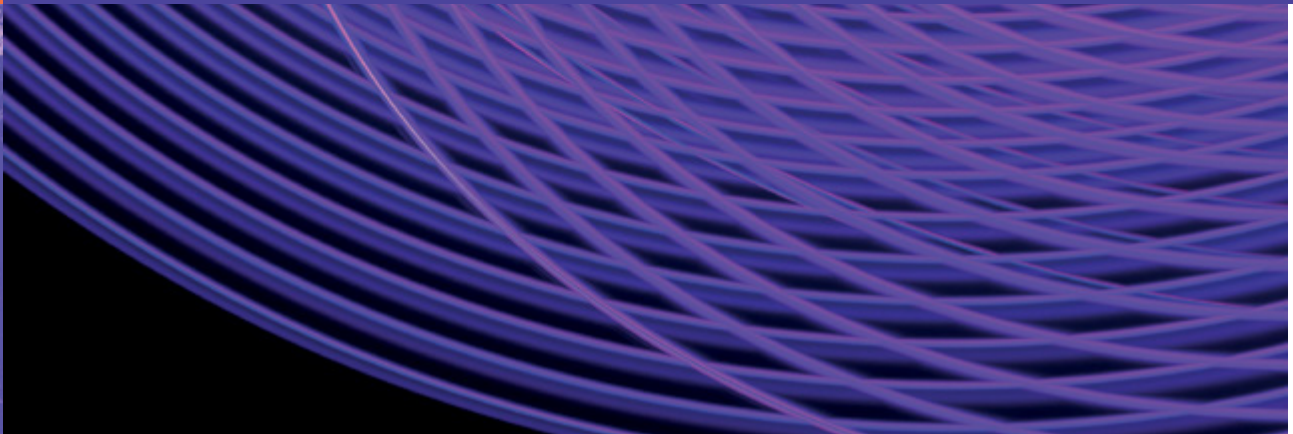


Beyond Commemoration:

Building the Future of Inclusive Memorialisation in the Western Balkans

**Hosted by British Council and Centre for Peace
and Conflict Studies, University of Rijeka**

19-20 March 2026, Hotel Bonavia, Rijeka



Agenda

DAY1

08:15 – 09:00 **Registration**

09:00 – 09:30 **Opening session: Framing the dialogue**

Why inclusive memorialisation matters?

Opening statements:

Representative of City of Rijeka (TBC)

Christine Wilson, *British Council*

Andreas Capstack, *British Embassy in Zagreb*

Valentina Otmačić, *Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Rijeka*

Facilitator: Refik Hodžić, *British Council*

09:30 – 10:45 **Session 1**

The hard problem: Inclusive memory in polarised societies

Format: Whole-group facilitated dialogue with three initial 5-minute interventions

Facilitator:

- Dr Nicolas Moll, *MemoryLab*

Input:

- Amina Krvavac, *War Childhood Museum (BiH)*
- Ilir Vitija, *Youth Initiative for Human Rights (Kosovo)*
- Branka Vierda, *Serb National Council (Croatia)*

Description:

This session tackles the core challenge that underpins all inclusive memorialisation efforts in the region: how to work ethically and effectively in societies marked by denial, selective remembrance, and political polarisation. Rather than focusing on individual projects, the discussion will explore structural barriers (state-sponsored narratives, social taboos, media dynamics, and institutional resistance) that limit whose stories are recognised as legitimate public memory. The goal is to develop a shared problem diagnosis that will inform the more practice-oriented cluster discussions that follow.

10:45 – 11:15 **Coffee Break**

DAY1

11:15 – 13:00 Cluster 1

Museums and oral history: Whose stories become public memory?**Format:** Fishbowl interview (45 min), open discussion (45 min)**Facilitators:**

- Dr Jasna Dragović-Soso, *Visiting Professor LSEE Research on South Eastern Europe, London*

Interviewees:

- Atdhe Hetemi, *Institute of Crimes Committed During the War in Kosovo*
- Elma Hašimbegović, *Historical Museum of BiH*
- Dejan Ubović, *Museum of the 90s (Serbia)*

Description:

Museums, memorial centres, and oral history initiatives play a decisive role in shaping public memory, yet they are often constrained by political pressures, institutional mandates, and ethical dilemmas. This session explores how such institutions can include stories of cross-ethnic humanity, women's experiences, and marginalised voices without reinforcing false equivalences or retraumatising communities. Through a fishbowl interview with practitioners working at the intersection of documentation, education, and commemoration, the goal is to identify principles and practices that make institutional memory work both inclusive and socially responsible.

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

DAY1

14:00 – 15:30 **Cluster 2*****Storytelling and art: When emotion enables (or blocks) dialogue*****Format:** Fishbowl interview (45 min), open discussion (45 min)**Facilitators:**

- Erëmirë Krasniqi, *Curator of Kosovo Pavillion at the 60th La Biennale di Venezia*

Interviewees:

- Marija Backović, *Prazan Prostor (Montenegro)*
- Milena Berić, *KROKODIL (Serbia)*
- Nebojša Slijepčević, *film director (Croatia)*

Description:

Artistic and narrative practices have a unique capacity to open emotional space where dialogue becomes possible, yet they can also provoke backlash, oversimplify complex histories, or unintentionally retraumatise audiences. This session examines the role of storytelling, literature, theatre, and visual art in memorialisation, focusing on how emotion can be mobilised ethically and constructively. The discussion aims to distil criteria for responsible, future-oriented storytelling that supports empathy, critical reflection, and sustained engagement rather than momentary impact.

15:30 – 15:45 **Coffee Break****15:45 – 17:30** ***Film screening of “Srbenka” and discussion with author Nebojsa Slijepčević led by Refik Hodžić*****18:20** **Dinner**

DAY 2 – Building capacity, coalition and continuity**09:30 – 11:00****Cluster 3*****Capacity building: What knowledge do we still lack?*****Format:** Fishbowl interview (45 min), open discussion (45 min)**Facilitators:**

- Dr Katy Radford, Director, *Office of Identity and Cultural Expression of Northern Ireland*

Interviewees:

- Marija Mandić, *The Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, IFDT (Serbia)*
- Natalija Havelka, *Centre for Peace, Osijek (Croatia)*
- Mirela Osmanović, *Srebrenica Memorial Centre (BiH)*

Description:

Even the most innovative memorialisation initiatives struggle without the right skills, tools, and institutional knowledge. This session focuses on identifying the most urgent capacity gaps in the region, ranging from trauma-sensitive facilitation and participatory MEL to digital archiving, mediation, and institutional engagement. Through practitioner-led discussion, participants will explore what kinds of knowledge must be developed locally, what can be adapted from international experience, and how shared learning infrastructures could support long-term impact.

11:00 – 11:15**Coffee Break**

DAY 2 – Building capacity, coalition and continuity**11:15 – 13:00** ***Working session – from clusters to coalitions?*****Working groups (mixed):**

1. Common challenges going forward and how to overcome them
2. Collaborative platforms and opportunities for joint work
3. Sustainability and funding

Facilitators:

- Rada Pejić-Sremac, IRMCT-ICTY
- Jeremy Lang, British Council
- Valentina Otmačić, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Rijeka

Description:

Building on the thematic discussions, this session shifts explicitly toward the future: how can the relationships, insights, and shared concerns emerging from this gathering be translated into sustained collaboration? Participants will work in mixed groups to explore possible collaboration models, shared standards, and joint platforms that could extend the impact of their work beyond individual projects. The aim is not to design a rigid structure, but to articulate a realistic, flexible pathway for continued cooperation.

13:00 – 14:15 **Lunch**

DAY 2 – Building capacity, coalition and continuity**14:15 – 15:45** *Plenary: The way forward*

Format: Presentations by working groups and responses from international donors and state representatives (45 minutes), discussion (45 minutes)

Facilitator:

- Nataša Govedarica, *ProPeace (Serbia)*

Panellists responding to working group findings:

- Ivan Jovanović, *UNDP*
- Uroš Mamić, *Regional Programme Manager UK*
- Nemanja Georgijević, *European Fund for the Balkans*

Focus:

- Overcoming political and financial barriers
- Collaboration/coalition logic (light network, not bureaucracy)
- What donors need to see to invest in this work

Description:

In this plenary session, working group rapporteurs present the ideas, recommendations, and collaborative concepts developed throughout the gathering. With donors and international experts responding, the focus is on feasibility: what kinds of cooperation are most likely to overcome political resistance, attract future funding, and influence public discourse? In the discussion to follow, participants focus on ideas of collaborations and future work that could receive support. The goal is to collectively shape a “way forward” framework that aligns practitioner ambitions with donor priorities and societal needs.

DAY 2 – Building capacity, coalition and continuity**15:45 – 16:30** *Closing session: Conclusions and the way forward***Facilitator:** Refik Hodžić, *British Council***Description:**

Rather than concluding with declarations, the gathering ends with institutional commitments. Participants representing organisations and institutions (where appropriate) are invited to articulate one concrete action (in one minute) they plan to take in the coming year to advance inclusive memorialisation, whether through collaboration, advocacy, or practice change. This session reinforces the gathering's core message: the future of memory in the Western Balkans depends not on events or statements, but on sustained, collective action.

20:00**Dinner**

