

CONFERENCE REPORT



The role of the European Union in the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage in conflict and crises

International online conference
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This report serves as conference proceedings of the international online conference organised by the EEAS held on 12 and 13 November 2020 on "The role of the European Union on the Protection and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage in conflict and crises".

Recordings of all the sessions of the international conference can be accessed on the dedicated [YouTube playlist of ECDPM](#).

This report was written by Mehiyar Kathem, with Sophie Desmidt and Maëlle Salzinger (ECDPM). Special thanks go to Joyce Olders (ECDPM) for her support in editing and lay-out and to Guillaume Décot (EEAS/ISP.2) for his continued guidance.

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Executive Summary

The discussions were about the role of the EU as a credible and neutral actor in the field of cultural heritage protection, and a global advocate for the importance of cultural heritage for peacebuilding and development. The ongoing preparation of an EU concept on the protection of cultural heritage in conflict and crisis was seen to add huge benefits to the EU external relations' toolbox, especially in relation to peace processes and security strategies. This concept, developed in the framework of the EU's integrated approach to conflict and crises, was seen as a tool that could underpin the EU's support to partner countries in their stabilisation efforts.

Exchanges during the conference clearly showed that an EU concept on cultural heritage protection would be complementary to its current promotion of cultural heritage in its external action. Panellists and participants agreed on the need for better integrating the EU interventions concerning cultural heritage, especially in situations of instability.

Participants noted that discussions and reviews of current practices and thinking within the EU could be done in a way to strengthen attention to issues, promoting a holistic understanding of cultural heritage protection, including security, gender, digitalisation, climate action, youth and education. The EU could stimulate this exchange, including by promoting academic research and exchanges between communities of practice, thereby supporting a platform for exploring the interlinkages and an appreciation of the complexity of cultural heritage. Related to this, the need to better include local communities, and in particular women and youth, were noted, as well as the need to address urgent cultural heritage priorities in conflict-affected countries.

The conference also explored possibilities for improved alignment and coordination between the EU's actions and its Member States, in a shift from cultural diplomacy to strategic engagement on cultural heritage in the promotion of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The value of international partnerships was also highlighted, be it with international organisations such as UNESCO, recognising its leadership in the field of cultural heritage, with the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), identifying synergies with their dedicated missions on the ground, and with other partner organisations, civil society or the academic world.

Introduction

The international online conference on “The role of the European Union on the Protection and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage in conflict and crises”, held on 12 and 13 November 2020, focused on the role of European Union (EU) institutions and its Member States with regards to cultural heritage protection. The conference was hosted by Guillaume Décot (Policy Officer, ISP.1, EEAS) and co-moderated by Damien Helly (culture Solution). Technical support was provided by MediatEUR, while content support was provided by Sophie Desmidt and Maëlle Salzinger (ECDPM). The 1,5-day meeting generated ideas and recommendations on how to examine new ways that could be used to strengthen and improve existing capacities as well as explore new opportunities to overcome the cultural destruction witnessed in conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts.

The conference followed the preparation of a study on [“The role of the European Union in the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage in conflict and post-conflict contexts in the Middle East region: The example of Iraq”](#). It brought together policymakers, practitioners, academics, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and many other stakeholders. This conference was the first of its kind to be organised by the European External Action Service (EEAS). The conference coincided with the 50th anniversary of the [1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property](#).

This report is structured as follows. Following the executive summary below, the first part presents the discussions and the main takeaways from these sessions. The second part captures the main recommendations for the EU’s work on cultural heritage protection in conflict and crises. In the Annex, the full programme of the conference can be found. Recordings of the conference can be accessed on [ECDPM’s YouTube playlist](#).

Part I. Session Notes

Opening session

The conference was opened by Guillaume Décot (EEAS/ISP.2), who introduced the keynote speakers for this opening session:

- Josep Borrell, High Representative, Vice-President of the European Commission
- Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner, Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth
- Michelle Müntefering, Minister of State for International Cultural Policy, Federal Foreign Office, Germany

To set the stage for the discussion, the opening session started with an address by **Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission**. In his address, HRVP Borrell noted that in modern wars, culture is used as a weapon to destroy the identity and history of nations. But he also underlined how culture can be a driver of peace and stability and culture can form a space where former enemies reconcile.

Following his intervention, **Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth**, noted in her opening address the importance of cultural heritage as an economic asset, as an identity factor and as a means for peace, through intercultural dialogue, conflict reconciliation and community resilience. Commissioner Gabriel also noted the importance to fight illegal trafficking and the smuggling of cultural goods. To be efficient, she noted, we need to act at different levels, ranging from legislative frameworks, border and customs support but also raising awareness, for example by providing training for actors on the art market. Already in 2016, the EU released a Joint Communication [“Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations”](#), where coordination on the issue of protection of cultural heritage was a key component. But the Commissioner also noted there was scope for improvement, for example to ensure cultural heritage is addressed in the EU’s integrated approaches to conflict and crisis.

Michelle Müntefering, Minister of State for International Cultural Policy at the German Federal Foreign Office, shared some remarkable figures, underlining the pressing challenges of illicit trafficking and sale of cultural goods, including in the European Union. Citing numbers emerging from the [ILLICID project, a German-funded UNESCO project](#), Minister Müntefering noted that only 2.1% of the cultural objects offered on the German market are being traded legally. But she also pointed to some achievements in the past years in the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods. Notably, she mentioned the [2019 EU regulation on the Introduction and Import of Cultural Goods](#) and the inclusion of protection of cultural goods in the mandate of the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) Iraq. The Minister emphasised Germany’s continued commitment to the issue, both at the European level during its presidency of the Council of the European Union, and at the international level, with continued support to the work of UNESCO. She further noted that Germany is planning to set up a mechanism for saving cultural goods in acute danger via a rapid support group, and [called for EU cooperation on this mechanism](#).

Closing the opening session, Lazare Eloundou Assomo, UNESCO Director for Culture and Emergencies and Secretary of the 1970 UNESCO Convention pointed to the continued importance of the 1970 Convention against Illicit Trafficking, which turned 50 this month. He noted the rise in illicit traffic and destruction of cultural goods in recent years. In addition, the current pandemic has meant that cultural sites have been under less strict surveillance more vulnerable to looting. Lazare

Eloundou Assomo also shared some of the success of the Convention, including the influence on public opinion and sensitisation of the broader public and museum professions, security forces on the importance of fighting illicit trafficking. At the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Convention, UNESCO launched a [new campaign, "The real price of art"](#), aimed at people wishing to buy cultural goods. In this field, he noted, the EU would remain a privileged partner of UNESCO.

Session I. Cultural heritage for building peace and security - what role for the European Union?

This session welcomed the following speakers:

- Henriette Geiger, Director People and Peace, European Commission, General Directorate for Development and Cooperation;
- Stefano Tomat, Director Integrated Approach for Security and Peace, European External Action Service;
- Louise Haxthausen, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Representative to the European Union and Director of its Liaison Office in Brussels.

The session was moderated by Damien Helly (culture Solutions). Discussions focused on the following three take-aways:

The added value of the European Union

This session focused on the role of the EU, its existing policy framework, its ambition and what to expect from the EU in the next few years on the protection of cultural heritage for building peace and security. The sessions also discussed the various entry points for the EU to address cultural heritage. According to Henriette Geiger, the EU could support cultural heritage protection by being a global advocate and making a strong case for future action. She mentioned that cultural heritage protection shall be further reflected in the projects funded under the new instrument of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

Stefano Tomat noted how the EU started its reflection on cultural heritage protection in the peace and security field of the EU, and how the EU's integrated approach to external conflict and crisis can be applied to protection of cultural heritage. **In conflict situations, it is more difficult for the EU to work at the local level. Here, EU delegations play an important role, and their engagement should be underpinned by conflict analysis that takes into account cultural heritage protection.** According to Stefano Tomat, the initial aim should be to develop a joint response to conflict by bringing together EU member states, institutions and partners, and by looking at conflicts from a preventive perspective. This work has started already, and the EU's joint response includes looking at cultural heritage protection as part of CSDP missions (for example in Iraq), but also including cultural heritage in EU support activities for strengthening mediation capacity (cultural heritage is part of the EU's new concept of mediation, and will be part of training to mediators and EU heads of delegation), as well as including it in early warning systems (building on the understanding that cultural heritage can be both a driver for conflict and peace). The latter aspect was a key element of improvement according to Louise Haxthausen, who found that currently, investments in conflict prevention and crisis preparedness are weak.

Quote:

"investment in conflict prevention and crisis preparedness is very weak: we need to apply "better safe than sorry" to CH protection." Louise Haxthausen, UNESCO Representative to the European Union and Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office in Brussels

For UNESCO, according to Louise Haxthausen, cultural heritage protection is a necessity for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The emotionally charged impact on communities when cultural heritage is attacked is a risk factor for escalation of violence and relapse back into conflict. Since 2015, she noted UNESCO has increased efforts to directly link cultural heritage to security, peace and development, which amongst other led to the adoption of [UN Security Council resolution 2199 \(2015\)](#). The EU is seen as a key ally in this field. The EU is UNESCO's main funder in the field of cultural heritage protection, in particular in contexts of conflict. For this it is all the more important to enhance cooperation between EU services and to develop a stronger definition of common purpose between EU institutions and its member states.

The need for multi-actor approach, with attention for community ownership

Several panellists noted the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to strengthen cooperation on cultural heritage protection. A joint response should not only include EU institutions and its member states but also local and international partnerships. According to Stefano Tomat, there is a need for a common vision at the strategic level, followed by operational activities at ground level in support of this common strategic vision. This is not an easy task. As Henriette Geiger noted, even within the EU, support structured for cultural heritage protection is not always joined up. Similarly, amongst EU member states, foreign affairs and cultural heritage are too often separated in their engagement with cultural heritage protection. Louise Haxthausen echoed this and noted the need to **break down the silos between cultural heritage specialists and other key actors, including** law enforcement, civil society, humanitarian and development actors. UNESCO's experience shows that for cultural heritage to contribute to broader security and development goals, stakeholders need to act together. In this regard, Stefano Tomat noted that his division proposed to develop a dedicated EU concept for cultural heritage protection to EU member states to enhance a more joined up and integrated approach to cultural heritage protection. This proposal was welcomed and Stefano Tomat acknowledged that this conference was an important building block in this process.

The need for community engagement and community ownership of cultural heritage protection was seen as a key determinant to make cultural heritage protection sustainable.

According to Henriette Geiger, long-term protection is not possible without community involvement. Local communities should be the long-term beneficiaries, too often they are insufficiently involved, especially in post-conflict and reconstruction phases. It works best if the community finds a specific cultural good to be an asset. Henriette Geiger referred to the example of the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). When the park was attacked, local communities came together to protect it because they saw the value in it. Protection was needed to protect their livelihoods.

Another point brought forward was the need for strengthening engagement with the academic community. Henriette Geiger noted the need for increased exchange of the EU with academic research, in addition to evaluation of EU activities. More research is needed on how cultural heritage destruction actually triggers escalation of violence and conflict. The EU would benefit from this to be able to more clearly define indicators for early warnings. This topic was also discussed in Session II.

A widening understanding of cultural heritage protection, and the growing importance of digitalisation

This session also discussed the widening definition of cultural heritage, driven by a growing understanding of the importance of considering the impact of climate change on cultural heritage, and in particular the protection of natural heritage and landscapes, but also issues of gender, youth (employment) and looking at cultural heritage as a source of livelihood protection and economic growth. Louise Haxthausen noted that natural hazards and climate change should be recognized as risk factors for cultural heritage protection, and that there was a need to better understand the interlinkages. Henriette Geiger noted how cultural heritage protection supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on gender equality (SDG 5), peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), employment (SDG 8) and reduced inequality (SDG 10). For example the EU funded initiative "Reviving the Spirit of Mosul and Basra" implemented by UNESCO, gender was incorporated and 30% of local engineers involved were women.

The session also discussed the growing understanding of what digitalisation could mean for the protection of cultural heritage, in particular intangible heritage (discussed further in Session VI). New technologies are key tools for the protection of intangible heritage, such symbols, literature, and digital art works. Under the impulse of digitalization, new forms of storing, preserving and making it widely accessible are an incredible form of protection, and the EU should support this.

Session II. International support for safeguarding cultural heritage in times of conflict and crisis

This session welcomed the following speakers:

- Valery Freland, Executive Director, ALIPH Foundation, International Alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas;
- Gitte Zschoch, Director, European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC);
- Tandon Aparna, Senior Program leader, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM).

The session was facilitated by Damien Helly (culture Solutions). The following key takeaways were discussed:

Building bridges between cultural heritage practitioners

Participants in this session discussed the different ways in which international non-governmental organisations engaged in cultural heritage protection, in particular in conflict and post-conflict situations, and how these could complement the EU's activities. Valery Freland explained ALIPH's approach to cultural heritage protection is to protect cultural heritage as a measure to build peace, and that cultural heritage protection is a means for economic development. His organisation is action oriented, operating as a business-like start-up, with over 100 operational projects. Four key dimensions are included in ALIPH's work: concrete protection measures, capacity building, awareness rising and community engagement. The EU could be a potential partner of ALIPH, for example by bringing a network of international partners and help break down barriers between different sectors (humanitarian aid, diplomacy, etc.) or to bring high-level expertise into the EU's work.

According to Gitte Zschoch, **there is a need for better coordination between EU national institutes for culture (EUNIC), as well as to open channels between civil society and EU institutions on the issue of cultural heritage protection, with a focus on civic engagement.** Culture is still in the mandate of EU member states, and the issue is handled very differently from country to country. Especially in fragile situations, there is a need to coordinate these different approaches and to better include civil society. According to Gitte Zschoch, organizations such as EUNIC can also play a role in helping to include local civil society in the planning and delivery of cultural heritage protection activities. This could also be a way to include them more in the discussion on what cultural heritage means for them and how the EU institutions and EU member states can best support them.

Another gap highlighted in this session by Tandon Aparna was the absence of culture in the international humanitarian aid system, making coordination on the ground very difficult, especially in fragile contexts. ICCROM is working on the nexus of disaster risk reduction, humanitarian aid and cultural heritage protection.

The need to gather more evidence and apply local knowledge

According to Tandon Aparna, **there is huge potential to tap into local knowledge of cultural heritage and bring that knowledge to policy-makers.** This is a matter of using understanding the local actor landscape. It involves working with non-state actors, local mediators, anthropologists and community elders as interlocutors, and people who have the trust of communities. There is no set

formula, but a range of best practices exist. Tandon Aparna mentioned [B+CARE](#), implemented by Cultural Heritage Without Borders after receiving training from ICCROM, and the creation of a network of “cultural first aiders” as a youth network that intervenes when there are cultural emergencies. Another example was the field research launched by a group of young volunteer conservation architects, conducted after cyclones supported by ICCROM in Kerala, the [Kerala Heritage Rescue Initiative](#). This initiative used a crowd map to collect data on damaged cultural heritage of all types, and also involved landless people with vital knowledge about sustaining wetlands. This was echoed by Gitte Zschoch, who noted the EU could use existing networks better, strengthen and support them. These initiatives generate vital knowledge that the EU could use and learn from.

Session III. The example of Iraq - how cultural heritage can be turned in a component for peace and development?

This session welcomed the following speakers:

- Mehiyar Kathem, Research Associate University College London, Coordinator Nahrein Network;
- Gabriel Munuera Vinals, Head of division Arabian Peninsula and Iraq, European External Action Service;
- Omar Mohammed, Historian Science Po Paris, Founder, Mosul Eye.

The session was facilitated by Guillaume Décot (EEAS/ISP.2) and was opened by a **video of the EU Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Martin Huth**. In his video, Ambassador Huth noted the EU's support to the reconstruction of Mosul and the rehabilitation of the historical centre of Erbil. These projects are creating jobs on sites and are reviving other sectors such as artistic industry, literature and cinema. Ultimately, Ambassador Huth noted, the goal is to strengthen the archaeological domain in Iraq. All work in this field must be based on the objective of social cohesion, scientific standards, protection and access by the public, which is still underdeveloped. Following this opening video, the session discussed the following two key issues:

Options for the EU's strategic engagement in cultural heritage in Iraq

Participants in this session discussed how the key determinants for successful engagement in Iraq with regards to cultural heritage protection. Mehiyar Kathem, the [lead author of a report](#) (commissioned for this conference) on the issue outlined a few determinants that could inform the EU's approach. It was mentioned that the EU has a unique position in Iraq, as it does not have the baggage that other international actors in the country have. This relative neutrality and trust was also recognized by Gabriel Munuera Vinals, together with the EU's ability to coordination across the development, peace and security nexus, and coordination among EU Member states. Participants in the session also discussed the potential impact of the new United States (US) administration, as the US is still seen as a large player in Iraq. For the EU, Gabriel Munuera Vinals underlined that the US remains an important partner and he foresees close continued cooperation, including in the field of cultural heritage protection.

According to Mehiyar Kathem, the EU would benefit from having a strategic framework for its engagement. Currently, the absence of such a strategic framework has implications on programming, internal coordination and international cooperation. For example, while several EU member states are active in Iraq to promote cultural heritage protection, activities are not seen as sufficiently joint up. According to Mehiyar Kathem, a paradigm shift is needed from cultural diplomacy to integrating cultural heritage more strategically in peacebuilding approaches. This should be accompanied by a mental shift of thinking in terms of programmes instead of one-off projects.

The importance of cultural heritage for reconciliation and statebuilding

Cultural heritage protection can be a nebulous term, and a contested concept, including in Iraq. In this regard, cultural heritage protection was discussed by Mehiyar Kathem as more than protection but as an element of human dignity and a definition of the type of society Iraqi citizens envisage. Mehiyar Kathem noted that some intervention in the field of cultural protection in Iraq are implemented without

a needs assessment, or without a thorough understanding of the nature of political systems, including who 'controls' cultural resources, especially in Iraq's fragmented political system. **This can be a difficult, and politically sensitive, undertaking, in particular in fragmented post-conflict situations, such as Iraq, where many different groups have a stake in cultural heritage.** For example, according to Omar Mohammed, the founder of Mosul Eye, international actors, including the EU, need to be more sensitive to Jewish Historic sites in Iraq, which are being left out of cultural heritage protection efforts. As a result, the synagogue of Mosul is at great risk, and as a result, the Jewish community. Recently, the US, through USAID has stepped in to address the protection of Jewish sites in Iraq, but concrete action is only expected once the new Biden Administration is inaugurated.

For Omar Mohammed, **the biggest challenges for cultural heritage protection in Iraq, including for the EU, is the involvement of the local community and their perspectives.** Concepts such as 'cultural heritage protection' or 'cultural diplomacy' are not well understood. A 'decomplexified' language around cultural heritage is therefore needed. Local communities have clear priorities: rebuilding their lives and making their cities and communities lively again. If the local population is not involved, cultural heritage programming runs the risk of being seen as a way for international organisations to enrich themselves, rather than benefiting the people that are directly affected. Cultural heritage projects must contribute to local economic development. Involving local communities, according to Omar Mohammed, is also a question of ensuring long-term sustainability.

Quote:

*"Cultural heritage projects must contribute to the local economy, and benefit the local population directly. [...] "The protection of cultural heritage in Iraq cannot be maintained by the EU forever."
Omar Mohammed, Historian Science Po Paris, Founder, Mosul Eye.*

Participants also discussed the role of the education system in cultural heritage protection. The importance of preservation and protection of Iraq's cultural heritage should be injected into the education system, especially in universities so that more Iraqi experts are formed and contribute.

Session IV. Cultural heritage, a component for the EU Common and Security Defence Policy Missions and Operations?

This session welcomed the following speakers:

- Tobias Pietz, Deputy Head of Division, Center for International Peace Operations;
- Major Alfio Gullotta, Civilian Coordinator for Training on Cultural Heritage, EU Civilian Training Group;
- Frederik Rosen, Director, Nordic Center for Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflict;
- Sophie Ravier, Special Assistant to the DSRSG Political, UN Senior Political Affairs Officer, MINUSMA.

The session was moderated by Damien Helly (culture Solutions) and led to three main take-aways:

Integrating cultural heritage in security and defence missions: specialisation or mainstreaming?

To guide the reflection on how to best integrate cultural heritage protection in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, participants in this session shared experiences and lessons learned from a range of security and defence organisations. Different approaches were put forward. According to Major Alfio Gullotta, specialised units are the most effective way to give weight to cultural heritage protection within organisations and during missions. Based on his personal experience, when cultural heritage is part of a long list of other considerations, it might get left behind. Frederik Rosen shed positive light on NATO's mainstreaming approach of Cultural Property Protection (CPP). NATO's commitment and willingness to dedicate resources to CPP resulted in institutional change and a deep understanding of CPP among staff. CPP is now covered by NATO's [Protection of Civilians policy](#) and integrated as a crosscutting issue in guidance for the conduct of missions and in training, education and evaluation. For Tobias Pietz, **cultural heritage protection could be integrated in CSDP missions as a crosscutting issue with focal points and a dedicated portfolio**. Participants also stressed the potential for integrating cultural heritage protection in the Sector Security Reform (SSR) mandate of CSDP missions and operations and recalled that ultimately, political will was the key driver for integration.

Delineating clear concepts, mandates and rules for institutions and ground level operations

In order for implementation to follow up from strategic decisions, the EU will need to clearly define the rules that CSDP missions and operations should follow. For Tobias Pietz, this means developing a specific concept for cultural heritage protection within CSDP missions and operations, which should be coherent with an overarching EU-level strategy. More specifically, "what the mission should protect" should be made clear in the mandate and at the operational level for CSDP staff. Indeed, Frederick Rosen stressed the lack of methodology for ground troops to evaluate "proportionality" (i.e. to what extent they should restrain from intervening if there is a threat of damaging cultural property) which is defined broadly in international law. Sophie Ravier also expressed the difficulty of "choosing" which sites to rebuild considering MINUSMA's broad mandate - it included protection of both cultural and natural heritage -, hence the need to consult with local communities. Major Alfio Gullotta shared a personal story which reinforced this point. During a rescue mission with the carabinieri in Central Italy following the earthquake in 2016, officers had planned to

discard a statue of Mary from a local church in Voceto, near Amatrice. While the item was of little historical or economic value, they came to realise it had very high symbolic importance for the community and should be preserved. Based on this and other experiences, he believes security missions should incorporate a focus on communities' definitions of cultural heritage in their training, beyond historical and economic considerations.

The sensitivity of external communication on cultural heritage protection missions

Because cultural heritage is targeted by violent extremist groups and appeals to people's sense of pride and identity, **external communication on cultural heritage protection interventions call for extreme caution, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations.** Frederik Rosen revealed a paradox: the more we talk about cultural heritage protection and attribute importance to it, the higher the risk of it becoming the target of attacks, in a global context where (social) media shapes perceptions in unprecedented ways. Mali is a concrete example where discretion was needed to avoid backlash against historic sites and the local population involved in rebuilding their sites, according to Sophie Ravier. She re-asserted the need to engage communities to limit the risk of missions creating frustrations by leaving behind sites of high significance to them.

Partnership and synergies with NATO and the UN

Panellists explored potential synergies to strengthen each other's missions and operations with regards to cultural heritage protection. Beyond anti-trafficking cooperation, Frederik Rosen saw different avenues for collaboration between the EU and NATO. For example, he noted the possibility of setting up a joint EU-NATO task force to support international justice investigations on the destruction of cultural property. He also noted how international peacekeepers have provided security cover for investigation of the International Criminal Court. **NATO's experience with mainstreaming CPP in its missions can bring empirical and evidence-based information to build up the knowledge base on the connections between cultural heritage and conflict.** This could inform EU decision making on cultural heritage protection in conflicts and crisis. This can be done through a multilateral platform including other key players, in addition to the EU and NATO. Frederik Rosen noted, however, that NATO's contribution is grounded in a military approach and must therefore be adjusted to the mandate of EU civilian CSDP missions and operations.

MINUSMA, which integrates both military and civilian components, can bring some insights in this regard. Sophie Ravier shared a lesson learned: when working in sectors within a peacekeeping mission, expertise risks being lost if military headquarters do not communicate the same information throughout the sectors and chain of command. The UN also has experience in building partnerships around cultural heritage, as MINUSMA worked in close proximity with UNESCO in Mali. Exploring synergies and sharing lessons learned between the EU and the UN from ongoing UN peacekeeping operations could further enrich the EU's integration of cultural heritage protection within EU CSDP missions and operations.

Session V. Cultural Heritage and recovery perspectives for a sustainable peace

This session welcomed the following speakers:

- Anna Paolini, Director, UNESCO Regional Office in Doha and UNESCO Representative in the Arab States of the Gulf and Yemen;
- Daniele Fanciullacci, Chief Executive, ARS Progetti, Ambiente Risorse e Sviluppo;
- Bastien Varoutsikos, Director of Development at ICONEM.

This session was moderated by Damien Helly (culture Solutions). Discussions and led to four main take-aways:

Taking a human-centred approach to cultural heritage protection

Anna Paolini made a strong case for focusing on the human dimension of cultural heritage based on her experience with the EU-funded [Cash for Work: Promoting Livelihood Opportunities for Urban Youth in Yemen](#) implemented by UNESCO in three cities. In Yemen, extensive surveys were conducted to ensure that the project would respond to the needs of Yemeni people and contribute to a positive narrative within society. According to her, **the project was a success because it responded to a demand from the people: restoring the places in which they lived** (i.e. private housing). She described a “snowball effect” whereby once the conversation was engaged and people started seeing results from the project, there were increasing calls to restore cultural heritage in other areas such as historic villages.

Bastien Varoutsikos’ echoed this importance of a human-centred approach, especially in times of conflict, and warned against opposing stones versus people. There is a risk of fuelling communities’ resentment and lack of understanding if restoring monuments is prioritised over human needs. According to Bastien, putting people at the centre of cultural heritage protection interventions means not only taking into account material needs, but also considering people’s sense of identity. In this line, Daniele Fanciullacci stressed the intangible benefits cultural heritage can bring to the human dimension by making urban spaces more culturally diverse, socially cohesive and ultimately, more liveable.

Quote:

“In general, the more a city is endowed with cultural heritage, the more it is able to integrate diversity. Loss of cultural heritage brings alienation, a feeling of insecurity and a decreased propensity to dialogue with others”. Daniele Fanciullacci, Chief Executive, ARS Progetti, Ambiente Risorse e Sviluppo.

Ensuring coherence and sustainability through a long-term perspective

Discussants also emphasised the need for making interventions sustainable and coherent within the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. For Bastien Varoutsikos, having a long-term presence within a specific locality is a key asset to adapt interventions to people’s evolving needs and making projects sustainable. He referred to the work of [Turquoise Mountain’s in Kabul](#), which started as an economic development project and increasingly capitalised on cultural heritage opportunities as they arose. UNESCO’s Cash for Work in Yemen also paid specific attention to coherence and sustainability, as

the programme's livelihood and socio-economic component was integrated with humanitarian interventions in Yemen, considering people's employability in the long term beyond the current humanitarian crisis. The social protection scheme is followed by activities that build up skills in the cultural heritage sector and promote culture-related Income Generating Activities (IGAs). Among efforts to make the project sustainable, Anna Paolini cited collaborating closely with government and line ministries, continuing the capacity-building activities and setting up cooperatives to enhance the overall resilience of the Yemeni cultural heritage sector.

Inclusion and empowerment of women and youth

Discussions also highlighted the **essential role youth and women play in the field of cultural heritage protection**. This was seen as particularly relevant in the Middle East and North Africa region, where youth constitute the majority of the population but are at higher risk of recruitment by armed groups. If youths are left behind in cultural heritage protection programming, the potential to achieve peacebuilding goals can be severely diminished. According to Anna Paolini, the Cash for Work project in Yemen explored ways of engaging with youth through media campaigns, including on social media. Yet, obstacles to effectively involve youth remain. For example, the UNESCO programme encountered resistance from master builders' associations to hire new youth because they feared they would lack the appropriate skills. In addition, Bastien Varoutsikos mentioned the gender digital gap which limits women's access to information on culture-related work opportunities. Strikingly, only 10% of participants in UNESCO's Cash for Work were women. Moreover, women are underrepresented in key professions for the cultural heritage sector such as engineering. Discussants highlighted that women play important educational and awareness raising roles, but noted that more must be done to increase opportunities for women's economic empowerment in the cultural heritage sector, in order to reduce gender inequality.

Improving understanding through data and conflict analysis

Discussants noted that a better understanding of the wide range of dynamics surrounding cultural heritage - and its destruction in time of conflict - is needed to improve the effectiveness of interventions and, above all, to support communities in reviving their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. For instance, ICONEM's use of 3D scanning of heritage and archaeological data provides raw material for different types of analyses (needs assessment, conflict analysis), but above all it gives communities a reference point. In other words, they contribute to communities' understanding of what cultural heritage looks like at a given point in time, before more destruction ensues from the conflict. It is also a way of preserving the memory of what has happened, which can help us remain aware of the risk of cultural heritage destruction in the future, in Daniele Fanciullacci's view. Discussants insisted that data collection should follow the people-centred approach as well by serving the ultimate aim of bringing back social life to various cultural heritage sites.

Discussants also stressed the value of having diverse sources of data and information, and the importance of context analysis. Bastien Varoutsikos insisted upon social surveys as key providers of information and explained why understanding social dynamics matter through the example of looting. By understanding people's looting patterns, cultural heritage practitioners can help identify which types of objects to look for in the art market. Especially in conflict-affected situations, or in post-conflict situations, cultural heritage protection interventions can be politically sensitive. Therefore, in addition to technical data and social surveys, Damien Helly added that understanding local power politics (land management, distribution of local authority) to inform cultural heritage protection initiatives is of key importance.

Session VI. Cultural Heritage for intercultural dialogue and peaceful communities.

This session welcomed the following speakers:

- Ramón Blecua, ambassador at large for intercultural dialogue and mediation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spain;
- Paolo Vitti, Board Member, Europa Nostra;
- Giovanni Fontana, Architect, UN Senior Consultant, Archi Media Trust.

This session was moderated by Guillaume Décot (EEAS/ISP.2). Participants stressed the need to rethink the contribution of cultural heritage to society in broader terms and spelled out three areas where this rethinking effort should take place:

Education as the first step for rethinking cultural heritage

For the discussants of this session, conceptions of cultural heritage are directly linked to education. Ambassador Ramón Blecua highlighted that our education systems focus on specific topics and dedicate little time to others. More specifically, he called for a shift away from considering issues as isolated facts and from the current focus on productive and profit-making activities towards learning about the environment, cultural heritage, gender and their connexions with productive systems.

Quote:

"We know the price of things but we have forgotten their real value". Ramón Blecua, ambassador at large for intercultural dialogue and mediation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spain.

Paolo Vitti echoed that opportunities to teach cultural heritage were numerous and had great potential for fostering intercultural dialogue. For instance, visiting a cultural site near one's community and reflecting on "why" it was built can **generate better knowledge of the "shared history" that ties together different groups, communities and regions**. Notably, Paolo Vitti argued that cultural heritage can support a broader Mediterranean identity that includes North and South and that questions the narrow focus on "national" heritage. In addition, as part of the [EU-funded UNDP programme to support the development of culture tourism in the occupied Palestinian territory](#), he realised that restricting the contribution of cultural heritage to economic gains from tourism was not adapted to the needs of local communities. Using the example of a historical site UNDP restored near Jericho, he explained that locals rather than tourists should bring social life back to the site, hence their decision to change the project's orientation and adopt a more grassroots approach.

Addressing the emotional component of conflict with cultural heritage

Focusing on economic gains from cultural heritage alone also fails to shed light on its considerable potential for supporting peacebuilding processes and bringing them closer to communities. Conflicts have an emotional dimension, said Amb. Blecua, and not addressing the distrust and sense of revenge that linger post-conflict may lead to the failure of reconciliation efforts. This has far-reaching implications for the role of cultural heritage in supporting social cohesion and long lasting peace. According to Amb. Blecua, **emotional grievances are best addressed through local mediation initiatives that integrate cultural heritage as a tool for healing**. He also expressed a desire to engage more in cultural diplomacy and cross-sector exchanges, announcing Spain would hold a

conference on the topic in Toledo, most likely next spring. He advanced his country as a credible and unique partner for the EU. With its complex history of multicultural exchanges but also discrimination and repression of cultural and religious minorities, Spain is well-placed to bring empathy to the European integrated approach to conflict and crisis.

Intangible heritage: questioning Western epistemologies using local knowledge

To explain what intangible heritage is, Giovanni Fontana used the definition of the 2003 UNESCO [Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) (article 2), which insists on the diversity of practices, objects and domains associated with intangible heritage, ranging from traditional oral practices to craftsmanship. According to him, presenting intangible heritage as “the wisdom of the people” captures its essence but it is impossible to make a clear distinction between tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which are complementary. In fact, the two categories used by Western experts fail to fully capture the local realities of cultural heritage. In Giovanni’s view, conflict is both an opportunity and a threat for cultural heritage. On the one hand, conflict has at times acted as a catalyst to reinvigorate forgotten cultural heritage, a process he calls “symbolisation”. As an example, he refers to the revival of traditional music by youth in Mosul in recent years. On the other hand, conflict brings about destruction at such a scale that interventions to support cultural heritage have to make difficult choices. Giovanni expressed his regret that due to the huge reconstruction needs in Iraq, restoring intangible heritage was largely set aside. Moreover, whilst recognising that positive initiatives to support intangible heritage are taking place at the government and NGO levels, he recommends working to bring initiatives closer to the community level by removing bureaucratic layers and language barriers.

Discussants throughout the conference have embraced the position that cultural heritage protection should involve local communities. This was reaffirmed in the last session and taken one step further by Paolo Vitti, who advocated for involving local communities in decision making on their own cultural heritage. Such an approach would allow for **interventions that do not discriminate against intangible heritage, but rather prioritise actions on the basis of people’s needs and aspirations.**

Closing session

The closing session was organised in three components. To set the scene for this closing session, Damien Helly, on behalf of [culture Solutions](#), summarised ten key takeaways from the conference. Specifically, these were:

1. The need to focus on communities and to make programming decisions that benefits people, with a focus on gender, youth as well as other international and national stakeholders, including communities of practice and expertise.
2. The notion that cultural spaces, both tangible and intangible, are opportunities for strengthening the protection of cultural heritage and to better analyse the connections between culture and governance.
3. Understanding the politics of heritage and in particular the ways in which 'shared memories' can be transformed by conflict. It was suggested that a discussion is needed about who shares what and what type of heritage is prioritised over others.
4. Strengthening partnerships, particularly between civilians and experts.
5. Creating further job incentives in the field of cultural heritage, which would galvanise further support for the protection of cultural heritage
6. The need to work with multidisciplinary approaches and techniques, considering the scale of the challenge ahead.
7. The urgency of crossing expertise to further our understanding of the role of cultural heritage in conflict situations.
8. The need for further research, including data, knowledge and understanding
9. Bettering EU external communication in the field of cultural heritage, particularly in partner countries
10. Internal EU action is necessary, and stronger coordination, leadership from Brussels and governments and stakeholder buy-in in partner countries are needed.

Following on this, two final speakers from the European Union discussed the outcomes and shared their views on how the EU should move forward regarding cultural heritage protection:

- Catherine Magnant, head of unit Cultural Policy, European Commission, General Directorate for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture;
- Brice de Schietero, head of division Integrated approach for security and peace, European External Action Service.

The EU must build on the current momentum and promising initiatives

For the two discussants, it was important to highlight the progress made in recent years. The conference is an example that today, **cultural heritage protection as an important component of peacebuilding and reconciliation has gained credibility and generates political will from the EU's leadership**. In contrast, according to Catherine Magnant, the field was a "no mans' land" in 2012 before the shift initiated by the former High Representative Frederica Mogherini. Therefore, the need to build up on the current momentum was clear for the two EU representatives, and Brice de Schietero recalled the diversity of positive experiences from which that EU can draw inspiration, such as the Cash for Work project in Yemen, ALIPH and UNESCO projects in the Balkans and the mediation dialogues in Iraq. On the basis of such promising developments, the EU will have to continue its efforts and always strive to do better.

Promoting a holistic approach to cultural heritage protection

A recurrent theme in the conference was the need for the EU to address cultural heritage protection within its integrated approach to conflict and crises. For Catherine Magnant, mainstreaming efforts should be taken one step further by connecting with broader EU social and economic policies. In addition, **the EU's approach to cultural heritage protection should be holistic, looking at both tangible and intangible heritage; and people-centred**, grounding its policy and funding decisions on local communities' involvement and their own conceptions of cultural heritage. Catherine Magnant also recalled the importance of building partnerships and Brice de Schietero stressed the still largely untapped potential of using cultural heritage to support peacebuilding, by addressing the psychological component of healing post-conflict.

The EU's next steps

Political will provides a solid basis for strengthening cultural heritage protection within the EU, but concrete steps and implementation must follow. The EU representatives advised looking at cultural heritage protection from a preventive perspective, with Catherine Magnant stressing the need to sensitise the European art market to the problem of illicit trafficking of cultural heritage. She highlighted the key role of UNESCO and mentioned the [Netcher platform](#), which gathers experts and holds many activities on illicit trafficking of cultural goods. More generally, she expressed her belief that more should be done on cultural heritage protection within Europe, giving the example of the projects in the Western Balkans.

Brice de Schietero stressed that the EU should operationalise its actions by integrating cultural heritage protection within its toolbox on crisis and conflict management. **The dedicated EU concept of cultural heritage protection currently under development** will be instrumental in this regard. The conference has provided decisive "food for thought" that will shape this concept, and civil society's concerns and recommendations will be included in the drafting process through a series of consultations. According to the two EU representatives, things are moving quickly and the dedicated EU concept should be ready for discussion in the spring of 2021.

Guillaume Décot (EEAS/ISP.2) ended the conference by paraphrasing Dostoyevsky. He said, "[It is] not only beauty that will save the world, but our common action and engagement for peace will. The rich discussion we had today will be of tremendous importance to place cultural heritage as a true, and solid component for development, peace and security around the world."

Part II. Recommendations

The international conference provided an opportunity for participants to propose solutions and recommendations in enhancing and protecting cultural heritage as part of EU external relations. Key recommendations are presented below.

1. *International and local partnerships remain key for the EU as a global and respected actor in the field of cultural heritage:*

Given its track record in the field of cultural heritage, the EU was perceived to be more neutral and carrying less baggage than other key players. Partnerships, with international and regional organisations were underlined as essential for continued global advocacy on the importance of cultural heritage for peace and development. Local partners are also key in conducting effective and efficient actions.

2. *The preparation of an EU concept on the protection of cultural heritage in conflict and crises will be key to provide a clear political framework and complement EU peacebuilding goals:*

The EU, building on its reputation as a global neutral actor, was encouraged to pursue the development of such a concept which could inform strong integration of cultural heritage in its future programming and international activities in this field, especially in situations of conflict and crises.

3. *The EU needs to improve the overall coordination of EU actors on the protection of cultural heritage to provide effective, efficient and sustainable support:*

Further coordination within the EU and between its member states was also recommended in this regard. Several EU member states are active in the field of cultural heritage protection, but at times without a joint approach. Partnerships with EU based cultural institutions and civil society organisations was widely welcomed to support the EU's overall goals of cultural heritage protection and mechanisms to safeguard and promote cultural heritage internationally.

4. *The EU needs to ensure closer integration of cultural heritage in conflict and context analysis, especially in conflict-affected and post-conflict situations, complemented by a deep political understanding of cultural heritage:*

Panellists and discussants not only pointed to the possible role of cultural heritage for peace but also the severe consequences of its exploitation and destruction, fuelling division, social tension and possibly contributing to conflict. Participants discussed that conflict analysis should include assessing the impact of cultural heritage protection interventions on peace and security in each phase of the conflict cycle, complemented by a deep understanding of political dynamics ("the politics of cultural heritage") and actors in a given context. The role of cultural heritage in mediation and peace dialogue, currently not thoroughly explored, was seen to be of paramount importance. While cultural heritage is included in the new EU concept on mediation, it was still under-appreciated with room for further improvement in future programming, including under the NDICI.

5. *The EU needs to adopt a holistic definition of cultural heritage that includes intangible, natural and digital heritage:*

It was noted that especially in conflict affected zones, destruction of physical cultural heritage (buildings and sites) can be so overwhelming that intangible heritage risks being forgotten. But participants noted that intangible cultural heritage constituted a central component of human life and identity. Supporting intangible

heritage was seen as a way to build common understanding, but also as a way to support local economies and create employment. Applying a holistic definition of cultural heritage would also help promote the role of new technologies in developing new forms of storing, preserving and making heritage widely accessible. This was seen as a powerful form of protection for intangible heritage. Inclusion of natural heritage would support a better understanding of the connections between cultural heritage, environmental degradation and climate change. Some examples shared by participants pointed to promising activities in the field of disaster risk reduction with attention for the protection of natural landscapes.

6. *The EU needs to give weight to external communication about cultural heritage protection, to get the 'right' narrative and avoid exacerbating existing tensions:*

Consideration of what specific values the EU should promote in terms of its messaging, communication and programming should be underlined. Conflict-sensitive forms of communication were mentioned, especially in conflict-affected contexts, where the EU should pay more attention to developing careful and culturally sensitive messaging and communication in local contexts.

7. *The EU's actions should follow a people-centered approach, highlighting the importance of communities, as a key determinant of successful engagement on cultural heritage protection:*

Communities should be the 'epicentre' of cultural heritage. The conference mentioned several times the role of youth, women and local communities as key actors which should be considered in devising a strategy on cultural heritage in conflict situations. Local communities have clear priorities but were seen as insufficiently appreciated in current programming. This poses a significant risk to inclusion, trust and the sustainability of cultural heritage projects. However, there was a need to define what exactly a 'community' is, in light of possible tensions between universality and cultural specificity, and how best to ensure people and members of society were involved in the celebration, promotion and protection of cultural heritage.

8. *The EU should support academic research, and incorporate research in its policy making processes, in particular about the relationships between conflict and cultural heritage:*

Participants agreed that better inclusion of evidence-based research of a multi-disciplinary nature is needed to further improve EU programming and policies. Exchanges between practitioners and experts from different sectors and disciplines were viewed as a key way to further strengthen understanding of otherwise complex relationships between conflict, peace and cultural heritage. To further this objective, the creation of a dedicated 'community of practice' on cultural heritage was proposed.

9. *The EU needs to pay attention to cross-cutting issues that have an impact on the protection of cultural heritage:*

Efforts should be made to include women in cultural protection projects; results so far are insufficient, and more efforts were needed to promote the nexus between gender equality, cultural heritage protection and peacebuilding. The involvement of young people was seen as another area that merits attention, pointing to the linkages between cultural heritage, economic development and education. Digitalisation, and the opportunities of digital means for the preservation, restoration and protection of cultural heritage were noted, with some promising examples discussed. Finally, and related to the need for a holistic understanding of cultural heritage, the importance of climate change and environmental degradation was stressed.

Annex

Full programme of the international Online conference on
“The role of the European Union in the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage in conflict and crises”
12-13 November 2020.

1



International online conference

**The role of the European Union on
the Protection and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage in conflict and crises**

On-line, Brussels, 12-13 November 2020

Final Programme

DAY 1 - Thursday 12 November

09:00-09:30	<i>Virtual conference room opens for login</i>
09:30-09:50	<p>Opening session</p> <p>Video – Cultural Heritage for Peace and Security</p> <p>Opening addresses</p> <p>Josep Borrell, <i>High Representative, Vice-President of the European Commission</i> Mariya Gabriel, <i>European Commissioner, Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth</i> Michelle Müntefering, <i>Minister of State for International Cultural Policy, Federal Foreign Office, Germany</i></p> <p><i>Presentation : Guillaume Décot, European External Action Service</i></p>
09:50-11:00	<p>Session I. Cultural heritage for building peace and security - what role for the European Union?</p> <p>Henriette Geiger, <i>Director People and Peace, European Commission, General Directorate for Development and Cooperation</i> Stefano Tomat, <i>Director Integrated Approach for Security and Peace, European External Action Service</i> Louise Haxthausen, <i>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Representative to the European Union and Director of its Liaison Office in Brussels</i></p> <p><i>Q&A session</i> <i>Facilitation: Damien Helly, Chair, culture Solutions</i></p>
<p><i>Virtual 15' break</i></p>	

11:15-12:30	<p>Session II. International support for safeguarding cultural heritage in times of conflict and crisis.</p> <p>Valery Freland, Executive Director, ALIPH Foundation, International Alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas Gitte Zschoch, Director, European Union National Institutes for Culture Tandon Aparna, Senior Program leader, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property</p> <p>Q&A session Facilitation: Damien Helly, Chair, culture Solutions</p>
<p>Lunch Break</p>	
14:00-15:15	<p>Session III. The example of Iraq - how cultural heritage can be turn in a component for peace and development?</p> <p>Mehiyar Kathem, Research Associate University College London, Coordinator Nahrein Network Gabriel Munuera Vinals, Head of division Arabian Peninsula and Iraq, European External Action Service Omar Mohammed, Historian Science Po Paris, Founder, Mosul Eye</p> <p>Q&A session Facilitation : Guillaume Décot, European External Action Service</p>
<p>Virtual 15' break</p>	
15:30- 16:45	<p>Session IV. Cultural heritage, a component for the EU Common and Security Defence Policy Missions and Operations?</p> <p>Tobias Pietz, Deputy Head of Division, Center for International Peace Operations Sophie Ravier, Special Assistant to the DSRSG Political, UN Senior Political Affairs Officer, MINUSMA Frederik Rosen, Director, Nordic Center for Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflict Maj. Alfio Gullotta, Civilian Coordinator for Training on Cultural Heritage, EU Civilian Training Group</p> <p>Q&A session Facilitation: Damien Helly, Chair, culture Solutions</p>

DAY 2 - Friday 13 November

09:00–09:15	<i>Virtual conference room opens for login</i>
09:15-10:45	<p>Session V. Cultural Heritage and recovery perspectives for a sustainable peace.</p> <p>Anna Paolini, <i>Director, UNESCO Regional Office in Doha and UNESCO Representative in the Arab States of the Gulf and Yemen</i> Daniele Fanciullacci, <i>Chief Executive, ARS Progetti, Ambiente Risorse e Sviluppo</i> Yves Ubelmann, <i>President and founder, ICONEM</i></p> <p><i>Q&A session</i> <i>Facilitation: Damien Helly, Chair, culture Solutions</i></p>
<i>Virtual break 15'</i>	
11:00-12:15	<p>Session VI. Cultural Heritage for inter cultural dialogue and peaceful communities.</p> <p>Ramón Bleuca, <i>Ambassador at large for intercultural dialogue and mediation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spain</i> Paolo Vitti, <i>Board Member, Europa Nostra, Reconciliation strategy, UNDP, Palestine</i> Giovanni Fontana, <i>Architect, UN Senior Consultant, Archi Media Trust</i></p> <p><i>Q&A session</i> <i>Facilitation : Guillaume Décot, European External Action Service</i></p>
12:15-12:45	<p>Concluding session. Outcomes and Recommendations.</p> <p>Catherine Magnant, <i>Head of unit Cultural Policy, European Commission, General Directorate for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture</i> Brice de Schietere, <i>Head of division Integrated approach for security and peace, European External Action Service</i></p> <p><i>Facilitation: Damien Helly, Chair, culture Solutions</i></p>