

No. 11	Музеј на отвореном "Старо село" - Сирогојно	Serbia	Zlatibor	Sirogojno
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Categories of cultural heritage

Professional craftspeople	Knowledge transfer	Presentation of crafts	Network for preservation of crafts	Local community building	Crafts within tourism
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Description

The Open-Air Museum "Staro Selo" is an open-air museum, established in 1979 (the start of building) with the aim of preserving and showcasing the rural heritage, traditional handicrafts and traditional lifestyle of the western Serbia region. The museum was officially organized in 1992 as a space where both material and intangible cultural heritage could be experienced within an authentic rural setting. The museum carefully relocated traditional wooden structures, such as homes, barns, and workshops, to recreate an authentic village setting. Their work contributes to the preservation, promotion, and appreciation of cultural heritage through various activities: field research and documentation, creation and professional processing of collections, exhibiting items through permanent displays and thematic exhibitions, publications, educational workshops, presentations, and demonstrations of living heritage, as well as

organizing various events (such as the "Old Crafts and Trades Fair," the "World of Music" festival, and others).

Types of handicrafts

Pottery Knitting Weaving Woodworking	Embroidery Leatherworking Herbalism Culinary craft	Candle making Glassblowing Copper engraving Quilting Jewellery making	Basket weaving Stonemasonry Blacksmithing Traditional agriculture practice
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Craft touchpoints - where to find?

Workshop of an artisan (directly from the craftsman) Handicraft Centre of more than one local artisan Regular local market Local festival	Shop selling local artisans' products Local tourism agency / souvenir shop Web-shops Social media accounts
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What can we learn?

Heritage preservation / valorisation practice	What do they expose with their practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The museum's heritage preservation and valorization practices center on integrated and interactive methods that bring the cultural and historical aspects of rural Serbian life into a dynamic and accessible context. The primary purpose of the museum is to preserve and promote the unique cultural traditions through immersive exhibits, live demonstrations of handicrafts, and seasonal events. The focus of their work is first and foremost preservation and conservation of different types of heritage. In terms of tangible heritage, they focus on architectural preservation, as well as household items, clothes, tools. When it comes to intangible culture, they have displays of traditional handicrafts, oral traditions, music and customs. Additionally, the museum employs demonstrations, presentations and workshops in traditional crafts like weaving, pottery, blacksmithing, and leatherwork by involving local artisans.
Success factors	Achievements and strengths that make this case inspiring for other attempts in the DR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The museum offers a unique combination of cultural authenticity, community engagement, and diverse programming. Their success lies in the holistic approach, for example, by preserving buildings, tools, and furnishings within an authentic setting, thus creating an immersive experience that provides context and depth to the heritage on display. They are most successful in community involvement and educational programs, through workshops, demonstrations and events.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some achievements and recognitions: a candidate for European Museum of the Year in 2013, received the ŽIVA award 2022 for storytelling.
<p>Local community involvement</p>	<p>Fundamental values that help to connect the target groups for the social prosperity of the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the very beginning, they had had direct collaboration with the local community – the initiative to establish the museum actually came from the local knitting cooperative in their wish to showcase wool-making techniques. • The museum actively involves local residents in exhibitions, workshops, and events. This engagement empowers locals by providing them with opportunities to participate as artisans, guides, or educators. • By organizing educational workshops and live demonstrations of traditional crafts, the museum supports knowledge transfer to younger generations and visiting audiences, where most of the children's programs are conducted with students from the primary school in Sirogojno. • There are also economic opportunities for local artisans. By attracting tourism and generating income through workshops and sales of handcrafted goods, the museum contributes to local prosperity while keeping heritage crafts economically viable and appreciated.
<p>Link to professional network</p>	<p>Reflecting on its strategic position in the region; making the most of networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The museum has notable collaboration with various institutions and organizations: museums, libraries, institutes, universities, tourism organizations, and cultural heritage research centers. Since 2011, the museum has been a member of the Forum of Slavic Cultures, and from 2001 to 2017, it was an active member of the ICOM Association of European Open-Air Museums (AEOM). They also had representatives within the national network for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage (regional coordinator for ICH for Western Serbia from 2011 to 2022 and a member of the National Committee for ICH since 2018). The museum proposed the inscription of Zlakusa pottery on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which was achieved in December 2020.
<p>Communication</p>	<p>The use of social networks to disseminate and promote their mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The museum is active on their web page, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube platforms, where they periodically publish updates, reports, videos, and activities. This mostly includes publications of traditional handicraft displays, such as posts featuring traditional knitting patterns, woodwork, and folk art, historical insights, such as posts on the origins and meanings of certain traditional handicrafts or traditions, as well as event announcement and updates. They especially highlight the living heritage and its bearers, along with workshops

		aimed at passing these artisanal skills on to the next generation.
Sustainability factor	Operations and maintenance that drive the practice forward; opportunities for financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The museum is a site of significant cultural heritage, so it is eligible for various national and EU grants aimed at cultural preservation and rural development. • Additionally, the museum capitalizes on tourism by hosting ticketed events, guided tours, and seasonal programs, which provide a steady income while enhancing visitor engagement. • Collaborating with local artisans allows the museum to sell traditional crafts, wool products, and textiles, creating a revenue stream that supports both the artisans and the museum while helping to maintain traditional practices. • They also utilize digital and social media marketing for promotion and attraction of a wider audience and visitors.

What makes it a best practice?

The Open-Air Museum “Staro Selo” excels in displaying handicraft heritage through an immersive and engaging approach that integrates traditional Serbian handicrafts, such as wool weaving, knitting, pottery, and woodcraft, within authentic historical environments. By situating artisans’ work in the context of traditional homes and communal spaces, the museum recreates the lived experience of regional traditional handicraft heritage. Its success is underpinned by legislative foundations, including adherence to Serbia's cultural heritage laws and alignment with UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which emphasize the protection and promotion of non-material culture. Institutional support from networks like the Forum of Slavic Cultures and collaboration with the ICOM Association of European Open-Air Museums have further strengthened its mission. So the key elements of the museum’s success include partnerships with local artisans, educational workshops that allow visitors to engage with traditional handicrafts firsthand, and annual events like the Fair of Traditional Crafts and the Music Festival, which attract a diverse audience, locals and tourists alike. The best strategies have proven to be the presentation of handicrafts in an authentic, village-like setting with contextual displays of tools and household items, continuous community involvement that strengthens local support, and a diversified revenue model.

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<https://www.facebook.com/p/Muzej-na-otvorenom-Staro-selo-Sirogojno-100063562623671/>

<https://www.youtube.com/@staroselosirogojno>