

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Nicosia Convention:

A CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE
TO OFFENCES RELATING TO
CULTURAL PROPERTY

15 – 16 JUNE, 2023

National Library of Latvia,
Ziedonis Hall, Riga



CONCEPT NOTE

Background of the Conference

Latvia attaches great importance to the protection of cultural heritage and the prevention of illicit trafficking, damage, and destruction of cultural property. This objective is also an important priority for the Council of Europe (hereinafter, CoE), which in 2017 opened for signature the Convention on Offences related to Cultural Property, known as the **Nicosia Convention**. This criminal-law treaty is the only legally binding instrument aimed at preventing and combating such crimes by strengthening criminal justice responses and, at the same time, fostering international cooperation. In the framework of the Latvian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, an international conference is being organised in Riga on 15 and 16 June 2023 on the appropriate criminal justice responses to these phenomena.

The current situation in Ukraine, where unfortunately cultural heritage has been deliberately targeted and looted artefacts may be illegally exported, brings a renewed interest in protecting cultural heritage from damage and/or destruction. This situation highlights the relevance of the Nicosia Convention, in the responses to offences relating to cultural property in conflict and post conflict situations.

Crimes against cultural property are a distinctly global problem requiring global solutions. It is widely accepted that the alienation and destruction of valuable artefacts affects everyone, insofar as cultural property is not only the legacy of individual countries, but also of humanity as a whole.

It is urgent to deal with this concern given the links between cultural property offences and organised crime and terrorism. Policing the illicit flow of cultural heritage across national boundaries requires a high level of co-operation between all relevant states and actors. Consequently, joint efforts must be made to set up the mechanisms by which countries can share information, learn from each other's best practices, and achieve better law-enforcement co-ordination to prevent and combat these offences.

As a leader in legal co-operation, the CoE benefits from a well-established network in Europe and beyond, and decades of experience creating international policy. As such, it is uniquely placed to promote a co-ordinated approach to the fight against cultural property offences. It is in this context that the Latvian Presidency is hosting a conference which will bring together representatives from international organisations as well as relevant national authorities. By working together, these representatives have the opportunity to improve international co-operation and thus provide an ever-growing level of protection to the world's cultural heritage.

Aims of the Conference


The aim of this Conference is to advance the fight against offences related to cultural property by promoting the Nicosia Convention and increasing the visibility of the work being done by the Council of Europe in this field. The main objectives are as follows:

1. to encourage states to sign and ratify the Nicosia Convention;
2. to share the views, concerns and approaches of the different stakeholders that participate in the fight against illicit trafficking and destruction of cultural property;
3. to discuss the benefits and challenges in ratifying the Nicosia Convention;
4. to highlight the importance of national and international co-operation in facing emerging challenges in this field.

Target Audience

The target audience of the Conference includes policymakers, government experts, representatives of the justice and culture authorities, law-enforcement authorities, judges and prosecutors, customs agencies, NGOs, members of relevant international and European institutions and organisations, academics, as well as other cultural stakeholders working in the field.

Organisation

Venue		The National Library of Latvia
Interpretation		English/Latvian interpretation will be provided during the meeting
Social event		Museum Storage Facility

Structure

The international conference will be organised as follows:

- **Session I** – Prosecution of damage, destruction, and illicit trafficking of cultural property.

- **Session II** – Challenges of damaged or destroyed cultural heritage in conflicts.
- **Session III** – Good practices and Exchange of experiences.
- **Session IV** – International Co-operation in criminal matters.

Each session will focus on a different area, with different panelists introducing the theme followed by an interactive discussion.

(DRAFT) Programme

Thursday 15 June 2023

Sessions from 9:00 to 13:30 (EEST)¹

8:15 Registration of participants and welcome coffee

09:00 – 09:20 OPENING SESSION

- o **Ms Inese LĪBIŅA-EGNERE**, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Latvia.
- o **Mr Nauris PUNTULIS**, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Latvia.
- o **Mr Matjaž GRUDEN**, Director of Democratic Participation, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe.

09:20 – 09:30 MESSAGE FROM THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

- Video message from **Ms Alexandra XANTHAKI**. Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights.

09:30 – 11:00 SESSION I - PROSECUTION OF DAMAGE, DESTRUCTION AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

Chair: **Mr Uldis ZARIŅŠ**, Deputy State Secretary for Cultural Policy of the Ministry of Culture.

- **The importance of criminal response to crimes against cultural property.**
Dr Carlos ROMEO CASABONA, Professor in Criminal Law, Director of the Inter-University Chair in Law and the Human Genome, University of Deusto and University of Basque Country.
- **Amendments to the Latvian legislation to implement the Nicosia Convention.**
Ms Rebeka LAVENIECE, Lawyer of the Criminal Justice department of the Ministry of Justice.
Mr Uldis ZARIŅŠ, Deputy State Secretary for Cultural Policy of the Ministry of Culture.
- **Investigation of criminal offenses related to cultural objects in Latvia (statistics, issues, current affairs).**

¹ Please note that times are in Eastern European Summer Time (EEST). Eastern European Summer Time is 1 hour ahead of Central European Summer Time (CEST).

Mr Martins JURJĀNS, Acting Prosecutor of the Zemgale Judicial Region Prosecution Office.

- **The financing of terrorism through cultural property.**
Ms Ruth GARCÍA ÁLVAREZ, Historic Heritage Brigade, National Police, Spain.
- **Damage to property as a result of criminal acts.**
Mr Kristian SCHNEIDER, Vice President, European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers Organisations, ECCO.

➤ **Discussion**

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

11:15 – 13:00 SESSION II - CHALLENGES OF DAMAGED OR DESTROYED CULTURAL HERITAGE IN CONFLICTS

Chair: **Mr Matjaž GRUDEN**, Director of Democratic Participation, Council of Europe.

- **Countering the erasure of cultural identity in war and peace, the specific case of looting and expropriating of cultural property in Ukraine.**
Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, MP from Ukraine and Chairperson of the Committee on culture, science, education and media of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).
- **Ms Kateryna CHUIEVA**, Deputy Minister of Culture of Ukraine.
- **Director of an Ukrainian museum.**
- **Policy on Cultural heritage.**
Mr Guilles Dutertre, Senior Trial Lawyer, International Criminal Court-Office of the Prosecutor.
- **Register of damage caused by the aggression against Ukraine under the auspices of the Council of Europe.**
Mr Pavlo PUSHKAR, Head of Division - Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.
- **Heritage for Peace initiatives in countries under conflict.**
Mr Isber SABRINE. President of Heritage for Peace association.
- **Questions & Answers**

13:00 – 13:30 WRAP-UP SESSION

13.30 Lunch break

16.30 Departure to Museum Storage

17.00 - 19.00 Tour around Museum Storage facility

19.45 Reception hosted by both the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Culture of Latvia

Friday 16 June 2023

Sessions from 9:30 to 12:30 (EEST)²

9:30 – 11:00 SESSION III - GOOD PRACTICES AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES

Chair: **Mr. Mārcis Kalniņš**, expert – archaeologist, National Heritage Board of Latvia.

➤ **Work of Department for Circulation of Culture Goods within National Heritage Board of Latvia.**

Mr Mārcis KALNIŅŠ, expert – archaeologist, Department of Circulations of Cultural Goods of the National Heritage Board of Latvia.

➤ **The fight against offences relating to Cultural Property: Council of Europe gap analysis report.**

Dr Cristina GUIASOLA, Professor of criminal law, University of Valencia.

➤ **Forensic work in legal proceedings on archaeological looting.**

Mr Maurizio PELLEGRINI, Arch Daniela RIZZO, former director archaeologists at the Superintendence of Southern Etruria and at the Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia in Rome, Ministry of Culture, Italy.

Ms Daniela RIZZO, officer at the Superintendence of Southern Etruria and at the Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia in Rome, Ministry of Culture, Italy.

➤ ***ONLINE The return of antiquities to their countries of origin – the case of Cyprus.***

Dr Marina Solomidou-Ieronymidou, Director of the Department of Antiquities of the Republic of Cyprus, Ministry of Culture.

² Please note that times are in Eastern European Summer Time (EEST). Eastern European Summer Time is 1 hour ahead of Central European Summer Time (CEST).

- **Addressing the increasingly organised and criminal nature of offences in cultural goods through technological innovation.**
Dr Arianna TRAVIGLIA, Director of the Centre for Cultural Heritage Technology (CCHT), Italian Institute of Technology (IIT).
- **Good practices on illicit trafficking and restitution in Italy.**
Ms Maria LUPRANO, Ministry of Culture, Italy.

➤ **Discussion**

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:00 SESSION IV - INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN CRIMINAL MATTERS

Chair: (tbc)

- **Heritage Crime Task Force.**
Mr Cameron Walter, Customs Adviser and Program Manager, Transnational Threats Department, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).
- **Actions of the Cyprus Police for Combating Illicit Procession and Trafficking of Antiquities’.**
Mr Michalis GAVRIELIDES, Cyprus Police - Chief Inspector - Head of the Office for Combating Illicit Procession and Trafficking of Antiquities.
- **European Union Action plan against trafficking in cultural goods.**
Dr Céline CHAZELAS-BAUR, Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Organised Crime and Drugs, European Commission.
- **Fight against the illicit trafficking. The 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.** The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- **International Co-operation in the field of cultural heritage offences.**
Ms Marina SCHNEIDER, Principal Legal Officer & Treaties Depositary, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT).
- *The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). (tbc)*
- *Carabinieri (tbc)*

➤ **Discussion**

CLOSING SESSION - OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

- Latvian representatives
- Council of Europe representative(s)

12:30 End of the conference

13:00 - 14:30 Lunch break

Organising Committee

1. Council of Europe

- Ms Monica REDONDO ÁLVAREZ, Culture and Cultural Heritage Division, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity.
- Mr Oscar ALARCÓN JIMÉNEZ, Criminal Law Division, Information Society and Action against Crime Directorate, Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law.

2. Ministry of Justice of Latvia

- Ms Indra AIZUPE, Director of the Criminal Justice department of the Ministry of Justice.
- Ms Rebeka LAVENIECE, Lawyer of the Criminal Justice department of the Ministry of Justice.

3. Ministry of Culture

- Ms Baiba MŪRNIECE, Director of the Culture Policy department of the Ministry of Culture.
- Ms Elīza SPURDZIŅA, Senior reporter of the Culture Policy department of the Ministry of Culture.

Background documents

- [Convention on Offences related to Cultural Property \(CETS No. 221\)](#)
- [Explanatory Report](#) of the Convention on Offences related to Cultural Property
- Publication: [The Nicosia Convention in ten questions and answers](#)