we should also divide the process into some phases, just like the introduction to workflows and daily responsibilities, which would mean that the mentee will familiarize with institutional routines, expectations, and professional standards. Later during the presentation of fieldwork and professional context, the young professional will be introduced to ongoing projects, methodologies, and the broader professional framework. In the next phase joint fieldwork and collaborative tasks should be made. It means working together on practical assignments to transfer knowledge through direct experience. Before the end of the ,,full integration" there shoul be a joint evaluation and reflection, where together the mentor and mentee would summarize completed work, discuss outcomes, and identify areas for improvement. In the end the independent work will start. In this phase the mentee undertakes tasks independently, with reduced supervision and increased responsibility.

Supplemental & alternative arrangements To ensure sustainability and prevent mentor burnout---particularly in institutions where mentors are already overextended---supplemental or alternative mentoring arrangements should be considered. These alternatives must not constitute an additional unpaid burden for employees. Instead, they should be adequately compensated and/or formally recognized within job descriptions as specific responsibilities. One particularly viable option is the structured involvement of retired professionals. Drawing on extensive experience and institutional memory, retired colleagues can offer valuable insight, continuity, and guidance. I continue to consult former colleagues informally, and I am convinced that, in an official mentoring capacity, they could contribute even more meaningfully to the professional development of younger generations. I believe that

integrating retired professionals into the institution's activities could greatly enhance the mentoring process. I still regularly consult with former colleagues, and as I said earlier I am convinced that in an official mentoring capacity, they could offer even deeper insight and guidance.

V. Institutional Vision

An Institution Ideal for Mentorship An institution genuinely committed to mentorship creates conditions that actively support learning, integration, and professional independence. Central to this commitment is the clear distribution of responsibilities and the transparent definition of roles and expectations. Such clarity enables newcomers to assume responsibility early, perform their duties to a high professional standard, and integrate smoothly into the institutional and team environment. Equally important is an institutional culture that encourages collaboration and continuous knowledge exchange. By connecting academic knowledge acquired at university with related disciplines---such as history, art history, ethnology, and architecture---the institution helps bridge the gap between theory and practice. This interdisciplinary approach is particularly vital in the CHIM sector, where complex cultural and historical contexts demand both specialized expertise and broad intellectual awareness. A mentorship-oriented institution also recognizes mentorship as a structured and valued professional activity. By providing time, resources, and formal recognition for mentoring roles, it ensures that mentorship remains effective, sustainable, and mutually beneficial. In doing so, the institution not only addresses potential challenges within the mentoring process but also cultivates an environment that supports long-term professional growth and the successful integration of future generations.

V. Personal Reflections: I as a Mentor

Inspired by my own mentoring experience, I strive to be an understanding, attentive, and well-informed guide. As a mentor, I seek to identify shared areas of interest, nurture curiosity, and encourage continuous learning. While consistent support is essential, I consider constructive and well-timed criticism equally important---a balance I have personally experienced and come to value in my own professional development. In practice, I would guide newcomers by involving them in real professional challenges from the outset. Rather than adopting an overly cautious or protective approach, I believe in promoting independent thinking and growth through direct experience. At the same time, if a particular method or task proves ineffective or fails to resonate with the mentee, I would remain flexible and adapt my approach accordingly. When a mentee shows signs of uncertainty or loss of direction, I would offer clear and reliable support. Most importantly, I would remain present not only as a mentor but also as a colleague, accompanying them for as long as guidance is needed in order to foster confidence, resilience, and professional autonomy.

Explore Further: Companion Documents

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Annex III: Mentoring Young Professionals in Cultural Heritage Institutions and Museums – From the CultHeRit Employment Model to Practice and Evaluation presents findings from the assessment of the employment model piloted in 2025 with a specific focus on mentorship. This document traces the mentorship element from its conceptual foundation through reported experiences to lessons distilled during evaluation.

Annex IV: The Mentorship Lab presents twelve conceptual proposals and activities. Rather than offering definitive tools, this section provides a starting point for institutions to co-design and adapt structured mentorship programs to their specific contexts. The list acts as a pick-and-choose menu and conversation starter to guide planning, structuring and formalizing mentorship practice within CHIM.

Annex V documents the formal mentorship rulebook drafted and adopted by employees at the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Serbia (RIPCM) following implementation of the mentoring pilot.


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Mentorship in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM)

Thomas Philipp

Annex III

Mentoring Young Professionals in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums: From the CultHeRit Employment Model to Practice and Evaluation

Interreg Danube Region

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CultHeRit

Identifying Solutions for Labor Market Imbalances in the **Cultural Heritage Sector** in the **Danube Region** by Improving Its Accessibility to Young Professionals

CultHeRit

2.043.590 €	1.634.872 €	1/2024 - 6/2026
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ANOFM Agenția Județeană pentru Ocuparea Forței de Muncă Bihor | u(p)m | MUO Muzej za umjetnost i obrt – Museum of Arts and Crafts

CultHeRit Insights

Mentorship in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM)

Thomas Philipp

Annex III

Mentoring Young Professionals in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums: From the CultHeRit Employment Model to Practice and Evaluation

About This Companion Document

This Annex serves as a companion document to the publication *CultHeRit Insights: Mentorship in CHIM*. The five Annexes of the publication detail diverse aspects of the CultHeRit mentorship pilot and present insights from the transnational working encounters and peer learning exchanges mediated and facilitated by experts:

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Mentoring Young Professionals in CHIM

This contribution draws on the CultHeRit transnational aspirational employment model, developed on the basis of a transnational analysis of employment practices, national stakeholder consultations, and a review of established HR management frameworks. The model organises the employment relationship into seven categories and twenty-five elements, ranging from recruitment through to separation. Of these, three elements were selected for intensive testing during the 2025 pilot actions, with one focus placed on Mentorship and Integration. The following text concentrates on this element, tracing it from its conceptual place within the model, through the experiences reported by mentors and young professionals during the pilots, to the lessons distilled from the accompanying evaluation.

Mentorship within the Employment Model

Mentorship is situated within the model's category of Onboarding and Orientation — the processes through which new employees acclimatise to their roles and to the organisational culture. Their purpose is to make new staff feel welcome, reduce the time it takes them to become productive, and strengthen engagement and retention. The category encompasses pre-boarding activities, structured orientation programmes, training on organisational policies and procedures, and, central to the present discussion, mentorship for integration. While each of these contributes to a successful start, it is mentorship that most directly shapes whether a young professional comes to feel connected, supported, and able to find their place within the institution.

Within the model, Mentorship and Integration is described as the assignment of mentors or buddies who help new hires navigate the particular culture of a cultural heritage institution or museum. Beyond professional guidance, mentors can support new employees with legal, labour-market, social, and cultural challenges — a role that becomes especially important when staff are recruited from abroad. The mentorship phase is also an opportunity to arrange individual inductions into the institution's various departments and areas of responsibility, so that new staff become familiar with the full range of its activities rather than only their immediate role.

The aim of mentorship, however, is not constant supervision but the development of independent competence in the mentee: not all work requires close guidance, and good mentoring gradually builds the confidence to act autonomously. The model is equally explicit that mentors should be conscientious and patient confidants, with the empathy to pass on knowledge and skills, and that, since mentoring is additional work, they should be compensated for it. It further recommends that institutions develop dedicated training for mentors and provide a mentor starter toolkit of resources, good practices, and tools to strengthen the mentor–mentee relationship. A concrete example of such a resource is the Going Places Mentoring Toolkit, published by Art Fund (the UK's national art charity) in 2024: although developed for a collaborative exhibition programme, its content is largely generic and explicitly designed to be adapted, offering ready-made templates — notably a mentoring agreement and SMART goal-setting guidance — that institutions can take as a starting point for their own mentoring frameworks.

What Mentors and Young Professionals Reported

At the CultHeRit partner meeting in Bucharest in June 2025, mentors and young professionals from the participating institutions presented their first-hand experiences of mentorship during the pilot action, organised around four themes: the challenges faced by mentors, the recommendations mentors wished to pass on, the challenges faced by young professionals, and the support those young professionals most needed.

Several themes recurred across all four. Time — both its scarcity for mentors and the time young professionals need to adapt — was the single most frequently cited challenge on both sides, closely followed by the importance of clear communication, shared expectations, and regular exchange. A persistent tension emerged between guidance and autonomy: young professionals valued close support yet also needed room to develop an independent professional identity, while mentors had to balance structured oversight with trust. Both groups stressed that mentorship works best when recognised as a two-way process, in which mentors learn from young professionals as much as the reverse. At the institutional level, the absence of formal frameworks, dedicated resources, and adequate equipment was repeatedly named as a barrier; yet the personal quality of the relationship — its openness, patience, and mutual respect — was consistently identified as the decisive factor enabling successful integration even where structures fell short.

From the mentors' perspective, the chief obstacle was lack of time: the difficulty of reconciling mentoring with their regular professional duties limited opportunities for structured guidance and regular exchange. Coordinating schedules and aligning the work timelines of mentors, young professionals, and other departments proved difficult in practice, and several institutions reported the absence of guidelines or rulebooks governing mentorship and onboarding. Inadequate workplace equipment — missing computers or dedicated workstations — created further practical obstacles, while the distinction between acting as a general institutional mentor and as a department-specific supervisor was a recurring source of ambiguity. Guiding newcomers through complex administrative procedures, particularly in public institutions, also demanded considerable time and patience. Their recommendations followed directly from this experience: to set aside regular, dedicated time for exchange; to approach mentoring with patience and realistic expectations; to give mentees genuine responsibility and ownership of tasks; to prepare not only the new employee but also the existing team for integration, especially where a position is newly created; and to embed mentorship in institutional programming and cultural policy, with fair compensation for mentors and mentees alike.

Young professionals, for their part, described the demands of adapting to a new working environment, pace, and institutional culture, particularly when arriving from a different sector, and of understanding internal hierarchies and administrative procedures in public-administration contexts. Communication gaps between departments, the lack of internal information-sharing systems, and limited access to shared tools or storage created practical barriers, as did unclear expectations and the absence of a structured introduction to institutional procedures and standards. Several found it demanding to balance different task areas — educational programmes, public relations, content creation — within a single role, and to switch constantly between modes of work; limited financial resources and tight

timelines further constrained the quality of what they could deliver. For some, external scepticism towards cultural heritage work added a further layer of difficulty. A recurring tension was finding the right balance between working independently and working closely with the mentor: several felt too closely identified with their mentor and struggled to establish a professional voice of their own.

The support these young professionals valued most was strikingly consistent. Clear instructions and well-defined expectations were named as the single most important form of support, alongside continued patience and openness from mentors and colleagues. The gradual extension of trust and responsibility — including the space to work things out independently — was identified as particularly motivating, and regular, constructive feedback was appreciated as a tool for self-assessment and growth. The emotional reassurance of having someone in one's corner was repeatedly described as decisive for wellbeing and integration. Beyond the relationship itself, young professionals pointed to the need for timely provision of materials, realistic timeframes, and adequate planning, and for the institution to advocate actively for their role and contributions within the wider organisation.

Key Findings from the Evaluation

These first-hand accounts were complemented by a structured evaluation, coordinated by Thomas Philipp from KUPF – Kulturplattform Oberösterreich and conducted across five rounds between January and December 2025. The ten CultHeRit partner institutions took part, with young professionals, mentors, colleagues, and HR managers surveyed at regular intervals. The evaluation drew on a small, purposive sample, and its findings are accordingly qualitative and illustrative rather than statistically representative; their value lies in the consistency with which certain themes recurred across very different institutional and national contexts. Of the twelve lessons distilled from the evaluation, three speak most directly to mentorship.

Recognise mentorship as a two-way process. Across all five evaluation rounds, mentors and young professionals alike reported mutual learning. Mentors gained fresh perspectives, digital skills, and renewed reflection on their own practice, while young professionals gained guidance, institutional knowledge, and confidence. Institutions benefit most when they frame mentorship as a professional exchange rather than one-directional instruction.

> *"I have gained a different perspective on young people and their field of work, their problems in the work process, and also my role as a supervisor." — Mentor*

Allocate dedicated time for mentoring. Time constraints were the single most frequently cited challenge among mentors throughout the evaluation. Without formal recognition and a dedicated time allocation within regular working hours, mentoring depends entirely on individual goodwill and risks being crowded out by other responsibilities. Institutional policy should therefore establish mentoring as a recognised part of the mentor's professional duties.

> *"The organization does not recognize mentoring as an additional responsibility performed during regular working hours. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a policy that clearly defines the role of the mentor, as well as the amount of time that should be allocated for working with the young professional."* — Mentor

Formalise mentoring frameworks. The absence of handbooks, guidelines, role definitions, and structured goal-setting was repeatedly identified as a barrier. Institutions benefit from clear frameworks that define the mentor's role, establish regular check-ins, and set shared expectations, while leaving enough flexibility for the relationship to develop organically.

> *"There is no regulation at the Institute that governs mentorship, nor has the practice of mentorship existed previously."* — Mentor

Taken together, these findings point in a single direction. Mentorship emerges from the CultHeRit pilot actions as one of the most effective levers for integrating and retaining young professionals in the CHIM sector — but only where institutions recognise it as a reciprocal relationship, grant it the time it requires, and give it a stable framework, rather than leaving it to individual commitment alone.

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Annex II: Voices from the Field – Perspectives on Mentorship in the CHIM presents individual narratives submitted by mentors and mentees. These testimonies offer a granular layer of reflection, ranging from the conceptual to the practical, providing researchers and HR specialists direct access to the lived experiences underpinning the main volume.

Annex IV: The Mentorship Lab presents twelve conceptual proposals and activities. Rather than offering definitive tools, this section provides a starting point for institutions to co-design and adapt structured mentorship programs to their specific contexts. The list acts as a pick-and-choose menu and conversation starter to guide planning, structuring and formalizing mentorship practice within CHIM.

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Mentorship in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM)

Senka Gavranov

Annex IV

The Mentorship Lab: Concepts, Proposals and Activities

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CultHeRit Insights

Mentorship in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM)

Senka Gavranov

Annex IV
The Mentorship Lab: Concepts, Proposals and Activities

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The Mentorship Lab: Concepts, Proposals and Activities

Annex IV presents twelve conceptual proposals and activities designed to establish institutionally supported mentorship that fosters growth for all participants. Rather than offering definitive tools or prescriptive rules, this section provides a starting point for institutions to co-design and adapt structured mentorship programs to their specific contexts. The list of twelve tools acts as a conversation starter to guide planning, structuring and formalizing mentorship practice within cultural heritage institutions and museums (CHIM).

Central to this framework is the commitment to an egalitarian approach that strives to mitigate unequal power dynamics often inherent in traditional mentorship arrangements. Twelve conceptualized instruments facilitate experiential learning, empathy building and role playing, enabling the co-development of working modalities between mentors, co-mentors and mentees. Each proposal incorporates an interactive element to frame the process as collaborative discovery rather than bureaucratic obligation. These tools favor dialogue over hierarchy, focusing on the negotiation of roles, expectations, goals and modes of work to ensure every arrangement remains flexible, dynamic and responsive to the needs of both parties.

These conceptual proposals adhere to four core principles:

- **Efficiency**: Maximizing impact while minimizing setup time.
- **Transparency**: Making expectations and progress visible to all parties.
- **Mutual Respect**: Fostering an environment of equality, support and bi-directional learning.
- **Connection**: Structuring interactions to actively build bonds and encourage meaningful, honest and open conversations between mentors and mentees.

Senka Gavranov assembled this curated selection in direct response to challenges and opportunities surfacing during CultHeRit workshops. These transnational encounters facilitated candid exchanges of experience and insight while serving as a support group for optimizing mentoring practices.

In the final phase of CultHeRit, these principles informed the field-testing of selected tools. One transnational session was dedicated to testing a selection of proposed tools. On June 18, 2026, Senka Gavranov facilitated the workshop *Intergenerational Cooperation and Future-Proofing the CHIM Sector* at the *Literary Museum Petőfi Sándor* in Budapest, Hungary.

Senka Gavranov facilitates workshop on intergenerational cooperation and future-proofing the CHIM sector, with members of CultHeRit project team and Key Stakeholder Groups (KSGs) in Budapest, June 2026. Photo credit: Zoltán Szalontai.

The session brought together members of the CultHeRit project team and Key Stakeholder Groups (KSGs) to strengthen intergenerational understanding and enhance transfer of skills and knowledge through experiential learning and empathy-building. Feedback confirmed that the tools are insightful and useful for considering steps and procedures for setting up and adopting mentorship programs, as well as for advancing intergenerational cooperation. The testing demonstrated that the proposed activities can be readily operationalized in practice, yielding tangible results: kickstarting conversations, planning procedures, anticipating obstacles and implementing diverse forms of mentorship including co-mentorship, team or peer-mentorship, work-buddy programs and job shadowing.

Validation from field-testing establishes the foundation for expanding trials across diverse institutional contexts before scaling up adoption. Resource constraints often prevent individual institutions from developing every asset independently. Partnerships or international bodies may therefore co-design these resources into standardized templates, which local institutions can then adapt, test and refine. The collection functions as a flexible pick-and-choose menu, enabling organizations to adopt concepts unaltered, modify them for local implementation or draw inspiration for creating original tools.

Conceptual Framework: Scaffolding and Autonomy

The framework acknowledges that human relationships, including mentorship, are fragile and prone to dissolution, especially during periods of high workload, pressure and stress. It aims to mitigate the risks of failed pairings and contain the impact should premature dissolution occur.

Conceptualized as scaffolding, it requires time and dedication to build properly and maintain stability throughout the engagement. It is designed for dismantling once its purpose is fulfilled: the autonomy of the mentee. Guidelines steer the secure transition when the mentee becomes an independent expert, transforming the dynamic into a collegial bond between peers while preserving the connection and allowing it to evolve. Collectively, these resources enable institutions to design inclusive and sustainable professional development pathways and intergenerational working arrangements for knowledge transfer.

The following sections detail each of the twelve tools, moving from selection and matchmaking through engagement and dissolution.

Visual metaphor: Scaffolding, an image that might be productive for approaching and setting up mentorship practices and programs at work. Photo credit: Senka Gavranov.

Mentorship Lab

1. Mentor Selection Criteria: The Mentor Matchmaker

Description: A basic dynamic guide helping institutions identify potential mentors through participatory engagement of their staff. It defines essential traits, trainable areas and non-negotiable criteria to help prospective mentors self-assess their readiness. It also explores the suitability of senior colleagues for alternative arrangements such as co-mentoring, work-buddy programs, team-mentoring, peer-mentoring and other formats.

Format: Interactive checklist or digital form used during group sessions.

Activity Example: 3-3-3 Focus Group. Human resources staff or designated coordinators convene a session with staff interested in mentoring. Facilitate a discussion where they collectively list three colleagues who exemplify “essential traits,” three who would benefit from training before starting and three who might need more time. This process deepens participants’ understanding of the mentorship framework, collects their insights and reactions and initiates a preliminary assessment of interest. This activity should promote collegiality and exchange of constructive feedback for professional growth. Skilled mediation is needed to guide self-evaluation and to prevent any form of unproductive criticism, especially harsh criticism, and to avoid potential misunderstandings. For smaller institutions, it can be 2:2:2 or 1:1:1.

1. Mentorship Handbook: The Mentorship Playbook

Description: A comprehensive handbook outlining the "rules of the road" for mentorship within an institution. The template draws on proven frameworks to standardize expectations while allowing for local adaptation.

Format: Downloadable, illustrated handbook (PDF/e-book).

Activity Example: "The Rulebook Walkthrough." A mentor and mentee read a specific chapter together (e.g., "Confidentiality") and highlight the three rules they find most relevant to their specific situation, discussing why they chose them.

2. Model Mentorship MO Agreement: The Forging the Partnership Pact

Description: A flexible, editable template for formalizing the mentorship relationship. Unlike a rigid contract, this is designed to be filled out collaboratively to ensure mutual buy-in and seal the commitment.

Format: Editable Word Doc (primary) + Fillable PDF (secondary). Designed with prompts and whitespace for a collaborative session.

Activity Example: "The Afternoon Pact." Instead of a quick signature or email exchange, the pair spends an afternoon in a guided negotiation session (in person or online). They walk through the agreement template and terms together, discussing and filling in the blanks to ensure both voices are heard. The signature serves as a bonding ritual to seal the partnership.

3. First Meeting Guide: The First Step Roadmap

Description: A structured agenda for the inaugural meeting, providing a selection of icebreakers, exercises for setting and matching expectations as well as communication protocols to ensure a productive start.

Format: A worksheet with exercises and time slots.

Activity Example: "The Expectation Map." The pair draws a visual map of their goals, identifying shared aspirations as well as potential gaps to discuss.

4. Mentorship Journal: The Journey Log

Description: A tool for tracking progress, challenges, and insights throughout the mentorship. It serves as a private space for reflection and a record of growth.

Format: Printable workbook or digital app interface.

Activity Example: "The Monthly Insight Swap." Both parties answer a specific prompt (e.g., "What surprised you this month?") and share one key insight during their check-in, using the journal as a shared reference point.

5. Ongoing Evaluation Toolkit: The Pulse Check

Description: Low-burden tools to monitor the health of the relationship, including pulse surveys and milestone checklists to catch issues early.

Format: (Digital) survey templates and a quarterly review checklist.

Activity Example: "The 5-Minute Pulse." A quick, open survey for both parties to rate satisfaction and progress. The results are reviewed together or by a coordinator to identify trends, flag emerging issues and initiate supportive dialogue.

6. AI & Digital Ethics Brief: The Tech Balance

Description: A guide on leveraging AI for administrative tasks while protecting the human core of the relationship. It also sets time-limit for screen time and prevents over-reliance on technology.

Format: Infographic or 2-page briefing.

Activity Example: "The Tech Boundary Pact." The pair agrees on a "Tech-Free Zone" rule and identifies administrative tasks to delegate to AI. The rules can be revisited as needed.

7. Mentor Training Modules: The Mentor Academy

Description: Modular training on soft skills like active listening, feedback, and boundary management, designed for workshops or self-paced learning.

Format: Depends on the budget: Webinar. Slide decks with facilitator notes.

Activity Example: "The Feedback Role-Play." Participants practice giving difficult feedback.

8. Retiree-Mentor Guide: The Legacy Bridge

Description: A specialized guide for engaging retired professionals, addressing their unique value (institutional memory) and logistical needs.

Format: Guideline with editable templates and proposed activities to walkthrough with the retiree-mentors, and to start the mentorship relationship with their mentee. Identify their needs in terms of trainings and support to guide newly hired early-career colleagues and welcome them into the professional community.

Activity Example: "The Legacy Story." I as a Novice (see Annex II) to remember career beginnings, build empathy with the mentee, develop bonds.

9. Intergenerational Cooperation: The Wisdom Exchange

Description: A training session to bridge generational gaps, addressing biases and fostering empathy between senior and junior staff.

Format: 2-hour interactive workshop kit.

Activity Example: "The Shared Challenge Timeline." Mentors and mentees work in small groups to map out major shifts and characteristcs of sectoral employment over the last twenty, thirty or forty years on a large wall chart. They place sticky notes representing personal or professional hurdles encountered at different career stages, regardless of age. The group then discusses how these challenges evolved and where the core struggles remain identical across generations, fostering mutual understanding and solidarity

10. Matching Engine: The Compatibility Lab

Description: A toolkit combining a work-style quiz with a structured matching event to ensure compatibility before forming mentorship pairs.

Format: (Digital) quiz platform and event guide.

Activity Example: "The Speed Round." Participants complete a "Work Style Quiz," then rotate through 3-minute "speed dates" with specific prompts. They rank their top 3 choices, and a coordinator matches based on mutual interest.

11. Troubleshooting & Exit Protocol: The Safety Net

Description: A guide for detecting early signs of trouble, resolving conflicts, and ending a mentorship gracefully if needed.

Format: Flowchart and "Difficult Conversation" scripts.

Activity Example: "The Future-Proofing Session." Before starting, the pair imagines a scenario where the relationship fails. They discuss *why* it might happen and write down three preventative measures to avoid those specific pitfalls. This is not only an exercise in joint obstacle anticipation and risk mitigation, but also a self-learning exercise as it helps crystalize the deal-breakers, obstacles and preferred communication style for each, and and then communicate them to the other participant.

Explore Further: Companion Documents

The five Annexes of *CultHeRit Insights* detail diverse aspects of the mentorship pilot and present insights from transnational working encounters and peer learning exchanges. This document functions alongside the following publications:

Annex I: Methodology and Inquiry Framework – The Evolving Dialogue outlines the investigative goals and themes guiding workshops in Banja Luka (April 2025), Bucharest (June 2025) and Postojna (October 2025). Structured discussions and insights from these multigenerational encounters supported mentors and mentees throughout the 2025 pilot phase. The questions posed shaped the inquiry, served as guidelines for structuring conversations and informed findings presented in *CultHeRit Insights: Mentorship in CHIM*.

Annex II: Voices from the Field – Perspectives on Mentorship in the CHIM presents individual narratives submitted by mentors and mentees. These testimonies offer a granular layer of reflection, ranging from the conceptual to the practical, providing researchers and HR specialists direct access to the lived experiences underpinning the main volume.

Annex III: Mentoring Young Professionals in Cultural Heritage Institutions and Museums – From the CultHeRit Employment Model to Practice and Evaluation presents findings from the assessment of the employment model piloted in 2025 with a specific focus on mentorship. This document traces the mentorship element from its conceptual foundation through reported experiences to lessons distilled during evaluation.

Annex V documents the formal mentorship rulebook drafted and adopted by employees at the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Serbia (RIPCM) following implementation of the mentoring pilot.


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CultHeRit Insights

Mentorship in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM)

Vladimir Džamić Tatjana Tripković Ana Vranješ
Dorotea Aščerić Danica Čolakov

Annex V

From Pilot to Policy: The Adoption of the Rulebook on Mentorship in the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Serbia (RIPCM)

Interreg Danube Region

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Identifying Solutions for Labor Market Imbalances in the **Cultural Heritage Sector** in the **Danube Region** by Improving Its Accessibility to Young Professionals

CultHeRit

2.043.590 €	1.634.872 €	1/2024 - 6/2026
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CultHeRit Insights

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About This Companion Document

This Annex serves as a companion document to the publication *CultHeRit Insights: Mentorship in CHIM*. The five Annexes of the publication detail diverse aspects of the CultHeRit mentorship pilot and present insights from the transnational working encounters and peer learning exchanges mediated and facilitated by experts:

Annex I: Methodology and Inquiry Framework – The Evolving Dialogue
Annex II: Voices from the Field – Perspectives on Mentorship in the CHIM
Annex III: Mentoring Young Professionals – From Model to Practice and Evaluation
Annex IV: The Mentorship Lab – Concepts, Proposals and Activities
Annex V: The Mentorship Rulebook

The *CultHeRit Insights* series also includes:

Improving the Employment Situation and Accessibility of Jobs in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM),

Invisibility of Work in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM) with its two Annexes
Annex I: Beyond the Exhibit – A Catalogue of Good Practices for Improving Visibility of Work in CHIM
Annex II The Diagnostic Mini-Survey – A Step-by-Step Guide for Practitioners

Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Cultural Heritage Institutes and Museums (CHIM).

The series *CultHeRit Insights* and accompanying Annexes was elaborated within the CultHeRit project (1 January 2024 – 30 June 2026), funded by the Interreg – Danube Region Programme with a total budget of 2 043 590 EUR (80% EU support). The initiative united thirteen organizations from eight Southeastern and Central European countries to address structural barriers facing young professionals in the sector.

This publication was supported as part of CultHeRit, an Interreg Danube Region Programme project co-funded by the European Union.

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Drafting and adoption of the Rulebook on Mentorship

The Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (RIPCM) in Belgrade has adopted the Rulebook on Mentorship, which entered into force on June 11th 2026. The document was developed as a direct result of the CultHeRit project, whose primary objective is to improve working conditions and employment accessibility in the CHIM sector. The adoption of the Rulebook marks a concrete institutional response to one of the key challenges identified throughout the project: the need for structured support mechanisms for newly employed professionals entering the field.

The Rulebook establishes a formal mentorship framework applicable to all newly hired staff at the Institute. The mentorship process spans two years - the first focused on professional integration and skills development, the second on encouraging independent and responsible practice. Each newly employed person is assigned a mentor, selected from among experienced colleagues in the same or a related profession, subject to the approval of the department head and director. The framework also provides for co-mentorship, mandatory weekly meetings, quarterly progress reports, and biannual evaluations, as well as the option to assign a different mentor if the working relationship is disrupted. Mentors receive a 15% salary supplement, and co-mentors receive a 10% salary supplement, in recognition of their roles. The document clearly defines the objectives of mentorship, the selection process, the respective obligations of the mentor and the mentee, and the evaluation process.

Beyond its immediate application at the RIPCM, the Rulebook is intended to serve as a model of good practice for other institutions in the CHIM sector facing similar challenges, and as a foundation for future internal policy development. We invite partner institutions and stakeholders to consider how comparable frameworks might be adapted to their own contexts, contributing to a more sustainable and supportive professional environment across the sector.

Rulebook on Mentorship

RULEBOOK ON MENTORSHIP IN THE REPUBLIC INSTITUTE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL MONUMENTS

Article 1. Subject Matter

This Rulebook regulates the organisation and implementation of mentorship for newly employed professional associates of the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (hereinafter: the Institute), regardless of the type of contract under which they are employed or otherwise engaged, to ensure the effective transfer of knowledge and skills, as well as facilitate their professional and social integration into the Institute's working environment.

Article 2. Objectives of Mentorship

The objectives of mentorship are: successful professional and social integration; fostering an understanding of the importance of work in cultural heritage protection and service to the public interest; encouraging continuous professional development; enabling independent and responsible work within the shortest reasonable period; and identifying and overcoming professional challenges at an early stage. Mentorship represents a key mechanism for preserving and transmitting professional knowledge, standards, and values between generations of employees.

Article 3. Mentorship Procedure

Upon conclusion of an employment or engagement contract, a newly employed professional associate shall be assigned a mentor from among permanently employed associates holding one of the two highest professional ranks and belonging to the same or a related profession. Exceptionally, where no such professional profile exists within the Institute, a mentor may be appointed from the closest related profession. The mentor shall be appointed within 15 days of the commencement of employment.

Article 4. Definition of Mentorship

Mentorship is a structured process of professional guidance, support, and transfer of knowledge and experience between a mentor and a newly employed professional associate, based on mutual trust, respect, and open communication. The mentor provides guidance, support, and feedback while respecting the individuality and professional development of the newly employed professional associate.

Article 5.
Selection of Mentors

Mentors are selected from among employees with relevant professional experience. They must demonstrate the ability and willingness to transfer knowledge and contribute to the professional development of younger colleagues. Mentors are appointed upon the proposal of the relevant organisational unit, with the consent of its head and the proposed mentor. The Director issues the decision appointing the mentor.

Article 6.
Co-Mentorship

Upon the mentor's proposal and with the consent of the head of the organisational unit, the Director may appoint one co-mentor from among the Institute's permanently employed associates. The co-mentor participates in the mentorship process under the mentor's supervision and assists in transferring information on procedures, work methods, and activities within the Institute.

Article 7.
Duration of Mentorship

The mentorship procedure lasts two years. During the first year, emphasis is placed on introducing the newly employed professional associate to the ethical principles of the conservation profession, the Institute's organisational structure, decision-making hierarchy, and the tools and programs necessary for work. The mentor also provides support in preparing for the professional exam and facilitates social integration. During the second year, emphasis is placed on gradual professional independence, decision-making, responsibility for assigned tasks, improvement of work quality, and planning and organisation of work activities. These activities shall be implemented in accordance with the mentorship programme.

Article 8.
Duties of the Mentor

Within 30 days of the appointment, the mentor shall prepare a mentorship programme. The mentor shall introduce the newly employed professional associate to the staff, facilitate integration, meet at least once a week, provide professional assistance, identify development needs, recommend professional literature and best practices, encourage initiative and responsibility, respect professional autonomy, monitor progress, and provide constructive feedback. The mentor may not unjustifiably transfer their own responsibilities to the newly employed professional associate, but may involve them in work assignments for training and professional development purposes.

Article 9.
Qualities of a Mentor

A mentor must possess professional and personal integrity, as well as strong knowledge-transfer skills. Mentors should demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills, including active listening and constructive communication, and must not engage in conduct contrary to the principles of professional and ethical mentorship.

Article 10.
Duties of the Newly Employed Professional Associate

The newly employed professional associate shall actively participate in the mentorship process, conscientiously perform assigned duties, and report to the mentor at least once a week. They may submit a written and reasoned complaint regarding the mentorship process. Complaints shall be decided upon within 15 days.

Article 11.
Reporting

Mentors shall prepare quarterly reports on the mentorship process, while co-mentors shall prepare semi-annual reports where applicable. Reports shall be submitted in writing within 10 days following the reporting period.

Article 12.
Evaluation

The mentorship process shall be evaluated every six months through an anonymous evaluation questionnaire. The head of the organisational unit, assisted by the Institute's legal service, shall analyse the results within 15 days and may propose measures for improvement. Where serious deficiencies or a disrupted mentoring relationship are identified, the Director may replace the mentor.

Article 13.
Mentor Proposals

Mentors and co-mentors may submit proposals to the head of the organisational unit and the Director regarding the type of work and scope of engagement of the newly employed professional associate.

Article 14.
Mentorship Outcomes

Expected outcomes include establishing trust and effective communication, developing professional independence, initiative and responsibility, and enabling independent, responsible, and high-quality work. Appropriate measures, including replacing the mentor, may be taken when the mentoring relationship is adversely affected.

Article 15.
Termination or Replacement of a Mentor

A mentor may participate in no more than two mentorship processes simultaneously. In the event of termination of employment, prolonged absence, inability to perform mentoring duties, or disruption of the mentoring relationship, the Director may appoint a new mentor or co-mentor upon the proposal of the head of the organisational unit within 15 days.

Article 16.
Compensation for Mentorship

Mentors are entitled to a 15% salary increase and co-mentors to a 10% salary increase for participation in a mentorship process with one newly employed professional associate, in accordance with the law and the applicable collective agreement.

Article 17.
Application of Regulations

Matters not regulated by this Rulebook shall be governed by the Labour Law, the Special Collective Agreement for Cultural Institutions, the Institute's general acts, and other applicable regulations of the Republic of Serbia.

Article 18.
Entry into Force

This Rulebook shall enter into force on the eighth day following its publication on the notice board of the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments.

This Rulebook was adopted on 11 June 2026.

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Annex IV: The Mentorship Lab presents twelve conceptual proposals and activities. Rather than offering definitive tools, this section provides a starting point for institutions to co-design and adapt structured mentorship programs to their specific contexts. The list acts as a pick-and-choose menu and conversation starter to guide planning, structuring and formalizing mentorship practice within CHIM.


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