

The Role of Friends of the Museum Associations: Collaborative Dynamics in Romanian Museum Management

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Abstract

In modern museum management, simply preserving and showcasing collections is no longer sufficient. A museum's success hinges on its ability to adapt to the evolving needs of its visitors and stakeholders. Stakeholders include visitors, employees, the local community, public administration, educational institutions, volunteers, researchers, nonprofit organisations, and businesses. Among these stakeholders, we assert that Friends of the Museum associations play a pivotal role. These associations may support museum development by providing financial assistance, advocacy, volunteer support, community engagement, networking opportunities, and help with long-term sustainability strategies. This paper explores the collaborative dynamics among Romanian museums that have led to the formation of these associations. Specifically, through interviews with representatives of Romanian museums and their Friends of the Museum associations, the research uncovers these associations' contributions and the extent of their involvement in museum initiatives spanning exhibitions, educational activities, and events. Additionally, this study identifies and discusses three typologies of support offered by Friends of the Museum associations: linear support, organic support, and rotating sequential support. The paper offers some lines of action for museums and Friends associations to enhance their cooperation.

Keywords: museum stakeholder management, Friends of the Museum, participatory culture, engaged stakeholders, networking and cultural networks.

Introduction

The latest definition of museums, adopted by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 2022, highlights changes in museums' roles and current directions and trends, including community relations.¹ Given its importance, the aforementioned definition offers guidance to museum management on how to "operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing".² The definition explicitly mentions community

¹ A. Zbucnea, "The Dynamics of the Museum Concept," *Culture. Society. Economy. Politics* 2, no. 2 (2023): 7–10.

² International Council of Museums (ICOM), "Museum Definition," 2022, accessed September 30, 2026, <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/>.



participation, making communities significant stakeholders. In museums, communities can include visitors, employees, the local community, public administration, educational institutions, volunteers, researchers and academics, nonprofit organisations, and businesses.³ Cultural enthusiasts, or culturally active people, seek to connect with others who share similar interests. These social interactions form the basis of various communities, such as Friends of the Museum associations. These stakeholders are influenced by museum management and, in turn, can affect museums' activities, resources, and outcomes.⁴

As stated in the definition, contemporary museums are nonprofit institutions, once again recognising their cultural and social role rather than an economic one. Although some generate a significant proportion of their own revenue, in many European countries, including Romania, museums rely to a considerable extent on public funding.⁵ Museums rely on several revenue sources to support their activities sustainably, including earned revenue and public or private contributions. In this sense, diversifying a museum's income sources indicates the institution's reliance on multiple stakeholders.⁶ From a long-term perspective, donors are critical to museums, but their behaviour and preferences are difficult to predict.⁷

For some museums, a substantial source of funding is contributions from members' associations (or "friends") of the museum.⁸ Nevertheless, the cases with a contribution surpassing 25% of the museum's funding are not as frequent as some studies in Canada or the UK show.⁹ Friends of the Museum associations play a pivotal role not primarily through financial support, but rather through promoting and benefiting the museum they support. More specifically, they

³ A. R. Emery, "The Integrated Museum: A Meaningful Role in Society?" *Curator: The Museum Journal* 44, no. 1 (2001): 69–82.

⁴ M. Bira and A. Zbucea, "The Networking Strategies of the Romanian Museums," in *Strategica. Upscaling Digital Transformation in Business and Economy*, ed. C. Bratianu, A. Zbucea, B. Hrib, A. Vitelar, and F. Anghel (Tritonic, 2019), 618–624; Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert, Nikolaos Boukas, and Marina Christodoulou-Yerali, "Museums and Cultural Sustainability: Stakeholders, Forces, and Cultural Policies," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 20, no. 5 (2014): 566–587, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2013.874420>.

⁵ Carmen Camarero and M. J. Garrido, "Incentives, Organisational Identification, and Relationship Quality among Members of Fine Arts Museums," *Journal of Service Management* 22, no. 2 (2011): 266–287, <https://doi.org/10.1108/0956423111124253>.

⁶ S.L. Berman and M.E. Johnson-Cramer, "Stakeholder Theory: Seeing the Field through the Forest," *Business & Society* 58, no. 7 (2019): 1358–1375, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650316680039>.

⁷ K. Lindqvist, "Museum Finances: Challenges beyond Economic Crises," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 27, no. 1 (2012): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2012.644693>.

⁸ Camarero and Garrido, "Incentives, Organisational Identification, and Relationship Quality among Members of Fine Arts Museums"; Lindqvist, "Museum Finances: Challenges beyond Economic Crises".

⁹ BC Museums Association, *BCMA 2021 Sector Survey | Revenue and Funding Report* (2021); Gareth Harris, "That's What Friends Are For," *Museums Journal*, November 3, 2014; National Audit Office, *The Financial Resilience of DCMS-Sponsored Museums and Galleries* (London: National Audit Office, 2026).

mediate the relationship between the museum and various donors, serving as a link between the museum and companies that want to support its activities.¹⁰ For instance, the American Friends of the British Museum, founded in 1989, has not only raised awareness of the museum in the US, thus increasing the number of visitors from the States, but has also contributed over \$60 million in financial aid to extend the collection, in works of art or to support significant programmes and projects at the British Museum.¹¹ Similarly, the American Friends of the Louvre has raised and donated around \$70 million in cash, in addition to art donations since 2004, when it was established.¹²

Therefore, Friends of the Museum could play a significant role in developing the museum and strengthening its relationships with and impact on the museum's communities. They could support museum development by providing financial assistance, advocacy, volunteer support, community engagement, networking opportunities, and help with long-term sustainability strategies. Still, little research has addressed this field. Nevertheless, over the decades, some interest emerged, including a special issue of the *Museum* journal, published by UNESCO in 1977, dedicated to this topic. This issue included around 10 contributions, most of which focused on specific case studies. This special issue already documented the great diversity of supportive activities that these organisations could develop: support of acquisitions and fundraising, contributions to the scientific and cultural activities – the restoration of artefacts, field research, guided tours, workshops for persons with disabilities, educational programmes for children, programmes for teachers, school programmes, and contributions to the safeguarding of heritage.¹³ More attention has also been given to Friends associations in the UK, especially those connected with cathedrals and various cultural organisations.¹⁴

¹⁰ Lindqvist, "Museum Finances: Challenges beyond Economic Crises".

¹¹ American Friends of the British Museum, "Background," n.d., accessed September 30, 2026, <https://www.afbm.org/background.htm>.

¹² American Friends of the Louvre, "Project Support," n.d., accessed September 30, 2026, <https://aflouvre.org/projects/>.

¹³ F. Bloch-Lainé, "Tour d'horizon," *Museum* 29, no. 1 (1977): 26–34, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000028282_fre.

¹⁴ See, for example, H. Bussell and D. Forbes, "'Friends' Schemes in Arts Marketing: Developing Relationships in British Provincial Theatres," *International Journal of Arts Management* 8, no. 2 (2006): 38–49; Alix Slater, "An Audit of Friends' Schemes at UK Heritage Sites," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 9, no. 4 (2003): 357–373, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1352725032000155081>; Alix Slater, "Understanding Individual Membership at Heritage Sites," *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* 4, no. 1 (2010): 44–56, <https://doi.org/10.1108/17506181011024751>; Judith A. Muskett, "From Sixpenny Entry to Five Shilling Subscription: Charting Cathedral Outreach and Friends' Associations in the 1920s and 1930s," *Journal of Anglican Studies* 10, no. 1 (2012): 94–118; Judith A. Muskett, "'Friends' of Anglican Cathedrals: Norms and Values. Befriending, Friending or Misnomer?" *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 34, no. 2 (2013): 189–203; Judith A. Muskett and Andrew Village, "Created to Be Guardians? Psychological Type Profiles of Members of Cathedral Friends Associations in England," in *Psychological Type, Religion, and Culture* (Routledge, 2020), 111–124.



Given their critical role, this research aims to discuss how these associations support museums and, more specifically, the Romanian museum landscape. This is important because cultural institutions must adapt to remain relevant and develop new strategies to improve community engagement. The first step was to set up a database of all the Friends of the Museum associations active in Romania – 37 were listed in 2024 in the National NGO Register. However, a more comprehensive investigation revealed that only 17 are currently active (one has expanded its scope, and six others appear to be operating, but there is not enough information online about their activities). We created a graph to visualise the data from this research better. We then selected some active associations for an interview-based analysis. The interviews aimed to do two things: first, to understand the motivations of both museum representatives and association members; and second, to assess their perceptions of working with associations and museums. The results obtained can be used to identify strengths and challenges in the relationships between museums and Friends of the Museum associations, providing valuable insights for developing more effective collaborative strategies.

Narrative literature review on Friends of the Museum

Conceptual framework

The key concepts found throughout the paper are *stakeholder*, *cultural sustainability*, *co-creation*, and *participatory culture*; therefore, definitions are needed. Considering these terms when designing a museum's management strategies is crucial because they ensure the museum remains relevant to communities and societies by engaging them and fostering sustainable development for the museum and its communities.

The term *stakeholder* describes any individual or group that can impact or be affected by an organisation's actions or its achievement of objectives.¹⁵ Sinclair and Hutchison¹⁶ define a stakeholder as any group or individual whose interests are affected by the outcomes of a decision-making process. A key aspect of museum management is building strong stakeholder partnerships and participating in an active, creative network.¹⁷ Stakeholder engagement ensures financial stability, supports project development, and broadens the museum's outreach, enabling the sustainable attainment of the museum's mission.

Cultural sustainability is a transdisciplinary, evolving term. Soini and Birkeland show that it can be organised around seven streams: heritage, cultural vitality, economic viability, diversity, locality, eco-cultural resilience, and eco-cultural

¹⁵ R. E. Freeman, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* (Pitman, 1984); James A. Stieb, "Assessing Freeman's Stakeholder Theory," *Journal of Business Ethics* 87, no. 3 (2009): 401–414, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9928-4>.

¹⁶ A. John Sinclair and Dale Hutchison, "Multi-stakeholder Decision Making: The Shoal Lake Watershed Case," *Canadian Water Resources Journal* 23, no. 2 (1998): 167–179, <https://doi.org/10.4296/cwrj2302167>.

¹⁷ Bira and Zbucea, "The Networking Strategies of the Romanian Museums".

civilisation.¹⁸ This term is essential because museums collect, preserve, and present tangible and intangible heritage, and transmit knowledge and skills to future generations.¹⁹ Therefore, they can be seen as essential instruments of cultural sustainability.²⁰ Culture is seen as a pillar of sustainable development because it allows cultural industries, producers, and policy-makers to advocate for including culture in all public actions; it allows for a more explicit conceptualisation of the interconnections between culture and the economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable development, and it also makes the relationship among culture, sustainability, and policy more straightforward.²¹ Cultural sustainability ensures museums can adapt continuously and sustain long-term impact.

Co-creation and a *participatory culture* are also key aspects of contemporary museums.²² These approaches ensure dynamic communities formed around museums, ready to engage with them. In this scenario, communities are firmly connected, and they share a common belief in the value of collective effort to create and share work with others.²³ Collaborative approaches in museums allow museum communities and stakeholders to actively participate in the design and implementation of exhibitions and programmes. They enable authentic representation, stimulate engagement, ensure wider accessibility, and build trust in museums. Museums can become dynamic cultural hubs and community voices.

As with other organisations, financial resources are vital to ensure museums' sustainable development and the smooth implementation of successful strategies. Through "friends" and "members," museums can expand their supporter base

¹⁸ Soini, Katriina, and Inger Birkeland. "Exploring the Scientific Discourse on Cultural Sustainability." *Geoforum* 51 (2014): 213–223. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2013.12.001>.

¹⁹ I. L. Pop, A. Borza, A. Buiga, D. Ighian, and R. Toader, "Achieving Cultural Sustainability in Museums: A Step toward Sustainable Development," *Sustainability* 11, no. 4 (2019): 970, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11040970>; L. Errichiello and R. Micera, "Leveraging Smart Open Innovation for Achieving Cultural Sustainability: Learning from a New City Museum Project," *Sustainability* 10, no. 6 (2018): 1964, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10061964>.

²⁰ Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas, and Christodoulou-Yerali, "Museums and Cultural Sustainability: Stakeholders, Forces, and Cultural Policies".

²¹ Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas, and Christodoulou-Yerali, "Museums and Cultural Sustainability: Stakeholders, Forces, and Cultural Policies".

²² R. Sandell, "Social Inclusion, the Museum and the Dynamics of Sectoral Change," *Museum and Society* 1, no. 1 (2003): 45–62; Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (2010), <http://www.participatorymuseum.org>; P. Barnes and G. McPherson, "Co-Creating, Co-producing and Connecting: Museum Practice Today," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 62, no. 2 (2019): 257–267, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12309>; Lærke Mygind, Anne Kahr Hällman, and Peter Bentsen, "Bridging Gaps between Intentions and Realities: A Review of Participatory Exhibition Development in Museums," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 30, no. 2 (2015): 117–137, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2015.1022903>.

²³ Henry Jenkins, Katie Clinton, Ravi Purushotma, Alice J. Robison, and Margaret Weigel, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (Chicago: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, 2006), https://www.macfound.org/media/article_pdfs/JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF; G. Black, *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-first Century* (Routledge, 2012).



and diversify their funding. One of the models for such organisations implies that *museums design and manage membership programmes directly*. This model is specifically developed in the US and aligns with specific fiscal regulations. People interested in becoming “members of the museum” pay an annual subscription and receive benefits that vary in type and number based on the subscription amount. The members’ scheme’s role is primarily financial, but it also builds a loyal community that advocates for and, if needed, supports the museum. Under this model, “Friends of the Museum” is an independent legal entity, a nonprofit organisation with the aim of supporting a specific museum’s activities. These associations can develop a wide range of activities to benefit museums, including fundraising, promotion, and advocacy. In general, they aim to increase museums’ impact on society and community support for their museum. They work with the museum’s management and representatives but operate autonomously.

This form of backing for museums by Friends associations is relatively new compared to discussions about museums’ relevance to society and how they should be supported.²⁴ Still, the first such initiatives date back to the mid-19th century, when the Vorarlberger Landesmuseumsverein was founded in Austria.²⁵ They offer different types of support to existing museums based on their needs. In some instances, such associations were even responsible for establishing certain museums. For example, in 1980, the Society of the Friends of the Musée d’Orsay was formed to develop and implement a strategy to establish the museum.²⁶ In Romania, such organisations could not develop during the communist regime because communities had little voice and legal and ideological constraints were strong. Associations that existed before WWII, such as the Friends of the Regional Museum of Buzău,²⁷ were suspended.

Nevertheless, the concept of supporting museums was considered to some extent. For instance, in the case of the History Museum of Transylvania, an initiative with this name was praised for developing relationships between museums and schools. In 1974, the museum launched an educational project. Circles of “Friends of the Museum” were established in several schools in Cluj-Napoca to bring history and heritage closer to children and, with the clubs’ help, to enrich the museum’s collections of contemporary history.²⁸ In other countries,

²⁴ Dominique Poulot, “Museums and Their Friends: An Uneasy Love,” in *Coordenadas culturales en la museología del presente: cinco neologismos: Actas del congreso internacional*, ed. Javier Arnaldo (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2023), 9–20.

²⁵ Bloch-Lainé, “Tour d’horizon”, 39.

²⁶ Société des Amis des musées d’Orsay et de l’Orangerie (SAMO), “Qui sommes-nous ?” n.d., accessed September 30, 2026, <https://amis-musee-orsay.org/a-propos/a-propos/qui-sommes-nous/>.

²⁷ A. Zbucea, “Muzeul, donatorii și prietenii muzeului [Museum, Donors, and Museum Friends],” *Revista muzeelor*, no. 1 (2005): 19–32, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272163020_Muzeul_donatorii_si_prietenii_muzeului_Museum_Donors_and_Museum_Friends.

²⁸ A. M. Ardos, “‘Prietenii muzeului’, un experiment reușit al Muzeului de Istorie al Transilvaniei,” *Acta Musei Napocensis* 15 (1978): 647–651, <https://biblioteca-digitala.ro/?articol=32834-prietenii-muzeului-un-experiment-reusit-al-muzeului-de-istorie-al-transilvaniei--acta-musei-napocensis-actamn-muzeul-national-de-istorie-a-transilvaniei--xv-1978>.

this type of organisation also evolved from “social clubs” for the elite interested in arts and culture into more democratic, interactive, and creative structures that collaborate closely with their museums in many forms.²⁹

Members of the association are generally not professionally related to the museum but are volunteers interested in the museum’s development for cultural, intellectual, or other personal reasons. The personal dimension should be emphasised, as it is the main driver of volunteering and donating time, knowledge, and money to museums. A UK study of friends of various heritage organisations groups motives for joining these initiatives into personal interest, spiritual reasons, self-interest, social reasons, altruism, benefits, and something to do.³⁰ Developing the museum through accomplished projects, enriching collections, or expanding knowledge rewards members of these organisations. They may also gain personal rewards, such as satisfaction, pride, or a sense of accomplishment.³¹ Volunteering for museums in co-creative or other projects may also lead to professional development, skills, and knowledge for Friends members.

Friends of the Museum associations as strategic museum stakeholders

Friends of the Museum associations can be strategic stakeholders because their support drives sustainable development and increases museums’ impact through various mechanisms. The financial and logistical support these associations may offer facilitates the development of museum projects, provides expertise in domains where museums sometimes lack specialists, and supports strategic partnerships. These associations might encourage community engagement and involvement in museums’ activities. In general, these associations advocate for and promote museums’ collections and activities.

Nevertheless, their cooperation with museums might be more significant. For instance, *Friends* could support exhibitions and educational programme development and contribute in various ways to cultural events developed or hosted by museums. Through co-creation, museums could develop more relevant and inclusive projects, and representatives of Friends associations could be suitable and reliable partners in this process. By default, members of the *Friends* association are examples of cultural participation. Apostolakis and Jaffry³² show that members of such associations are generally culturally active and tend to support culture and museums more broadly than other museum visitors.

²⁹ Debie Hayes and Alix Slater, “From ‘Social Club’ to ‘Integrated Membership Scheme’: Developing Membership Schemes Strategically,” *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 8, no. 1 (2003): 59–75, <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.201>.

³⁰ Slater, “Understanding Individual Membership at Heritage Sites”.

³¹ M. I. Dahl, “Finding a New Voice: Lifelong Learning Experiences in Museum Volunteering,” *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 37, no. 1 (2018): 120–133, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2017.1406546>.

³² A. Apostolakis and S. Jaffry, “An Analysis of Monetary Voluntary Contributions for Cultural Resources: The Case of the British Museum,” *Tourism Economics* 19, no. 3 (2013): 631–651, <https://doi.org/10.5367/te.2013.0222>.



Direct financial support, nevertheless, seems to be central to the relationship between a museum and its Friends association. In Romanian museums, compared to other European museums, limited funding and an unsupportive legislative framework that sets spending caps and discourages some types of costs do not allow cultural institutions in Romania to allocate significant funds for vital activities such as promotion, making additional reliable financial resources a significant concern. Against this background, networking is needed to create opportunities that improve economic efficiency and access complementary resources.³³ *Friends* can facilitate both direct access to funding and networking, with or without affecting the museum's resources.

Over the years, networking has become central to the cultural field and has been called on as a tool to reform the whole sector. In this sense, the European Commission encouraged the cultural sector to work more cross-sectorally, promoting dialogue between cultural networks and stakeholders from other fields.³⁴ Moreover, from the European Commission's perspective, a cultural network is a vector for integration. Several papers discuss the importance of museums being part of a network of similar institutions, as it facilitates information circulation, increases cross-cultural cooperation, and more easily attracts additional revenue. Moreover, networking increases both a museum's effectiveness and its relevance to the public and society.³⁵ It also unlocks the innovative capacity of cultural organisations through innovative synergies.³⁶ This phenomenon is more common in museums abroad. For example, small museums such as the Museo e Istituto Fiorentino di Preistoria have organised into a network to increase their visibility and offer coherent programmes that respond to the community's real needs. Although many researchers discuss the importance of networking in this cultural environment, little research has examined the role of Friends of Museums and the Association of Friends of Museums' main contribution to museum development.³⁷ Specifically, Boël³⁸ argues that Friends of the Museums of Brazil help promote and

³³ Silvia Bagdadli, "Museum and Theatre Networks in Italy: Determinants and Typology," working paper, February 2003, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=384400.

³⁴ Annabelle Littoz-Monnet, "Cultural Networks as Vectors of European Integration," in *Post-identity?: Culture and European Integration*, ed. Richard McMahon (Routledge, 2013), 161–175.

³⁵ Bira and Zbucnea, "The Networking Strategies of the Romanian Museums".

³⁶ Elena Borin, "Fostering the Creation of Cross-Sectorial Networks: Key Drivers for Culture-Related Collaborations in Italy's Po Delta Region," *European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy* 5, no. 1 (2015): 27–42, <https://doi.org/10.3389/ejcmp.2023.v5iss1-article-3>.

³⁷ J. Lynne Teather, "The Museum Keepers: The Museums Association and the Growth of Museum Professionalism," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 9, no. 1 (1990): 25–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647779009515192>; J. Boël, "Friends of Museums: Unity and Diversity in Their Service to the Museums," *Museum International* 29, no. 1 (1977): 5–8, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0033.1977.tb02017.x>; Camarero and Garrido, "Incentives, Organisational Identification, and Relationship Quality among Members of Fine Arts Museums".

³⁸ Boël, Jacqueline. "Friends of Museums: Unity and Diversity in Their Services to the Museums." *Museum* 29, no. 1 (1977): 5–7. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000028275>

manage national heritage. Camarero and Garrido³⁹ go more in-depth and analyse the responses of museum members (or “friends”) to the incentives they receive from museums, integrating two distinct theoretical perspectives: the relationship marketing perspective and the theory of social identity.

Friends associations are also part of various networks that might be activated for the benefit of the museum, its visitors, and its communities. Some networks might be informal, others formal. Some might operate locally, nationally, or even globally. One such global network is the World Federation of Friends of Museums, established in 1975⁴⁰ and recognised by ICOM and UNESCO. It promotes “the cooperation between associations of Friends of museums throughout the world, to enhance the value of museums and encourage the safeguard of our cultural heritage.”

Hayes and Slater⁴¹ identified and discussed three types of such organisations: Social Club Groups, Public Members’ Schemes, and Integrated Membership Schemes. The “Social club” is an emergent, voluntary, informal structure of active local enthusiasts, usually elite and affluent, with intrinsic motivations who strongly advocate for the museum. Public members’ schemes are established, semi-professional organisations with a diverse, geographically widespread membership base, stratified categories, and a focus on recruitment through marketing. They operate autonomously with formalised governance, engage in structured fundraising, offer tangible and intangible benefits, and actively promote their mission, including income generation and volunteer opportunities, but not audience development. Integrated Membership Schemes consist of a reinvented professional function or department that focuses on growing and consolidating a diverse, stratified membership base through tailored benefits, relationship-building, and strong retention strategies. They are fully embedded within the host organisation’s structure, emphasising professional management, strategic fundraising, audience development, and long-term engagement while maintaining a strong sense of community. In all cases, these structures are significant museum stakeholders and should be part of the museum’s sustainable development strategy.

An Exploratory Study of Romanian Friends of Museums

Given the lack of research identified, this paper seeks to shed light on the role of Friends of the Museum associations and their primary contribution to museum development, focusing on Romania.

The first objective of this research is to map the existing associations. This

³⁹ Camarero and Garrido, “Incentives, Organisational Identification, and Relationship Quality among Members of Fine Arts Museums”.

⁴⁰ World Federation of Friends of Museums (WFFM), “Who We Are,” n.d., accessed September 30, 2026, <https://thewffm.org/who-we-are/>.

⁴¹ Hayes and Slater, “From ‘Social Club’ to ‘Integrated Membership Scheme’: Developing Membership Schemes Strategically”.



is crucial for understanding their role in supporting museums, fundraising, and community engagement. This knowledge can inform policy-making, strengthen museum support networks, and inspire new initiatives to enhance public participation in cultural heritage.

A second objective of the research is to examine the perceived role and contributions of Friends of the Museum associations. This objective aims to analyse how museum staff and association members view the role of Friends of the Museum associations in supporting museums, their exhibitions, educational programmes, and events. It also identifies differences in perceptions between the two groups regarding the associations' impact on museum development and operations.

A third objective is to assess the dynamics and future of Friends of the Museum associations in relation to the museums they support. This objective explores the current state and potential evolution of collaboration between museums and their Friends associations, focusing on both short- and long-term development. It also investigates association members' motivations and whether they see their involvement as reflecting the museum's commitment to inclusivity and public engagement.

Research design

The research consisted of two primary investigations.

The first step was to identify the active associations in Romania. We conducted a thorough analysis of the national register of associations established to support museums. The National NGO Registry (Registrul Național ONG) is an official database managed by the Romanian Ministry of Justice that records non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including associations, foundations, and federations that have obtained legal personality. It serves as a public record of registered NGOs, providing transparency and legal recognition, and includes essential details such as their name, legal status, headquarters, and governing bodies. Specifically, we searched and reviewed the register to determine the associations' current status. We then created and analysed a database of active museum associations. We screened these organisations' missions and communication approaches to map their profiles. Moreover, a qualitative content analysis investigated some communities created on social media (Facebook groups) that could potentially become NGOs.

The second step comprised a series of semi-structured interviews with representatives from Romanian museums and Friends of the Museum associations. The exploratory research comprised six interviews (with museum representatives and members of Friends of the Museum associations), lasting 10–30 minutes each, recorded on a smartphone and conducted in May–June 2024. When possible, the interviewees mirrored the two perspectives – of the museum and of the Friends' organisation (see Table 1). The selection of associations was based on the previous mapping. The selection criteria included the following: associations

must be based in Bucharest, have demonstrated activity within the last two years, and cover diverse fields such as art, architecture, history, folk arts, and traditions. These three criteria were deemed to be relevant to the current study.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

<i>Museum representatives</i>	<i>Friends of the Museum association representatives</i>	<i>Type of museum</i>
I1 Board member and head of the department responsible for the numismatic collections and historical treasures	I2 Founder and representative of the association (Year of establishment: 2022)	History
I3 Manager	I4 Manager of the association (Year of establishment: 2023)	Folk arts and traditions
	I5 Former director of the association (Year of establishment: 1998)	Art
I6 Documentary Exhibition Centre coordinator		Architecture

Considering the time constraints, the interview guide was designed around four main lines of investigation that together map cooperation between museums and “Friends,” depicting the experiences of both sides. These main topics are: the development of the relationship between the museum and the Friends association; the role of the Friends and how they contribute to the museum’s activities; the development of the community and resources; and the future of the collaboration between the museum and the Friends. Together, the interviews depict the journey of the relationship between the two partners. This allows us to identify both the practical contributions of these partnerships and the challenges that shape their development.

Ethical compliance was considered. We considered the anonymity of the interviewees; we also obtained informed consent to record the interviews.

The mapping of the Friends of the Museum associations

In the National NGO Registry, we found 37 associations that declared the support of a specific museum as their main aim. Not all associations in Romania are registered in this registry. Some associations may operate informally, be registered only at the local level, or not yet appear in the national registry due to delays or omissions in data updates. Also, not all registered associations are active anymore. Therefore, we vetted the database to identify only the organisations that remain



actively committed to their missions. Figure 1 shows how these organisations have evolved since their establishment.

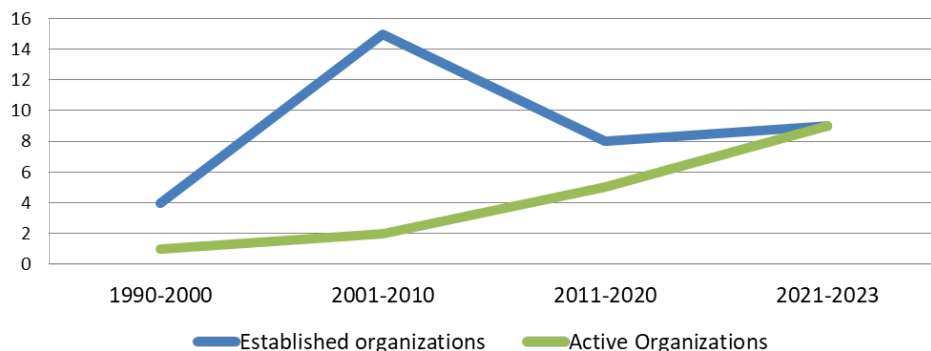


Figure 1. Evolution of the "Friends of the Museum" organization

Figure 1 shows that these organisations' survival chances are small over time. Only 3 of the 19 such organisations established before 2010 are operating today. We double-checked the register data (the last notification was in the past few years) by reviewing the organisations' actual activities. We identified 17 relatively active Friends associations in this way. 9 of these organisations support museums outside Bucharest. Also 9 of them are formed around national or regional museums. We assume these museums excel at building and retaining a community by satisfying stakeholders through institutional prestige, consistent communication, and the value of their heritage. Individuals and communities may also be more open to supporting and volunteering for large organisations.

From the Friends of Museums mission analysis, several recurring objectives are identified:

- Support for the museums: various means are proposed, such as providing financial, moral, and logistical support to museums and cultural institutions to ensure continuous operation and improvement of museum activities. Some organisations also mention helping reopen museums and maintaining and developing their collections.
- Promotion and visibility of the museums: tools considered include enhancing museums' visibility at local, national, and international levels; creating partnerships with other museums, cultural organisations, and academic institutions; and promoting museums and their collections through exhibitions, publications, and digital platforms.
- Preservation and conservation of cultural heritage through protecting, restoring, and conserving historical, archaeological, artistic, and architectural heritage, supporting research and documentation of cultural heritage, and encouraging the integration of museums and cultural sites into tourism circuits.
- Education and public engagement by organising conferences, seminars, and cultural events to educate and engage the public and encourage

community involvement in cultural and educational programmes, especially among young people.

- Research and scientific contributions are an important aim for some of the organisations identified, which intend to support scientific research in fields such as archaeology, history, art, and museum studies, to facilitate access to funding for research and museum-related projects, and to help publish scientific and educational materials related to museums and heritage.
- Partnerships and international collaboration through establishing cooperation with similar organisations from Romania and abroad, creating public-private partnerships to support cultural projects, and engaging civil society and private sector actors in cultural and heritage initiatives.
- The development of cultural infrastructure is also mentioned by a few organisations, which aim to support the establishment of new cultural centres, exhibition spaces, and archives, to encourage investment in museum modernisation and technological advancements, and to facilitate the implementation of best practices and international museum standards.
- Community development and cultural tourism-related aims are also identified in some organisations that want to contribute to the socio-economic development of local communities through cultural projects, promote historical sites and museums as key tourist attractions, and encourage cultural and artistic events that celebrate national identity and traditions.

These objectives reflect a common goal across these organisations: protecting, promoting, and enhancing Romania's cultural and historical heritage while fostering education, tourism, and community involvement. The most frequently cited aims are the first four objectives. Their diversity and complexity reflect the significant needs of Romanian museums and these organisations' strong desire to support them. Later in the analysis, we also observed a gap between the ambitions expressed in these aims and the actual activities and results these organisations achieved.

A detailed evaluation of these organisations' actual activities is challenging, as only a few of the active ones have websites or communicate on social media (mainly Facebook). We observe fluctuations in their activity, but they generally adopt a narrow approach despite their declared missions. The exception seems to remain the Friends of the National Art Museum of Romania, which is among the oldest associations of this type, established in 1998, with intense and diverse activity initially,⁴² followed by a decline and, to some extent, a revival in the past few years.⁴³ It also seems to be the only Romanian association of this type to be a

⁴² See Prietenii Muzeului Național de Artă al României, "Prietenii MNAR," n.d., accessed September 30, 2026, <https://prieteniimnar.ro/>; Zbucnea, "Muzeul, donatorii și prietenii muzeului [Museum, Donors, and Museum Friends]."

⁴³ Prietenii MNAR, "Prietenii MNAR."



member of the World Federation of Friends of Museums, proving a certain level of professionalism.

A few cases also stood out: presidents who were not Romanian citizens and lived abroad. All these organisations had very short lifespans. Also, only a small number of organisations are formed around professionals in the museum field, or even include the museum employees they support. This is not surprising, given that a previous study suggested that strong personal and professional relationships between such organisations and museums lead to consistent association activity and greater impact.⁴⁴ One organisation expanded its mission from supporting a specific museum to broader support for cultural heritage, then stopped all activities and communication. Another organisation, the Association for the Royal Heritage of Peleş, takes a more specialised approach, primarily focusing on architectural heritage. While it is not dedicated to the Peleş National Museum, its efforts benefit both the museum and its visitors, especially since this organisation is more active and communicates more widely than most others.

Last but not least, we note these organisations' lack of visibility and narrow communication approaches, even among the more active ones. These organisations have no website or social media account, with a few exceptions. Moreover, when such online communication platforms were established, communication was neither particularly frequent nor particularly varied.

We also identified eight Facebook groups dedicated to museum friends' communities. This is the case of Bistrița-Năsăud County Museum Complex, Enescu National Museum, Golești Museum of Viticulture and Fruit Growing, National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, "Dimitrie Gusti" National Museum of the Village, Peleş National Museum, School of Architecture Museum, and the "Village House" Museum, Dunavățu/Murighiol. They were created between 2011 and 2021, but the number of members is not directly linked to the group's age. Again, half of these museums are in Bucharest, Romania's capital. With two exceptions, museums or their employees administer these groups. With two exceptions, the discussions are also public.

All the Facebook groups have informative posts, but lack a call to action that highlights the museum's need for support. At first glance, the groups seem small: the largest has up to 13K members, and most members are people passionate about culture in general and the topics a particular museum addresses. In terms of posting frequency, the groups display substantial differences both in the volume and in the pattern of posting. Rather than following a regular posting rhythm, activity in some groups is concentrated in short periods, while a relatively lengthy time are no posts. To have an image on the variety of situations, we mentioned the following cases: the maximum number of posts per day registered is 2 in a group with an audience of over 2K people; a group with 13K people has eight posts/month, relatively regularly posted; in a group with around 500 people, the frequency of posts is 10/year with irregular frequency.

⁴⁴ Zbucnea, "Muzeul, donatorii și prietenii muzeului [Museum, Donors, and Museum Friends]".

Findings related to the cooperation between Romanian museums and Friends of the Museum associations

Association of Friends development

From the interviews, we identified multiple scenarios: one or more associations that were created and had many projects but, for various reasons, could not persist (for example, because the focus was too much on funding a single area of activity) or associations that were created several years ago and persisted through all the changes. In most cases, it all started with one or more people passionate about both culture and the specific field in which a particular museum operates, who wanted to get closer to it.

‘We missed this collaboration very much, considering that many museums in Bucharest and abroad have the support of such associations...what we observed in other institutions was that the associations of friends helped a lot to realise more difficult exhibitions, large-scale exhibitions, plus the promotion of the institutions. Museums are not sufficiently supported financially in these areas of promotion ...’, said I1. The manager of the foundation formed around this museum (I2) shares the same opinion, saying that ‘this foundation was set up with the idea of helping the museum (...) in terms of the activity it carries out, the idea is to help with projects, with specific needs, as well as with initiatives of the community around the foundation, initiatives that aim to increase the level of interest in the museum and the level of accessibility of the museum to the community, to the city, to the people of Bucharest, and of course to its visitors’.

Among the difficulties encountered in founding the NGO is ‘the idea of generating a community; on the other hand, museum employees are not used to having someone come to help them ... Romanian society is not yet ready for this kind of collaboration, and there is a lot of work to be done to create a community to help the museum’, declares I2.

The differences between the role played by European and Romanian associations of Friends are also highlighted by I3, who states that ‘Associations have a very small role in Romania, unfortunately, compared to other Western European countries and especially compared to the USA, where they are extremely active and especially very rich; in Romania these associations have appeared, most of the time, on the initiative of museum managers.’ As we have seen in the literature, the role of the Friends is not only to provide financial support for museums’ activities. ‘The main thing that such an association has to do is obviously to raise funds for a museum and to participate through efforts, not just fundraising, but through material efforts in kind, when the museum needs to organise different events. Unfortunately, Romania benefits from extremely restrictive legislation, and I would even say counter-cultural legislation, not only about museums but concerning all public cultural institutions’, said I3.

Although this role seems to be predominant, given the legislative context in Romania, the associations of Friends are trying to reduce the gap and reach the



level of the associations of Friends of museums in Europe by lobbying for museum institutions and engaging in all kinds of educational activities aimed at making museums accessible to more categories of the public. 'Associations of friends are also associations that lobby for the institutions they work for, and this lobbying eventually also leads to obtaining funds from other attracted sources', states I3 when asked about the association's main contribution. The representative of the association formed around the museum (I4) shares the same perspective: 'we are each, so to speak, close in our way to the museum, and this has also brought us together....there is funding that, you know, from the state, but which is insufficient and which is very conditional. (...) The association can help where the museum, being a large institution, is very difficult to move, and that is what we have done; we have supplemented here and there through exhibitions organised by the museum, and when we were explicitly asked for a helping hand'.

I5 states: 'The relationships between the friends associations have been different depending on the dynamics between the managers and the association. Friends of the Museum associations aim to support the museum's work (...). The financial side makes a decisive contribution because, for example, the museum has no budget for promotion, or we all know that museum institutions need promotion. We have tried to supplement and help precisely in the areas where they do not receive state support.' However, in this case, we do not have the museum's perspective to compare it with. In such cases, the primary concern is typically financial assistance to address situations where public institutions cannot respond adequately.

Moreover, a particularly noteworthy case study is a Facebook group (I6) that, although it does not yet have NGO status, shows higher activity than other groups. 'The group becomes a cultural page that could interest this target group. Most of them are either architects, students, graduates, or professors who may be thinking of donating the things they have, but also heritage lovers, because the museum has gone a bit out of the sphere of conservation, valorisation through exhibitions, cultural projects and... automatically, at all the events we participated in, this interested public appeared; they were looking for us; they saw that there was a page of friends, and they stayed in touch with us in this way'.

Concerning the steps to give a legal form to this group, I6 says that 'there are discussions because all these cultural projects, in fact, involve either sponsorship contracts, or co-financing, or different forms in which it is quite difficult through the university to go through this process and then at least in the last year there was discussion that we should set up an NGO to support cultural projects'.

The activity of the associations

As mentioned above, both the literature and the interview responses show that associations' roles differ but are not limited to financial support. For example, I1 said that the help of the associations formed around the museum was: 'Very much on the IT side, where public institutions have very big problems, because

IT people have better salaries than a public institution can offer, and basically here they have gone out of this sphere of promotion and organising exhibitions. They have helped us a lot in organising events, conferences, exhibition openings, and book launches; sometimes they have also helped us with legal assistance.'

'Through these activities, they try to reach less accessible areas and to support financially and from different perspectives poorer communities that do not have access to museums,' said I1.

Thus, Friends of the Museum associations have played an important role in promoting participatory culture and developing cultural networks, based on the evaluation of the interviewees. They take actions to facilitate access to heritage for disadvantaged communities by providing financial and logistical support, enabling participation by otherwise excluded segments of the public. This proves that vision exists, as well as willingness to implement significant projects. The question lies in the evaluation of the actual long-term impact. The support provided by the Friends could contribute to museums becoming key actors in community development, and the specific activities carried out by the aforementioned associations create the perfect context for co-creation and the public's active involvement in museum experiences. Scaling up and increasing the collaborative projects can support museums to transform from exhibition spaces to open cultural hubs, thereby creating and strengthening an inclusive cultural network.

'They helped us by giving us financial support... They paid for the editing and printing of some guides to the exhibition, which were offered free of charge,' said I1. The perspective on the main contribution of such an association is shared by I2, who states: 'We have contributed financially to concrete projects, but I believe that, and not only in the case of this foundation, in the case of all of us, it is the creation of a community around the museum. This is very important; I mean a community must surround the museum, and that community must think about its needs and the museum must be part of our life; it belongs to the city, to us; I mean it is not a hidden thing where people are sitting and researching...' 'In Romania, at the moment, it is (the help) more of a financial nature, or the associations, of course, they do not support; the associations do not support; they do not sponsor the museum. (...) The associations make some expenses for the benefit of the museums,' says I3.

In addition to supporting the museum's efforts to promote its heritage, the associations formed around the museum also develop specific activities to make the museum seem more open to the public. However, this is not the case for all the institutions analysed.

'None of them is a museographer by profession; they are all people who love museums, and they undoubtedly visit museums not only in Romania but wherever they go abroad. They are people who participate in the cultural life of the country, who attend openings, who know the people in museums (...); due to the obvious lack of time, precisely because they are people with an intense professional activity



of their own, they do not have the time to allocate to activities of the association aimed at attracting the public to the museum in an additional way. This remains a task for us, the institution', says I3.

The association contributes to heritage conservation through concrete interventions: 'We are already involved in two of them (referring to two successful rehabilitation and rescue interventions)', declares I4.

The primary contribution of the Facebook group is as follows: 'disseminating information. I do not limit myself to promoting only the museum's events, which are not...there are 6-8 per year, but I disseminate all the University's activities that could be interesting for the guild, but especially for the public that flirts with heritage, exhibitions, rehabilitation projects, restorations, and all sorts of things like that', states I6.

Perspectives on the collaboration of Friends associations with museums

Maintaining consistent communication is imperative. I1 stated that '(...) the person in charge of PR on behalf of the association, for example, is in contact with several people in the museum with whom they are in constant communication and with whom they discuss various details and ask how activities should be carried out.'

Associations of Friends formed around a museum strategically collaborate with museum staff, reaching diverse audiences through complementary activities. These associations leverage diverse digital platforms to expand their visibility and diversify their communication methods for a range of target audiences. Providing information technology (IT) support, communications assistance, and promotional support is imperative, as these address a significant deficit in the Romanian museums' capacity to allocate funds for promotional activities.

'They coordinate their work (referring to the people in the museum) and have somewhat the same plan. It's just that, working in different areas, they reach different target groups, which is really useful. On different channels because, for example, on Facebook the museum's page is followed by certain categories of people and their page by other categories; they also have a parallel website where they upload different material than what we find on our website, which, in general, also has a very important administrative function beyond the promotion of heritage. Yes, I think this part of IT and promotion was the most difficult part for us to realise, and this is where they had the most important contributions', says I1.

I2 states that 'it also depends a lot on the museum's management that it is decisive that they want to be helped, on the one hand, and the other hand on the strength of the community that makes up the foundation, i.e., the more members we have involved, the better it is because money is not necessarily very important, but contacts and people to make things happen.' Thus, the objective is to establish and sustain a continuous dialogue between the museum and the associations, as interpersonal relationships are essential. I3 also underlines

the importance of personal relations: ‘the non-governmental associations that work alongside museums, so-called friends, do not have any kind of contractual relationship with the museum; everything depends very much, I repeat, on the personal relations they have with the museum management or with people in the museum management. (...) Associations are not institutions that have to go forward regardless of who is in charge; they have to be people who have natural, I repeat, friendly relations with the people who work in the museum, otherwise they cannot be members of an institutional abstraction... even if it has obviously become... they set up this association out of love for the institution.’

The museum’s relationship with and support for the association are characterised by complementarity and distinctness. The museum maintains its programmatic autonomy, while the association contributes to its mission where its expertise can enhance its value without impinging upon its institutional authority. I5 declares: ‘The museum has an independent program. So the association’s involvement comes as a result of their requests; obviously, they can be supported in non-exhibition activities because you do not want an intervention of non-specialised people in a specialised institution. (...) Involvement has grown steadily; we have developed many promotional campaigns to increase the museum’s visibility, works have been donated, pieces of furniture have been made, and each president usually brings his vision, and I expect this upward trend to continue. (...) The members are already quite involved, and they will be even more so in the future, especially as a younger generation of collectors wants to participate more actively.’

The association’s involvement is characterised by dynamism and evolution, shaped by its leaders’ vision and its members’ interests. An upward trend is taking shape, driven by a new generation of collectors who infuse the association with fresh energy and a strong desire to actively support and promote museum heritage.

Perspectives on future lines of collaboration and expansion of the association

The absence of a coherent communication and promotion strategy is a significant challenge, attributable to two factors. First, the high costs associated with such initiatives; second, museums manage these responsibilities internally through specialists in their respective fields, rather than involving public relations professionals.

‘We still don’t have a proper strategy for communication and promotion, and I know that this was one of the most important points on the discussion list to be able to establish a communication strategy and an image strategy, which we don’t have and which are generally very expensive activities because they need to be done by specialists and as in all museums in Romania, PR and communication departments are staffed by people who have not necessarily studied communication and public relations, but rather in the specific field of each institution,’ declares I1.



‘Those generally involved are companies with Romanian capital who understand the need for a cultural identity. (...) Multinationals aim to help social cases, poor people, in short, things like this, art, in fact not art, history, is not on their agenda and we cannot accuse them that perhaps they have no interest... The involvement of companies with Romanian capital consists of sponsorship, which can be financial or in equipment...with infrastructure, with logistics in organising events, which is very good because those cost money’, says I3. The perceptions of the interviewees suggest there is a greater willingness to engage in collaborative endeavours with Romanian companies than with multinational corporations. Nevertheless, the support is perceived as broad and diverse; I5 states that ‘over time we have had collaborations with banking institutions, with private companies in all fields that have supported the association, which in turn supports the museum’s work...their involvement was financial, they made sponsorships, which these sponsorships were directed by the association to the museum’.

Conclusions

Amid the need and desire to align with European trends, museums have opened their doors to people passionate about culture and heritage to build strong collaborations, aiming to make the museum a space more open to all categories of the public. Museums in Romania are also underfunded and must seek additional funding for various exhibition projects, especially for promotion, given the lack of specialists willing to work in the field due to low salaries. In this respect, from the interviews we conducted, we can extract the following: museums need both moral and financial support, and associations provide it. They support museums, aid them, and act as a link between the museum and various specialists.

In this sense, we can identify several typologies of supporting Friends organisations. First, linear support is an ongoing, structured, and growing commitment by a single organisation. Second, organic support is non-institutionalised, spontaneous, and arises naturally from the informal, grassroots nature of support without a formal structure (as in Facebook groups that are not yet legally established NGOs). Third, support can be rotating and sequential, with different organisations taking turns supporting the museum over time. A single organisation may support museums through ups and downs.

Friends of the Museum associations are stronger around prestigious museums, benefiting from better collaboration, resources, and institutional support. Interpersonal relationships are clearly important, and association members have a deeply soulful disposition, a keen interest in culture, and multifaceted involvement in the cultural sector. However, many of these organisations have a limited lifespan and low impact due to poor sustainability and fluctuating involvement. The absence of a communication and visibility strategy hinders the associations’ ability to attract new members and promote their initiatives. Across these social media communities, we can conclude that community involvement

is lacking in most cases, and the lack of a clear call to action makes it difficult to mobilise people and increase their impact.

While Friends of the Museum associations are committed to helping museums in many ways and are often believed to play an important role in supporting them, evidence from Romanian cases suggests their influence may be less significant than many involved expect and assume. Barriers include the lack of a concrete action plan, difficulty attracting and retaining members, and the absence of a clear vision for resource mobilisation. The implications of these findings are synthesised in Table 2.

Table 2. Key findings on the development and role of Friends of the Museum associations in Romania

Dimension analysed	Key findings
Association development	Initiated by passionate individuals or museum managers, uneven evolution (some dissolve, others remain sustainable)
	Difficulties in building communities and gaining acceptance from museum staff
	Limited role compared to Western Europe and the USA
Role and contributions	Financial support (promotion, printed materials, events) compensating for the lack of public funding
	Non-financial support (IT, event organisation, legal assistance)
	Educational and accessibility-oriented activities for broader audiences
	Advocacy (lobbying) and attraction of external funding
	Building and strengthening a community around the museum
Types of activities	Organisation of events, exhibitions, and cultural launches
	Direct involvement in heritage conservation and restoration
	Information dissemination, including via social media
	Support for disadvantaged groups' access to culture
Museum–association collaboration	Based mainly on informal, personal relationships rather than formal contracts
	Requires constant communication and coordination
	Complementary relationship: museums retain autonomy, associations provide support
	Reaching diverse audiences through different communication channels
Influencing factors	Openness of museum management is decisive
	Size and engagement of the community can outweigh financial resources
	Restrictive legislative context limits NGO development



Dimension analysed	Key findings
Challenges and limitations	Lack of coherent communication and promotion strategies
	Limited financial resources and reliance on sponsorships
	Limited availability of volunteers
	Low interest from multinational companies
Future trends and perspectives	Increasing involvement and gradual professionalisation of associations
	Emergence of a younger generation of engaged supporters/collectors
	Formalisation of informal initiatives (e.g., online groups)
	Development of partnerships with Romanian companies

To address the identified challenges, the recommendations for Friends of Museums associations are to focus more specifically on activities with quantifiable outcomes, set clear objectives, and develop projects with a tangible impact on both museums and the community. Only by actively involving the community can museums create exhibitions, activities, and messages that address the public's needs and expectations, rather than adopting an elitist, hermetic discourse. Thus, museums should adopt a more open attitude toward collaboration with the communities around them. Furthermore, museums could engage more closely with these associations on highly focused, collaboratively developed projects.

Rezumat

În managementul muzeal modern, simpla conservare și expunere a colecțiilor nu mai sunt suficiente. Succesul unui muzeu depinde de capacitatea sa de a se adapta la nevoile vizitatorilor și ale părților interesate, care se schimbă în mod continuu. Printre părțile interesate se numără vizitatorii, angajații, comunitatea locală, administrația publică, instituțiile de învățământ, voluntarii, cercetătorii, organizațiile nonprofit și mediul de afaceri. Dintre aceste părți interesate, susținem că asociațiile „Prietenii Muzeului” joacă un rol esențial. Aceste asociații pot sprijini dezvoltarea muzeului prin asistență financiară, activități de promovare și susținere a cauzei (advocacy), voluntariat, implicarea comunității, oportunități de networking și sprijin în elaborarea strategiilor de sustenabilitate pe termen lung. Lucrarea explorează dinamica colaborării în cadrul muzeelor din România care a dus la constituirea acestor asociații. Mai exact, prin intermediul unor interviuri cu reprezentanți ai muzeelor românești și ai asociațiilor „Prietenii Muzeului” aferente, cercetarea evidențiază contribuțiile acestor asociații și gradul lor de implicare în inițiative muzeale, precum expoziții, activități

educaționale și evenimente. În plus, studiul identifică și analizează trei tipologii de sprijin oferit de asociațiile „Prietenii Muzeului”: sprijin liniar, sprijin organic și sprijin secvențial rotativ. Lucrarea propune direcții de acțiune pentru muzee și asociațiile de prieteni, în vederea consolidării cooperării dintre ele.

Cuvinte-cheie: managementul părților interesate în muzee, Prietenii Muzeului, cultură participativă, părți interesate implicate, networking și rețele culturale.

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