



**Presidency of Latvia  
Council of Europe**  
MAY – NOVEMBER 2023



13 June 2023

**International Conference**

# **THE NICOSIA CONVENTION: A CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE TO OFFENCES RELATING TO CULTURAL PROPERTY**

**National Library,  
15 - 16 June  
Riga, Latvia**

## 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)<sup>1</sup>**

**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.

### **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**

Moderator: **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.**  
**Mr Uldis ZARIŅŠ**, Deputy State Secretary for Cultural Policy of the Ministry of Culture.  
**Ms Rebeka LAVENIECE**, Lawyer of the Criminal Justice department of the Ministry of Justice.
- **Investigation of criminal offenses related to cultural objects in Latvia (statistics, issues, current affairs).**  
**Mr Martins JURJĀNS**, Acting Prosecutor of the Zemgale Judicial Region Prosecution Office.

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

- **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.**  
**Dr Kristian SCHNEIDER**, Vice President, European Confederation of Conservator-  
Restorers Organisations, ECCO.
- **Innovation and technology with artificial intelligence to explore the web in search  
of stolen works of art – the S.W.O.A.D.S. project**  
**Mr Salvatore RAPICAVOLI**, Major Dr at the Comando Carabinieri Tutela Patrimonio  
Culturale, Italy.
- **Discussion**

**11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break**

## **11:30 – 13:15 SESSION II - CHALLENGES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN CONFLICTS**

Moderator: **Ms Monica Redondo Álvarez**, Curator – Programme manager of the  
Nicosia Convention (tbc).

- **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 CHUYEVA**, Deputy Minister of Culture of Ukraine.
- **Mr Fedir ANDROSHCHUK**, Director General of the National Museum of the History of  
Ukraine.
- **Policy on Cultural heritage of the Office of the Prosecutor.**  
**Ms Paola Sacchi** 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.

➤ **Discussion**

**13:15 – 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 -21.30 Reception hosted by both the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Culture of Latvia

**Friday 16 June 2023**  
**Sessions from 9:30 to 13:30 (EEST)<sup>2</sup>**

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

Moderator: **Mr. Mārcis Kalniņš**, expert – archaeologist, 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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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

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- **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 – 11:30 Coffee Break**

#### **11:30 – 13:00 SESSION IV - INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN CULTURAL AND CRIMINAL MATTERS**

Moderator: **Dr Oscar Alarcón Jiménez**, Lawyer - Programme manager of the Nicosia Convention (tbc).

- **European Union Action plan against trafficking in cultural goods.**  
**Angela BARDENHEWER-RATING**, Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Organised Crime and Drugs, European Commission (EU).
- **The UNESCO 1970 Convention: promoting international cooperation in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property.**  
**Ms Sunna ALTNODER**, Chief of the Movable Heritage and Museums Unit at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- **Heritage Crime Task Force.**  
**Mr Cameron Walter**, Customs Adviser and Program Manager, Transnational Threats Department, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).
- **International cooperation in the field of restitution and return – the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention.**  
**Ms Marina SCHNEIDER**, Principal Legal Officer & Treaties Depositary, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT).
- **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.
- **Criminal Intelligence Officer.**  
**Mr Gonzalo GIORDANO**, Coordinator, Works of Art Unit, Criminal Networks SubDirectorate, International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

➤ **Discussion**

**13:00 – 13:20 CLOSING SESSION - OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS**

- Latvian representatives.  
Ms Baiba MŪRNIECE, Director of the Culture Policy Department of the Ministry of Culture, Ms. Vivita VĪKSNA-BĀRBALE, deputy head of National Heritage Board of Latvia.
- Council of Europe representatives.  
Mónica REDONDO ÁLVAREZ, Oscar ALARCÓN JIMENEZ

**13:20 End of the conference**

**13:30-15:00      Lunch break**

## **Organising Committee**

### **1. Council of Europe**

- Ms Monica REDONDO ÁLVAREZ, Culture and Cultural Heritage Division, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity.
- Dr 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.
- Alma KAURĀTE, Senior officer at Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia.



## **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](#)