

EUROPEAN INITIATIVE no 7:

Heritage at risk: Fighting against illicit trade in cultural goods and managing risks in heritage sites



PROTECTION PILLAR

Draft version 06/12

WHY? - Objectives

Amongst specific objectives of the European Year, three are crucial for this initiative: "encourage synergies between the Union and the Member States, including by strengthening initiatives to **prevent** the **illicit trafficking** of cultural goods"; "promote **debate, research** and the **exchange** of good practices on the quality of conservation, safeguarding, innovative reuse and enhancement of cultural heritage, and on contemporary interventions in the historical environment; and "highlight the potential of **cooperation** in matters of cultural heritage for developing stronger ties within the Union and with countries outside the Union and for encouraging intercultural dialogue, post-conflict reconciliation and conflict prevention".¹

The proposed initiative aims, on the one hand, at enhancing cooperation on **risk management** for cultural heritage in Europe and, on the other hand, at **raising awareness** about the implications of illicit trade in cultural goods – both within and outside of the EU.

FOR WHOM? - Target groups

National authorities competent for heritage protection, policy makers, enforcement authorities, art market, research communities.

WHAT? - Content of the initiative

The initiative will have 4 main components running in parallel:

Component I – Regulatory measures

In July 2017 the Commission adopted a proposal of the regulation on imports of cultural goods. Adoption by the legislator, foreseen for the 4th quarter of 2018, will lead to the strengthening of the EU legislative framework on combatting illicit trade in cultural goods.

Timeline:

- Adoption of the regulation on import of cultural goods by the Parliament and the Council expected in November-December 2018

Component II - Awareness raising and capacity building activities

¹ Decision (EU) 2017/864, Art. 2 specific objectives (m), (c) and (k).

Heritage is often the target of acts of vandalism or looting while offenses related to heritage are not pursued with the same severity as other types of crime. Therefore, capacity building of the relevant authorities to better detect and combat this crime and curbing the demand for such objects are main actions planned to protect cultural heritage from being illicitly traded.

As part of Component II, two joint projects with UNESCO will be implemented:

- (1) The project "Engaging the European art market in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property" will help to engage the European art market in the fight against the trafficking of cultural property, in particular through reinforcing due diligence in the European art trade and sensitizing relevant stakeholders to the implications of illicit trade in cultural property.
- (2) The project "Training to enforcement authorities" will provide capacity building activities to the relevant EU Member States' enforcement authorities who will be trained on the legal framework and practical ways of investigating heritage related crimes.

Timeline:

- December 2017 (tbc) – start of the project "Training to enforcement authorities" implemented by UNESCO
- March 2018 (tbc) – trainings for the art market within the project "Engaging the European art market in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property" (with UNESCO)

Component III - Improving evidence and sharing experience

The severity and frequency of natural disasters has risen over the past decades, affecting several cultural heritage sites in Europe. Member States should therefore be able to ensure a comparable level of preparedness and an optimal cooperation between relevant national and international bodies. Moreover, better knowing the dimensions of the illicit trade in cultural goods is essential at policy and operational level for the EU Member States, and the wider international community. Therefore, under component III, the following three actions are planned:

1. In early 2018, publication of a European Commission Study on Safeguarding Cultural Heritage from Natural and Man-Made Disasters. It will facilitate sharing experience between the Member States on the most effective ways to protect cultural heritage at risk and pave the way for future cooperation.
2. Launch of a new study on the dimensions of illicit trade in cultural goods in the EU and on the use of new technologies to combat it will allow to better understand the routes, volumes and operational modes of traffickers in the EU. The study will also provide an overview of the existing technological tools used to identify illicit cultural objects and pursue the traffickers.
3. By the end of 2018, award of the grant for a social platform on cultural heritage in danger to bring together the research community, public and private actors, and policy makers at national and international levels working on issues related to the illicit trade of cultural goods and on the protection, preservation or reconstruction of cultural heritage.

Timeline:

- January 2018 – publication of the study on Safeguarding Cultural Heritage from Natural and Man-Made Disasters and a related communication event
- Early 2018: launch of a new study on the dimensions of illicit trade in cultural goods in the EU and on the use of new technologies to combat it
- 5-6 March, Civil Protection Forum including a component on protection of cultural heritage

Component IV - Cooperation with third countries

The EU will cooperate with third countries to protect their cultural heritage against trafficking; looting and destruction. In particular, a joint project with UNESCO will provide for rapid assessments and

immediate safeguarding measures of cultural assets targeted by conflict or disaster in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen; and the on-going project on safeguarding Syrian cultural heritage will be continued.

The EU will reflect on how to contribute to the protection of cultural heritage in the context of fragile countries or crisis situations, notably through its Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) instruments.

Timeline:

- Spring 2018 (to be confirmed) – a brainstorming with the relevant enforcement authorities of the EU Member States and international organizations will be organized by the European External Action Service.
- Beginning of 2018 (tbc) – start of the joint EU-UNESCO project "Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace"

WHEN? - Key Events

The following events taking place throughout 2018 will focus on protection of cultural heritage at risk:

- 23 January 2018, Krems am Donau, Austria - Conference "Safeguarding Cultural Heritage from Natural and Man-Made Disasters"
- 5-6 March, Brussels - Civil Protection Forum 2018 (a component on protection of cultural heritage).
- May 2018, Sofia - Two events organized by the Bulgarian Presidency: a conference for the Ministries of Culture on combatting illicit trade in cultural goods and a specific event for the Ministries of Interior on links between illicit trade and organized crime.

PARTNERS:

- Within the Commission, services dealing with culture, external relations, research and innovation, taxation and customs will have a key role in the implementation of this initiative.
- UNESCO
- Third countries, in particular Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen.