Report on the outcomes of a presentation and participation in a Dissemination Conference[1]

Action number: CA22145

Grantee name: Branislav Kovár

Conference Details

Conference title: The Archaeology of Games and Gamers in the Carpathian Basin (Iron Age and Roman Period): Interdisciplinary Perspectives (21–23 October 2026).

Conference web-page: N/A

Conference venue[2]: Alba County Council/National Museum of Unification, Alba Iulia, Romania, organised by Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca Branch, Institute of Archaeology and Art History.

Accepted oral contribution details

Title of the presentation: Discoveries of Game Boards and Game Accessories in the Border Region of the Province of Pannonia in the Roman Period

Co-authors: Tim Penn, Summer Courts

Other details of the presentation: The conference was from 21 to 23 October 2026, but due to transport links, I had to travel on 20 October and return on 24 October.

Outcome of the conference participation

Description of the outcome of the conference presentation, including contacts made and potential for future collaborations.

(max.500 word)

I successfully delivered my application at the conference. I discussed gaming finds from Slovakia and neighbouring countries in the Roman period. The feedback from international colleagues was useful and helped me to draw parallels with the broader context of Roman boardgames archaeology in south-eastern Europe. In particular, it is now clear that there is a shared 'ludic' culture in central and southern Europe, which centres on Roman military camps, where most of the gaming material has been found. The majority of gameboards found in this region are roughly scratched grid boards, which were scratched after firing. This suggests there was a large-scale improvised culture of play in this part of the Roman empire, though carefully made ludic objects such as dice and counters are also attested in some instances. The feedback on my paper was very positive, but some important and useful considerations were raised,

[1] This report is submitted by the grantee to the Action MC for approval and for claiming payment of the awarded grant. The Grant Awarding Coordinator coordinates the evaluation of this report on behalf of the Action MC and instructs the Grant Holder Manager to verify the grant documents compliance and proceed with the payment.

[2] For an online conference, specify virtual participation; for hybrid conferences, specify whether it is an in-person or virtual participation.

particularly regarding ceramic rondels in the Roman Empire and beyond its borders. I will incorporate this feedback into my future publications (a conference proceedings volume is expected, with a deadline in 2027). I would like to emphasise that this was a particularly important conference because very little was known until now about games and gaming in the archaeology of the Carpathian Basin and neighbouring regions. The proceedings, therefore, break new ground by providing the first collection of studies on this important topic.

More broadly, I was able to make a wide range of contacts with Romanian colleagues and graduate students (Aurel Rustoiu, Ioan Cristian Cireap, Mariana Egri, Marina Musteață) as well as colleagues from Germany (Wolfgang David, director of Frankfurt Museum) and Moldova (Vasile Iarmulschi, Nicolai Batog). These contacts will lead to future publications on the archaeology of Central and South-eastern Europe, as much gaming-related material here remains unpublished.

Moreover, because I have been participating in GameTable for three years, I have now become confident in providing feedback on games archaeology to colleagues. This means I now feel able to help shape the research of colleagues who are newer to this field. I was also able to advise the conference organisers that I would help facilitate peer review for conference volume papers via my connections in the GameTable network. This suggestion was received very positively, and I anticipate that we will be able to enlarge our contacts as a network in Romania and neighbouring countries because I attended this conference.

During excursions, I was able to see several unpublished exemplars of Roman gameboards and make contact with Alexandra-Anca Timofan, who directs the excavations in which they were found. I was able to explain the significance of some of these finds and encourage colleagues in Romania to publish these materials in future.

Overall, this was a very successful conference visit, and I thank the GameTable network for its support.

Acknowledgement of inclusion of necessary supporting documents to claim the grant

I confirm that the following documents have been uploaded on e-COST as an integral part of this report:

- the certificate of conference attendance issued by the conference organiser.
- the programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the oral presentation of the grantee.

Yes.