



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



11 May 2023

**International Conference**

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

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

## **DRAFT 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. At the occasion of the Presidency of Latvia to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, an international conference on the adequate criminal justice response to these phenomena will be organized in Riga on 15 and 16 June 2023.

The current situation in Ukraine, where cultural heritage has been deliberately targeted and looted artefacts may be illegally exported, unfortunately brings a renewed interest on protecting cultural heritage from damage and/or destruction. That situation highlights the relevance of the Nicosia Convention, in the responses to the 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 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 Presidency of Latvia 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 the offences related to cultural property by promoting the Nicosia Convention and increasing the visibility of the work being done by the CoE in such 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 Council of Europe Convention on Offences Relating to Cultural Property, known as 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

**8:15** Registration of participants and welcome coffee

### **9:00 – 09:30 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 Matjaz GRUDEN, Director of Democratic Participation, Directorate General of Democracy (DG II), Council of Europe
- o Representative of DGI (TBC)

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

Chair: **tbc**

- **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)**  
**Mr Martins Jurjāns**, Prosecutor of the Pierīga Prosecution Office
  - **State Police of the Republic of Latvia**
- **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**, 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 Matjaz GRUDEN**, Director

### Questions & Answers

- **Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK**, Representative of Ukraine at the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE
- **Ms Kateryna CHUIEVA**, Deputy Minister of Culture of Ukraine
- **Mr Oleksandra KOVALCHYUK**, Director of the Odesa Fine Arts Museum **(TBC)**
- **The case-law of the European Court of Human Rights**  
**Mr. Pavlo PUSHKAR (TBC)**

### 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 from Latvia

**End of Day 1**

**Friday 16 June 2023**

## 9.30 – 10.30 SESSION III - GOOD PRACTICES AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES

Chair: National Heritage Board of Latvia

- **Addressing the increasingly organised and criminal nature of offences in cultural goods through technological innovation**  
**Dr. Arianna TRAVIGLIA**, Italian Institute of Technology  
Work of Department for Circulation of Culture Goods within National Heritage Board of Latvia **(TBC)**
- **The fight against offences relating to Cultural Property: CoE Gap analysis report**  
**Dr. Cristina GUIASOLA**, Professor of criminal law, University of Valencia
- **Valuation of damage to plundered archaeological sites**  
**Arch. Maurizio PELLEGRINI, Daniela RIZZO**
- **The Greek inter-ministerial coordination group experience**  
Central national authority **(TBC)**

➤ **Discussion**

**10:45 –11:00 Coffee Break**

**10.45-12.00 SESSION IV - INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN CRIMINAL MATTERS**

**Chair: TBC**

- **UNESCO: new model provisions to the 1970 Convention**
- **UNDOC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) (TBC)**
- **EUROPOL-EU Action plan against trafficking in cultural goods (TBC)**
- **International Criminal Court-Office of the Prosecutor. Policy on Cultural heritage (TBC)**
- **Office of the UN-Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights (Video message)**
- **INTERPOL (TBC)**
- **The International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT)**
- **Discussion**

**CLOSING SESSION - OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS**

- **Latvian representatives**
- **CoE representative(s)**

**12.30 End of the conference**

**13:00-14:30 Lunch break**

## **Organising Committee**

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

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

### **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](#)