

CONFERENCE BOOK ON

THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

A NEW TOOLBOX IN THE EU
EXTERNAL POLICY TOOLBOX



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PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE CONFERENCE 2024

A NEW TOOL IN THE EU EXTERNAL POLICY TOOLBOX

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Foreword

Dear Reader,

I am delighted to present our publication containing the contributions of keynote speakers and participants from the Conference on the Protection of Cultural Heritage - A New Tool in the EU External Policy Toolbox, held on 9 September 2024, organised by the Hungarian Presidency in Brussels. Once again, I want to thank all of you who contributed to making this conference happen. This event held special significance for us, with over 200 participants, including representatives from more than 20 NGOs, whose contributions were invaluable to its success.

Brussels, November, 2024

Bálint Ódor

Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Hungary to the EU



Contributions from the keynote speakers



Keynote speech by Ambassador **Bálint Ódor**, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the EU

It has been a long journey — one that began in 2020 when the European External Action Service proposed a concept paper to the PSC on the Protection of Cultural Heritage. We all realised that this first discussion on the proposed concept note would be the foundation block of an important initiative.

The second important step was the adoption of the Council Conclusions on the EU approach to cultural heritage in conflicts and crises. The Council recognised that engaging in the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in the aftermath of a conflict or crisis

- Helps protect the identities of individuals and communities,
- Serves as a basis for sustainable recovery and lasting peace,
- And contributes to the overall resilience of societies.

Allow me to emphasise the importance of the economic, social, and environmental aspects related to the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

Over the past three years, many of you in this room worked hard to make this idea an active new tool in the EU's external policy toolbox.

Let me explain in just a few sentences what the cultural heritage initiative means to us.

It is about taking a more proactive, innovative new approach to tackling crisis situations in the EU's immediate neighbourhood. Hungary, along with several other Member States, believes that the European Union should assume greater responsibility for the cultural heritage of nations beyond its borders, playing a more active role in its preservation. This is particularly relevant given the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East, and the Sahel, all of which result in the daily loss of irreplaceable cultural treasures.



It's about preventing conflict and promoting reconciliation by supporting the cultural heritage of various regions.

This is not a mere cultural or museum project; it's a new action-oriented approach focused on delivering assistance at the ground-level by providing active support for cultural institutions that are of particular importance to people living in these crisis areas or potential crisis areas. The Cultural Heritage Initiative recognises the complex reality of regions like the Middle East and Africa, where several ethnic and religious communities coexist. Supporting cultural institutions that matter to these communities is an effective way to promote peaceful coexistence, prevent conflicts, and encourage reconciliation. The initiative represents a complex new approach that considers the preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage. The main objective of our conference is to help implement the objectives unanimously agreed upon by the 27 Member States.

The second objective of this conference is to create a platform where stakeholders in the Protection of Cultural Heritage can meet and talk. Many individuals and organisations present here today have made significant progress in the last couple of years by implementing projects in the neighbourhood of the EU, in the Middle East, and in Africa, among other places. However, there has not been enough cooperation among yourselves, with many individual projects and few joint efforts. I believe that by joining forces, we can achieve even greater results. I encourage you to talk to each other during the break and explore opportunities for collaboration. This will also inspire the Commission to take part in the implementation of your great ideas.

As the Presidency, we place great emphasis on the implementation of these Council conclusions.

Time has proven that it was the right decision to adopt the Council conclusions in 2021 because the last few years have shown that

- There is an increasing need for crisis management,
- The number of conflicts is constantly increasing and
- There will also be an increasing need for conflict prevention, management, and follow-up measures.
- The stability of the EU's neighbouring regions is of key importance.

The Protection of Cultural Heritage has become an important part of peacekeeping, stability, and reconciliation, serving as an important element in the EU external toolbox.

Before I conclude my introductory remarks, allow me to offer additional observations. The first is that good practices already exist to address these challenges.

- NGOs, civil society organisations, intergovernmental organisations, and state actors have been in the field for a long time (such as Hungary Helps, ALIPH, or the Imane Atarikh NGO) and
- have led the way with good practices.

This is why I am delighted that so many of you accepted our invitation to this conference. In the audience, I recognise excellent professionals with impressive track records in this field and, more importantly, concrete plans for the future. However, the Protection of Cultural Heritage has direct links to the present, which also means it is connected to the future.

It is a very important objective for our Presidency to ensure that the EU becomes actively and proactively involved in this process and contributes financially to the PCH.

My second observation is that this conference provides us the opportunity to improve and strengthen cooperation, while also giving us the chance to increase our efforts in regions and countries where there is a need.

Keynote speech by **Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović**, Secretary General of Europa Nostra



C'est un immense honneur pour Europa Nostra de participer aujourd'hui à cet important rassemblement de différentes parties prenantes, publiques et privées, qui partagent une ambition commune : donner au patrimoine culturel une place plus centrale au sein des stratégies et actions prioritaires de l'Union européenne, non seulement à l'intérieur de l'Union mais aussi dans le cadre du volet extérieur de son action.

De nombreux documents adoptés au cours des dernières années par les Institutions et les États membres de l'Union et par des organisations de la société civile ont démontré - de façon convaincante - le bien-fondé d'une telle ambition.

Au moment de la mise en place du nouveau Parlement européen et bientôt de la nouvelle Commission européenne, le timing est propice à proposer un programme visionnaire et audacieux, impliquant divers partenaires publics et privés et doté de moyens financiers adéquats aux besoins identifiés.

Le patrimoine culturel est beaucoup plus qu'un simple élément à ajouter dans la « boîte à outil » de l'action extérieure de l'UE.

Les projets de collaboration relatifs au patrimoine culturel confèrent une dimension humaine et émotionnelle qui est précieuse pour les relations de confiance et de respect mutuel que l'Union se doit de développer avec les pays du reste de l'Europe et ailleurs dans le Monde.

Un grand merci à la Présidence hongroise du Conseil d'avoir associé Europa Nostra à cette réflexion et mobilisation communes. Depuis 60 ans, la raison d'être d'Europa Nostra est d'animer et de faire entendre cette merveilleuse chorale européenne composée de nombreuses Voix de la société civile engagée en faveur du patrimoine culturel. La mission et l'action d'Europa Nostra couvre tous les pays de la Grande Europe. Dès lors, notre action peut aussi contribuer à l'action externe de l'UE, notamment dans le cadre du processus de son élargissement et aussi dans le cadre de sa politique de voisinage. Bien entendu, nous restons solidaires et ouverts aux échanges aussi avec la société civile active sur d'autres continents. Nous sommes donc prêts à envisager des collaborations avec nos collègues non-européens, avec le soutien nécessaire de l'Union ou d'autres partenaires internationaux.



Aujourd'hui, permettez-moi d'énumérer brièvement un certain nombre de pistes d'actions concrètes que nous pourrions explorer ensemble :

- S'agissant de la reconnaissance et de la dissémination des meilleures pratiques, les Prix européens du patrimoine que nous gérons conjointement avec la Commission européenne pourraient servir d'inspiration pour mettre en place des Concours semblables dans les pays ou régions avec lesquels l'Union entretient des relations privilégiées. A titre d'exemple, citons le fait que nos collègues en Serbie ont déjà lancé un Concours avec le soutien de la Délégation de l'Union à Belgrade, tout comme nos collègues du Petra National Trust l'ont récemment fait en Jordanie.
- En même temps, rappelons de nombreux cas de patrimoine en péril, soit en raison de menaces liées aux conflits politiques ou armés, soit en raison de projets de développements qui ne sont pas durables et appropriés. Dans le cadre du programme des « 7 Most Endangered » que nous menons depuis 10 ans avec l'Institut de la BEI, nous souhaitons renforcer des collaborations avec les Institutions de l'Union et d'autres acteurs publics ou privés, pour contribuer ensemble au sauvetage des sites en péril sélectionnés aussi dans les pays qui ne sont pas encore membres de l'Union, tels que l'Albanie ou la Géorgie.
- Mentionnons aussi le European Heritage Hub, le projet pilote lancé par l'Union que nous gérons avec un large consortium de partenaires européens. Le Hub nous a entre autres permis de mettre en place un « Small Grants Scheme », aussi avec le soutien précieux d'ALIPH, pour financer des projets menés par la société civile en Ukraine, en Moldavie, dans les Balkans occidentaux et dans le Sud du Caucase. L'enveloppe initiale de ce programme symbolique reste fort modeste – 250.000 Euros. Pourtant, les besoins identifiés sont bien plus grands ; il serait donc souhaitable de pouvoir augmenter les ressources disponibles à l'avenir. Et puis, le modèle d'un « Small Grants Scheme » pourrait être exploré aussi pour d'autres régions du Monde, à commencer par le voisinage sud de l'Union.
- S'agissant du processus d'élargissement de l'Union, une priorité et des moyens beaucoup plus élevés devraient être accordés aux projets relatifs au patrimoine tangible et intangible des pays candidats. L'Union devrait aussi accorder une plus grande attention au sort du patrimoine multiculturel et multireligieux dans les territoires marqués par des conflits, passés et présents, comme en Bosnie-Herzégovine, au Kosovo ou dans le Haut-Karabakh.
- Ensemble avec ALIPH, nous préconisons aussi le besoin d'enrichir la vision et l'ambition de la Communauté politique européenne avec des actions concrètes de collaborations dans le domaine du patrimoine culturel. Cela serait le meilleur investissement pour renforcer le sentiment d'appartenance à une grande famille européenne, au-delà des frontières actuelles de l'Union.
- Enfin, l'action et la diplomatie climatique de l'Union devrait promouvoir la contribution du monde de la culture et du

patrimoine culturel pour rendre cette action plus imaginative et plus efficace. Suite à notre Appel mondial à l'action, signé par un grand nombre de partenaires, dont ALIPH, un « Groupe d'Amis pour une action climatique basée sur la culture » a été lancé lors de la COP 28 à Dubaï. La COP 29 à Baku va poursuivre cet élan initial. Nous aimerions voir tous les États membres de l'Union adhérer à ce Groupe d'Amis, et ainsi renforcer - ensemble avec la Commission européenne – l'engagement de l'Union, pour faire bon usage de la dimension culturelle et patrimoniale de l'action climatique, au sein de l'Union et aussi à l'échelle mondiale.

Comme vous le voyez, les pistes d'action sont nombreuses. A nous de les explorer, voire de les réaliser, ensemble !

Keynote speech by **Bariza Khiari**, President of ALIPH Foundation



Je suis très heureuse d'être avec vous aujourd'hui car cette conférence c'est, pour ALIPH, à la fois l'aboutissement d'un long cheminement, celui d'une prise en compte croissante au niveau européen de l'enjeu de la protection du patrimoine dans les zones en crise, mais aussi, très certainement, un nouveau chapitre, que nous allons écrire ensemble, marqué par la mobilisation déterminée de l'Union européenne et de ses Etats membres aux côtés de tous ceux qui, au quotidien, œuvrent en faveur du patrimoine en danger dans le monde.

Je veux à cet égard remercier tous ceux qui, dans cette salle, ont contribué à cette prise de conscience, et notamment la Présidence hongroise de l'Union européenne – et chacun sait ici l'engagement du ministre et de l'ambassadeur –, le Service Européen d'Action Extérieure, son Secrétaire général et toute son équipe – mais aussi la commission européenne – et plus particulièrement le directeur du Service des Instruments de Politique Etrangère, qui nous a fait confiance et a soutenu notre action en Ukraine – ainsi qu'un nombre croissant de pays de l'Union européenne, parmi lesquels les membres d'ALIPH : la France, le Luxembourg et Chypre.

Je souhaite ce matin vous faire part de trois réflexions. D'abord, ces dernières années ont montré que la destruction du patrimoine n'était pas un enjeu du passé, mais bien un défi d'aujourd'hui, de plus en plus prégnant : de plus en plus, notre patrimoine est un dommage, collatéral ou intentionnel,

des conflits en cours – et on pense naturellement à l'Ukraine, à Gaza, au Yémen, au Soudan, au Sud Caucase, etc. - mais aussi l'une des victimes du changement climatique : plus de 200 maisons traditionnelles de Gao, au Mali, ont été endommagées par les inondations torrentielles de ces derniers jours. Et le constat est le même au Yémen, au Niger ou encore au Tchad. C'est la raison pour laquelle ALIPH a décidé récemment d'élargir son champ d'intervention à la protection du patrimoine des zones en crise contre l'impact du changement climatique et a lancé, à cet effet, un grand appel à projets consacré en priorité à l'Afrique.

Car il faut tous nous mobiliser, plus que jamais, politiquement et financièrement, pour sauvegarder ce patrimoine de l'humanité.

C'est ce que nous nous efforçons de faire chez ALIPH et, ce, dans un esprit de neutralité, seul à même de nous permettre d'intervenir partout où c'est nécessaire: nous avons ainsi soutenu depuis 6 ans 450 projets dans 35 pays. En particulier, notre agilité nous a permis de répondre aux besoins urgents de stabilisation à Beyrouth, après l'explosion de 2020 – et je salue notre ami le directeur général des antiquités du Liban -, ou de protection des collections des musées, des bibliothèques et des archives en Ukraine – nous en avons protégé près de 400. Notre agilité, associée à celle de nos partenaires sur le terrain, nous a aussi permis d'enclencher le sauvetage du site extraordinaire de Mes Aynak en Afghanistan, avec nos amis de l'Aga Khan. Et aujourd'hui, nous sommes aux côtés du patrimoine de Gaza, où nous avons pu, grâce au dévouement des professionnels locaux et internationaux, financer des opérations – en cours - de sauvetage de collections de musées sous les décombres. Notre ambition, chez ALIPH, c'est d'être « les ambulances du patrimoine », comme celles que nous avons mises en place avec les professionnels ukrainiens.



Car ce qui est en jeu, c'est bien plus que des pierres : c'est une part essentielle de nous-même, de notre commune humanité. Derrière les pierres, il y a des femmes et des hommes qui vivent autour, qui en vivent, matériellement, spirituellement. Je me souviens de cette vieille femme, rencontrée récemment à Mossoul, qui avait perdu sa maison lors de la guerre de

libération, et qui nous a remerciés les larmes aux yeux parce que nous avons contribué à la réhabilitation de sa mosquée, qu'elle trouvait « plus belle qu'avant ». On touche là à quelque chose d'indicible, quelque chose de plus grand que nous. Peut-on imaginer rebâtir un pays si l'on ne

reconstruit pas ce qui fait son histoire, sa mémoire ? Et chacun de nous n'a-t-il pas besoin de beauté, d'harmonie pour vivre ? Je dirais même plus : un droit à la beauté ! C'est dans cet esprit qu'ALIPH – qui est bien plus qu'un fonds – apporte un soutien financier, scientifique, technique, parfois politique, à des projets concrets menés de main avec les autorités, les communautés, la société civile et les partenaires locaux, à qui je veux rendre ici hommage. Ce travail, nous le menons dans le but ultime de contribuer à la construction de la paix et au développement durable. Et notre mission, nous la menons dans le respect des valeurs universelles, et en complémentarité avec l'UNESCO et l'ensemble des organisations patrimoniales internationales.

Vous pouvez compter sur nous pour être l'un des instruments d'une ambitieuse politique européenne de protection du patrimoine dans les zones en crise. Comme je sais pouvoir compter sur un nombre croissant d'entre vous pour mener à bien notre mission. Rejoignez-nous : l'union fait la force !

Keynote speech by **Stefano Sannino**, Secretary General of the EEAS



First, dear Ambassador Ódor, thank you very much for organising this conference. I must emphasise the excellent cooperation that we had in organising this day of common work, as well as the importance we place on the Protection of Cultural Heritage and advancing our international cultural relations and public diplomacy within the European Union.

Welcome to you all from my side as well. It is good to have so many familiar faces and friends around, but also new friends and new colleagues. We certainly need to keep supporting the work that we have to do together. The Hungarian Permanent Representative mentioned already the importance of cultural heritage. It is true that unfortunately, sometimes heritage can be the object of a very symbolic form of violence, used to incite hatred to exacerbate divisions within societies. This disruption, including the loss of intangible heritage like traditions or languages, also damages the transmission of culture across generations.

The politicisation and destruction of cultural heritage, particularly when tied to religious or ethnic identities, intensifies conflicts and serves as a major obstacle to dialogue, peace, and reconciliation. Nevertheless, cultural heritage can also be of crucial role in fostering peace and development as

the foundation for resilience and recovery in post-conflict societies. When protected and rehabilitated, heritage helps society to heal, provides communities with a sense of identity, and enables them to rebuild and recover after conflicts. Cultural heritage is a foundation for resilience, fostering social cohesion, and promoting inclusive dialogue. Beyond its social role, it also has economic benefits: it drives sustainable development and cultural tourism and supports local economies, which can help post-conflict areas to recover more quickly and more effectively. Heritage is embedded in the traditions and practices that shape our identities and connect us to the past while inspiring our present and our future.

The European Union’s motto, “United in Diversity”, captures the unifying power of cultural heritage, celebrating the richness of Europe’s varied culture while acknowledging the global shared legacy of heritage. In an increasingly interconnected world, heritage transcends borders, fostering mutual respect and understanding. The EU’s approach to cultural heritage protection emphasises respect for cultural diversity, promotion of human rights, and the importance of sustainable development. This approach ensures that all initiatives are grounded in values that uphold the dignity of affected communities in the preservation of their cultural identity.



Allow me to highlight a few elements of our work with international partners, notably UNESCO, on key projects that foster social and economic development. One recent example is the heritage tourism initiative in Cairo, focused on rehabilitating the al-Maridani Mosque and expanding tourism in Egypt. In Iraq, our job creation and rehabilitation project in the historic cities of Mosul and Basra supports the restoration of urban heritage landscapes,

creating jobs and promoting social cohesion. In Beirut, the recovery projects for housing, culture, and the creative industries focus on rehabilitating the housing and cultural sectors in the aftermath of the port explosions.

EU engagement in the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Ukraine deserves a specific mention. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has spiralled into a humanitarian catastrophe, and as it continues, the number of destroyed or severely damaged cultural heritage landmarks only increases. There are also clear indications regarding the pillaging of cultural sites and of the deliberate destruction of monuments related to Ukrainian history carried out in areas occupied by Russian armed forces. Protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage is therefore of strategic importance and a strategic countermeasure for the European Union. Since the very beginning of the hostilities, we have provided support to Ukraine in this regard. The European Union has prioritised the protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage. The Acting to Preserve Ukrainian Heritage project launched in 2022, with the support of the ALIPH foundation, provides emergency protection, documentation, and support for Ukrainian heritage professionals. Additionally, the European assistance mission in Ukraine is actively supporting Ukrainian authorities in regards to crimes related to cultural heritage. In collaboration with general office prosecutors, the mission organised a conference titled “United for Justice, United for Heritage”, which, among other topics, underlined the need for accountability for crimes committed against and affecting cultural heritage.

As the European Union navigates the complexities of cultural heritage protection amidst the ongoing global crisis, several challenges must be addressed to enhance the effectiveness and the coherence of its initiative. The primary issue is the fragmented nature of cultural heritage efforts within the European Union. The diverse approaches and the lack of coordination can lead to inefficiencies and missed opportunities in developing synergies. Currently, cultural heritage initiatives within the EU are somehow disjointed, with various Member States and EU institutions pursuing independent projects and policies. The External Action Service wants to play a role in addressing these challenges, providing a cohesive strategic vision and facilitating enhanced coordination. By fostering closer collaboration between EU institutions, Member States, and international partners, we can streamline efforts and ensure that cultural heritage protection initiatives are aligned and in line with the broader EU foreign policy objectives. The Hungarian Permanent Representative stressed the importance of creating a proper framework where these issues can be discussed, linking together all these different elements. We hope to push forward quickly in this direction.

Another significant challenge for us is the issue of funding. It is evident that the public budgets for cultural heritage protection are limited and face growing pressure in today's socioeconomic climate. To meet these challenges, we must look towards innovative solutions, particularly in the realm of public-private partnerships. The EU has led the way in developing a new concept focused on the impact and the environmental, social, and governmental investments that have the potential to unlock significant private capital for heritage preservation. By exploring this opportunity, we can complement public funding and ensure that cultural heritage protection remains a priority for years to come.

The term ESG – environmental social governance – was coined in 2006 in a UN report by a group of the largest institutional investors, intergovernmental experts, and civil society, leading to the approval of the principles for responsible responsive investments. The number of signatories committing to these principles has grown exponentially over the past 15 years. The European Union is by far the most represented, with 44% of capital committed. As the European Union, we have played a key role in the development of ESG-related standards, regulations, and best practices, most recently with the corporate sustainability reporting directive for listed companies. Until now, the largest share of this capital has been invested in the “E” - environment - leaving the social and governance aspects lagging behind. Investments in art and culture account for only 11% of total impact investments. Going forward, beyond endowments or brands, we need to change the mindset. This change requires a toolkit of complementarity between financial and non-financial instruments to innovate public and private partnerships and to encourage private capital to flow towards the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

What lies ahead is the debate that is starting at this conference, hopefully leading to the identification of an innovative paradigm that shifts from public funding allocation to public and private investments, creating complementarity between the different facets of these two strands of work. This will be very much at the centre of the roundtable this afternoon. To conclude, to effectively address the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by cultural heritage protection, the European Union must closely cooperate with Member States and all stakeholders to adopt a joint-up strategic approach. By consolidating our efforts and promoting our cooperation in a Team Europe spirit, the European Union can ensure that cultural heritage continues to be a beacon of hope, connection, and inspiration for generations to come.

Keynote speech by **Mohamed Alhassane**, Director of the NGO Imane Atarikh



La protection du patrimoine culturel et historique au Niger est cruciale pour préserver l'identité et la mémoire collectives du pays. Le Niger est riche en sites archéologiques, en monuments historiques, et en traditions culturelles uniques, mais ce patrimoine est souvent menacé par des défis comme le développement urbain non réglementé, le manque de financement pour la conservation, et les tensions sécuritaires dans certaines régions.

Voici quelques initiatives et stratégies pouvant renforcer cette protection initié par l'ONG Imane-Atarikh (donner vie au patrimoine):

- Travailler en partenariat avec les communautés locales pour renforcer la sensibilisation et l'engagement autour du patrimoine. En intégrant les connaissances locales et les pratiques culturelles, il est possible de garantir une meilleure protection tout en respectant les traditions et les valeurs locales.
- Promouvoir des programmes éducatifs pour sensibiliser les jeunes générations à l'importance du patrimoine culturel et historique. Cela peut inclure des initiatives dans les écoles, des expositions, et des festivals culturels.
- Collaborer avec des organisations internationales, comme l'UNESCO, UE, d'autres pays pour bénéficier de leur expertise et de leur soutien financier. Ces partenariats peuvent aussi renforcer la visibilité internationale du patrimoine nigérien et attirer l'attention sur les défis locaux.
- La documentation, la numérisation des sites et des objets patrimoniaux, ainsi que la préservation des savoir-faire traditionnels sont essentielles pour la promotion de notre patrimoine culturel. La numérisation permet de créer des archives virtuelles pour les générations futures et de protéger les informations en cas de dégradations physiques.
- Le changement climatique a un impact considérable sur le patrimoine culturel et historique du Niger, où les sites archéologiques, les monuments et les traditions culturelles sont menacés par des conditions climatiques de plus en plus extrêmes causant l'effondrement de plusieurs maisons et mosquées.

Voici les principales conséquences du changement climatique sur le patrimoine au Niger:

Les régions sahéliennes du Niger sont particulièrement touchées par la désertification, qui se traduit par l'érosion accélérée des sols. Ce phénomène affecte les sites archéologiques, culturels et historiques, en particulier ceux situés dans les zones désertiques et semi-arides. L'érosion expose les vestiges à l'altération et peut faire disparaître des sites entiers, rendant leur préservation plus difficile.

La hausse des températures et les fortes variations thermiques à Agadez fragilisent les matériaux de construction traditionnels comme l'argile, et la terre crue. Ces matériaux, couramment utilisés dans les bâtiments anciens, se détériorent plus rapidement à cause des pluies diluviennes extrêmes, entraînant l'effritement et la désintégration des monuments. Les précipitations, autrefois plus régulières, deviennent moins prévisibles et plus intenses. Les inondations soudaines dégradent les infrastructures, endommagent les maisons culturelles et menacent la vie des populations.

Le climat entraîne aussi un exode rural vers les villes et d'autres pays. Cet exode provoque une rupture dans la transmission du patrimoine culturel immatériel (langues, coutumes, rituels). Pour protéger le patrimoine du Niger en particulier la ville historique d'Agadez face à ces menaces, plusieurs actions peuvent être envisagées :

- Utiliser des matériaux plus résistants et durables pour restaurer les structures, en les adaptant aux nouvelles réalités climatiques.
- Former les communautés locales pour qu'elles puissent participer à la sauvegarde des sites et adopter des pratiques de conservation adaptées.
- Mobiliser des chercheurs et des fonds internationaux pour mieux comprendre l'impact du climat et renforcer les capacités de préservation.
- Créer des archives numériques des sites et des objets, de manière à conserver une trace en cas de destruction physique.

Le changement climatique représente donc un défi majeur pour la préservation du patrimoine nigérien. Adapter les mesures de conservation et création d'emploi aux jeunes sont indispensables pour protéger cette richesse culturelle et historique pour les générations futures.

Protéger le patrimoine du Niger, c'est non seulement préserver la paix et la cohésion sociale et des trésors historiques mais aussi contribuer à l'identité et au développement culturel du pays. Une approche inclusive et proactive

est indispensable pour garantir que ce patrimoine unique soit transmis aux générations futures.

Roundtable discussion with the participation of Gert-Jan Koopamn, Director General, European Commission DG NEAR, **Stefano Sannino**, Secretary General of the EEAS, **Louise Haxthausen**, Director, UNESCO's Brussels Office, **Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović**, Secretary General of Europa Nostra, **Bariza Khiari**, President of the ALIPH Foundation Board, **Sarkis Khoury**, Director General, Directorate General of Antiquities of Lebanon, **Mohamed Alhassane**, Director, NGO Imane Atarikh (Agadez, Niger) monitored by Ambassador **Bálint Ódor**, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the EU.

The discussion had been organised around the following questions:

- *What are the main challenges for cultural heritage protection in conflict and war zones?*
- *Which regions should receive more focused attention, and where do more projects need to be undertaken?*
- *How could the Team Europe Initiative be launched in the field of cultural heritage protection?*
- *Which challenges of the Protection of Cultural Heritage need to be focused on during the Hungarian Presidency and can be taken forward in the future?*

Louise Haxthausen, Director of UNESCO's Brussels Office highlighted the importance of the Council Conclusions of 2021 and stressed the importance of the systematic integration of cultural heritage protection into the broader conflict response of the EU, as called for in the Conclusions. "We have learned extremely valuable lessons on what to do and what not to do", said the Director, adding a few other challenges to the discussion. Here, she emphasised that more systematic and sustainable interventions for cultural heritage protection require flexible and predictable funding. She also underlined that, as mentioned in the 2021 Council Conclusions, the Protection of Cultural Heritage in crisis situations can be a double-edged sword. It may be instrumentalised and contribute further to violence and conflict. Therefore, interventions must be designed taking into account the "no harm" principle to genuinely contribute to culture being a federating, peacebuilding element. She finally called for more efforts to address impunity related to cultural crimes. She estimated that the Hungarian EU Presidency's initiative to create a dedicated Council Working Party for the Protection of Cultural Heritage would provide an important forum for EU Member States to address such challenges, as the Protection of Cultural

Heritage in conflicts is not only a cultural imperative but also an issue of security, human rights, and respect for humanitarian law. **Gert-Jan Koopman, Director-General of DG NEAR**, added that cultural heritage is not just a tool of foreign policy; it's much more fundamental than that, and it is about what we are, who we are; it's about identity; it's about culture; and ultimately, if it is lost, we lose ourselves. He also explained that in these conflict areas the destruction of cultural heritage is very deliberate; what's more, it is a war crime aimed at destroying the foundations of the aggressed nation, as is clearly the case in Ukraine, and we should take that extremely seriously. The Director-General also highlighted how cultural heritage and the restoration of cultural heritage speaks to ordinary people and reverberates in local communities. Mr. Koopman agreed that very small actions could carry significant weight, well beyond their functional dimension, and the small financial contribution. Regarding the latter element, he said that this is actually a really important element of who we are and therefore should be an important element of our policies. In addition, he advocated for a much more integrated approach, as it was not mentioned until this time in the conversation, and emphasised the need to consider all the different dimensions together while placing greater emphasis on coordination. He also mentioned that DG NEAR will soon be taking forward a regional project in the Southern Neighbourhood, which needs to be discussed in the wider context in the newly established Council Working Party. **Sarkis Khoury, Director-General of Antiquities of Lebanon**, underlined the importance of the Conference and expressed his appreciation to the Hungarian Presidency. The Director-General underlined that Lebanon has a very small area but is very rich in both tangible and intangible cultural heritage from ancient times. He explained how difficult it is to protect this heritage during armed conflicts, not to mention the problem of 2 million refugees caused by the war in Syria. The Director-General expressed his gratitude to Valéry Freland and ALIPH for their help from the first day of the 2020 explosion, as well as to other partners, including Hungary Helps. He explained how important it is for all of us, including the European Union, to devote as many resources as possible to prevention. Investing in prevention is often more cost-effective and less expensive than post-conflict reconstruction or rehabilitation. We should put much more emphasis on this aspect, and there is a huge need for international cooperation at all levels. There is a need for long-term projects that can bring reconciliation to the country. **Mohamed Alhassane, Director of the NGO Imane Atarikh**, focusing on the Sahel region, underlined again that regarding Protection of Cultural Heritage, the most important problem is climate change. He stressed that even with a small investment, huge results can be achieved, especially in the Sahel region and Niger, and called for more attention from the EU institutions. When asked about which region will be prioritised in the

EU's external relations, **Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović** stated that "what needs to be prioritised is the Protection of Cultural Heritage across EU external relations in order to enhance mutual trust and understanding while demonstrating the EU's respect for the culture, identity, and dignity of our partners". She added that even in peaceful times, cultural heritage faces immense loss due to climate change or unsustainable and inappropriate development projects. To avoid such a deplorable loss of our shared heritage, the Secretary General called on the EU to develop adequate quality standards for funding that support heritage preservation and heritage-led sustainable development, both inside and outside the EU.

Stefano Sannino, Secretary General, concluded that a tailor-made approach should be introduced, emphasising the importance of bringing together all the different strands of activity to have a real impact in this area. He also highlighted the need to maintain focus on local communities and stakeholders.

Bariza Khiari, President of the ALIPH Foundation, made a clear distinction between legal challenges (the principle of sovereignty, a founding principle of international law, and its corollary, the principle of non-interference, international sanctions), political challenges (neutrality, defining priorities), and finally, financial challenges.

Ambassador Bálint Ódor, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the EU, summed up the most important common points of the speakers as follows:

- Prevention is a key element when talking about Protection of Cultural Heritage, and we should take a holistic, coordinated, and differentiated approach in economic development – tourism e.g., is often a very important element. The Protection of Cultural Heritage is an important dimension of this development;
- The Protection of Cultural Heritage is a very important vector for peace-keeping;
- There is a need to give an adequate answer to new challenges such as climate change;
- There is a need to exploit the Team Europe Approach more efficiently and a need to involve civil society as well;
- We should mobilise the private sector – linking it to the ESG dimension – and find channel resources;
- There is no need to prioritize regions, but the objective and efforts should be different in war and conflict zones.





ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION CHALLENGES FACING THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE



Péter KOVÁCS, Director General, Hungary Helps Agency

It is a profound honour to stand before you today at this pivotal event, where we underscore the critical importance of preserving our cultural heritage and strengthening European solidarity. Instead of overwhelming you with statistics or data, I wish to present a single photograph and the powerful story it tells. This image encapsulates the very spirit that drives our mission at Hungary Helps. The photo was taken in August 2018 in Lebanon - a land where history is deeply felt at every step. It is the land where Jesus walked, where Crusaders, Ottomans, Mamelukes, and many others fought, but where people of many religions still live side by side. In Lebanon, life is deeply connected with family, community, tribe, and religion. Here, religious communities play a more defining role in social life than we are accustomed to in the West.

For centuries, Christians and Muslims have lived side by side, united by a shared history and culture, offering hope for enduring peaceful coexistence. The photograph captures Lebanese youths working on a church reconstruction project in Hardin, a small village rich in cultural heritage. Hardin is the birthplace of Saint Hardin, a key figure in the Maronite Church. Although the Saint John Monastery is in ruins, it remains a popular pilgrimage site. I had the privilege to be there and visit the sites. Since 2018, Hungarian archaeologist Zsolt Vágner, in collaboration with local experts and supported by Hungary Helps, leads the excavation of church ruins there. His work, coordinating the restoration of sixty-three Lebanese temples with the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, is supported by Hungarian archaeologists, architects, and restorers and overseen by the Lebanese Directorate General of Antiquities. However, we Hungarians are not the only ones in the Holy Valley. Italian professionals are also actively involved in this initiative. Their presence in the valley is a testament to their shared commitment to preserving local cultural values, and it is truly encouraging to witness their dedication to safeguarding this heritage alongside us.

Archaeological excavations globally serve to preserve architectural culture, but in Lebanon, they mean much more. They boost local tourism, providing direct income to communities, and help people connect with their heritage, fostering pride in their culture and encouraging them to build their futures at home. The photograph tells the story of three young men from the Mikhael family: Anthony, Gaby, and Joseph. They began working with us 6 years ago as high school students. Despite their humble beginnings and the struggles their family faced during and after the civil war, these young men have become key figures in our project. Anthony and Gaby, brothers, and Joseph, their cousin, joined the excavation team in 2018. Their family



has endured much hardship, with their father injured in war but still working as a vegetable farmer and former school bus driver. Their mother, often ill, stays at home, caring for their two younger sisters. The three continued to work with us, and their dedication extended to maintaining and preserving the

churches they worked on. Anthony and Gaby used their earnings to open a small family-run vegetable store, which has provided their family with income and enabled them to support their sisters' education. Their father has retired from bus driving and now helps in the shop, while their mother produces homemade goods for sale. In 2024, Anthony, Gaby, and Joseph are still volunteering to inspect and clean the churches, feeling a deep sense of responsibility for preserving their legacy. These young men are not just workers; they are guardians of their Lebanese cultural heritage. Such as many others, including local Muslims and Syrian refugees who also work there with us, showing that this effort is important to them as well. I hope I've conveyed what lies behind our projects: the faces, stories, and lives that we shape together.

The Hungary Helps Program is not just about starting projects or about aiding people. It is about cooperating with them. Each restored building and preserved memory has real human stories behind it, contributing to keeping cultural heritage alive and passing it on to future generations. Thank you for your attention and for supporting the tireless efforts that make these stories possible. Together, we are not just building the future; we are preserving what is invaluable and irreplaceable.



Stefano Tomat, Managing Director – Civilian Operations Commander, EEAS

I am very grateful to have the opportunity to introduce this summary of the Conference on the Protection of Cultural Heritage (PCH) organised by Hungary in September 2024. It is long overdue that this highly important but sometimes neglected topic reaches the agenda of the European Union. Cultural heritage has played a major role in several conflicts and touches on some of the most intensely felt and intensely

held human sensibilities. While it serves as a source of fraternity, it can also, unfortunately, be a source of division.

I would like to underline three particularly important dimensions. Firstly, the political dimension - manifestations of power, sovereignty over territory, a sense of control over one's environment. Secondly, the economic dimension - not only the quantifiable value in terms of the loss of goods and artefacts through illegal trafficking but also indirect impacts such as on tourism. Thirdly, the identity dimension as cultural heritage defines who we are and our narrative of who we are as individuals and as members of our communities and nations.

To protect the cultural heritage that surrounds us, we should also shield it from false narratives and disinformation aimed at dividing communities. The conference findings presented in this book include a project that involved diverse populations and communities in its activities, demonstrating the value of such initiatives in crisis management and conflict resolution.



From the perspective of the civilian missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy, the PCH tool contributes to reducing tensions and can even accelerate the withdrawal of special missions and other security presences once a peaceful and stable dynamic is achieved.

I am convinced of the value of cultural heritage actions in the context of civilian CSDP and proud of the work that is being done in the field. I am thinking of the activities of the EU civilian mission EUAM in Ukraine, working together with the Prosecutor General on the fight against trafficking of cultural heritage. Kosovo is also an interesting example where cultural heritage has sadly featured as part of the conflict dynamics. I do not need to explain the importance that the monasteries or religious sites have in this area: EULEX Kosovo has, as one of its main tasks, the patrolling of sites and supporting mediation and agreement on their access – including by training the Kosovo Cultural Heritage Unit. And of course in Georgia, where the EU Monitoring Mission has a role to play in creating a positive connection between populations on the two sides of the administrative boundary lines. Finally, in Iraq we have deployed an expert on cultural heritage who has helped establish a national database.

Let me conclude by underlining three important elements where we should focus more for the future: firstly, visibility of the EU involvement in CH (which in itself contributes to conflict solving), capacity (we have to recognise that only 8 out of 27 Member States have national police units specialised in cultural heritage protection and this could be improved), and communication (we need to better explain the advantages of PCH in conflict situations).

I would like to conclude by thanking those EU Member States who have contributed - through our missions and in their own right – to map out and protect cultural heritage, and I look forward to continuing to enhance the EU role in this area.



Johanna Leissner, Scientific Representative for Fraunhofer

It is a great honour for me today, under the EU Presidency of Hungary, to have the opportunity to present to you the work of the open method of coordination expert group of 25 Member States and three associated countries. The topic is how climate change affects cultural heritage. Today, I have both good news and some bad news to share. Let me start with the good news. It was in 2020 that, worldwide for the first time, the topic of climate change and how it affects cultural heritage received a political mandate. Without support from politicians, we cannot move forward with action. So it was the Cultural Affairs Committee of the Council of the European Union who gave the mandate to establish this expert group. At the same time, Europe became the first in the world, 21 years ago in 2003, to launch a research programme to scientifically study the impact of climate change on cultural heritage. However, we can now see that climate change is occurring at an unprecedented speed and scale, and it is affecting our cultural heritage. It is destroying it; it is damaging it.

We in the expert group have collected a lot of information about the state of play in the different Member States and associated countries. We put it all together in a final report with 10 recommendations to the European Union, but also to the Member States. Since then, we have received a lot of attention. Not only at the EU level, but also in the Member States, regions, cities, cultural heritage institutions, and even among private individuals. Meanwhile, we have also received a lot of attention from outside the EU. Just to mention a few, the United States and the National Park Service, for example, have invested \$750 million from President Biden to adapt their cultural resources in their national parks against climate change. One important finding we identified is the need to integrate cultural heritage and climate change into all kinds of policies, not just cultural policies.

Well, another task we had was to see if there were already any good practices or examples out there. One of my favourite examples of good practise is from Italy, where they have combined natural heritage and cultural heritage. They have restored the grasslands in an Alpine region, which now act as carbon dioxide sinks, alongside the renovation and restoration of the Alpine huts. Additionally, they have reintroduced local goats and sheep to produce a famous cheese. Recently in

August, a major initiative of the citizens of the city of Copenhagen took place - they urged the government to stop demolishing old buildings. This was another important finding of our expert group: we have studies that show it is more climate-friendly to invest in upgrading old buildings than demolishing and tearing them down to build new, energy-efficient structures.

Today, we have a lot of initiatives with small projects, but we know that climate change is destroying our heritage everywhere in the world at an unprecedented speed and scale.

So, we really need to invest in cultural heritage protection and prevention; we have the means, we have the research results, but we need big programmes, we need a climate deal for heritage.

We need a combination of innovation and traditional knowledge. And we need to cooperate better; this was said already many, many times. We are all sitting in the same boat, and we can be so strong together. Of course, at the end of the day, if we invest in, let's say, an economic programme to protect cultural heritage, we will also be promoting peace and fostering a deeper understanding of ourselves and others. This is what we all wish for now: that we have more peace, better mutual understanding, and respect for everyone.



Efthymios Shaftacolas, Archaeological Officer of the Department of Antiquities, Deputy Ministry of Culture, Republic of Cyprus

One of the challenges for professionals around the world that are working towards protecting cultural heritage is that of illicit trafficking. This crime – and there is no other way to describe this act – refers to the sale or trade of cultural goods (whether they be antiquities, works of art, or ethnological items) that have been looted from tombs or archaeological sites, or pillaged from ancient monuments, religious buildings, museums, or galleries.

One country with significant experience in confronting the looting and illicit trafficking of its cultural heritage is the island of Cyprus. Like other neighbouring countries in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Cyprus is a 'source' country for looters searching for antiquities. This continues to this day, confirming the existence of networks active in the illicit trafficking of Cypriot cultural heritage and of an active destination market, and has gotten worse over the last few years due to the use of modern equipment such as metal detectors that are easy to buy and easy to use for locating antiquities underground and underwater. One factor that sets Cyprus apart

within the EU is that it is a living example of a country that has experienced large-scale looting and illicit trafficking of its cultural property following an armed conflict fifty years ago.

The 1974 Turkish invasion and subsequent occupation of part of the island led to the pillaging of museums and archaeological sites, the destruction and looting of hundreds of ecclesiastical monuments— not only of their movable religious items but also their mosaics and wall-paintings. Even registered collections of antiquities and paintings were stolen from private residences. All this amounted to a large and irreplaceable part of the cultural heritage of the Cypriot people, a greater loss than any in financial terms. Fifty years later, the authorities of Cyprus are still searching for the thousands of cultural goods that went missing. The repatriation of a single cultural good, though merely a drop in the ocean, is nevertheless a triumph against illicit trafficking.

A primary tool for all countries to combat illicit trafficking is legislation, both national and international. In this regard, it is important to mention the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of an Armed Conflict and its two Protocols, the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen and Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. The 2017 Nicosia Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property is currently the only international treaty focusing on criminal measures and sanctions on the destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage. At a national level, the 1935 Antiquities Law of Cyprus, as well as other laws that have incorporated Directives and Regulations adopted by the European Council, addresses the import and export of cultural goods and the return of illicitly trafficked property.

The Department of Antiquities of Cyprus cooperates with local and international authorities; these include the Cyprus Police, the Customs Department, the Law Office of the Republic, the Church of Cyprus, academic and research institutions, the competent authorities of other countries, ICOM, and Interpol International. As an EU member state, Cyprus also has access to the Internal Market Information System (IMI), which facilitates the exchange of information between public authorities. It is often used to inform other Member States of either the theft of cultural property from a specific country or of the import of cultural goods that may be products of illicit trafficking from another EU member state. The Republic of Cyprus has also signed several Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding with neighbouring countries in the Middle East, as well as with others such as the USA, for mutual cooperation in the Protection of Cultural Heritage against illicit trafficking. The National Committee for the Combating of Looting and the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Heritage provides for a valuable coordination consortium, especially concerning repatriations or the detaining of cultural objects from other countries at Customs, which has been able to achieve significant results in recent years.

Illicit trafficking is an international problem, one that may never be resolved. All we as cultural heritage protectors can do is cooperate to the best of our abilities and find ways to curtail and reduce the looting that precedes it.



Sarkis Khoury, Director General, Directorate General of Antiquities of Lebanon

Le Liban, avec ses 10452 km² et ses 9000 ans de stratification de diverses cultures, a forgé une identité unique, marquée par sa situation géographique entre les terres des pharaons, de la Mésopotamie, des Grecs et des Romains.

Cette position, source de défis constants, est aussi un atout pour ce carrefour exceptionnel de rencontres et d'échanges culturels. En 2023, le Liban compte 6 sites inscrits au patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco. Le pays a également soumis 10 sites à la liste indicative, dont 9 culturels et 1 naturel. De même, son territoire comprend une centaine des sites archéologiques, des villes et villages historiques protégés par la loi pour leurs valeurs historiques et architecturales.

La mission est très complexe, même dans les meilleures des conditions. Actuellement, le Liban est confronté à plusieurs défis majeurs : la protection des sites historiques, des musées, des artefacts et des archives, ainsi que le trafic illicite des objets culturels. La protection du patrimoine est un enjeu majeur dans un pays souffrant d'une crise économique sans précédent et des ressources humaines limitées. Il est également confronté au développement urbain et au changement climatique auxquels viennent s'ajouter des défis inhabituels, tel l'explosion dévastatrice du port de Beyrouth le 4 août 2020. Ce cataclysme a gravement endommagé des centaines de demeures patrimoniales, le Musée National de Beyrouth, ainsi que d'autres musées, des bibliothèques, des théâtres et des industries culturelles diverses, qui reflètent le tissu urbain et social par excellence. En réponse, la Direction Générale des Antiquités (DGA) a rapidement mis en place une unité d'urgence, en lançant le projet BACH (Beirut Assist Cultural Heritage). Elle a initié ce projet en coopération avec des partenaires nationaux et internationaux, ainsi que les sociétés civiles et les habitants. Cette initiative a contribué efficacement à la réhabilitation, à la reconstruction et à la renaissance du patrimoine culturel libanais.

La région du Liban a également énormément souffert du séisme qui a fortement secoué le pays le 6 février 2023. Ce dernier a rappelé la nécessité d'un inventaire et d'une documentation des bâtiments à risque d'effondrement. Les résultats de

l'enquête menée, en 2018 à Tripoli, par la DGA ont montré que 400 autres bâtiments avaient besoin d'être consolidés. Tripoli, nommée capitale de la culture arabe en 2024, est un exemple éminent de ville historique ayant conservé son authentique tissu urbain. Elle est classée sur la liste indicative du patrimoine mondial.

Il faut également souligner que le sud de pays traverse une guerre complexe depuis le 8 octobre 2023. Ce conflit est exacerbé par l'utilisation des technologies avancées notamment dans le domaine de l'armement et de l'intelligence artificielle, qui rendent presque impossible la mission de protection du patrimoine. Des villages historiques, des vergers et des oliviers millénaires ont été détruits, et des centaines de milliers d'arbres fruitiers ont été abattus. Le Liban, signataire de la convention de La Haye en 1954 ainsi que ses 2 protocoles, avait protégé durant la guerre civile (1975-1990) les collections du Musée National et les sites archéologiques avec des mesures de protection traditionnelles.



Ces méthodes, innovantes à l'époque, ne sont plus efficaces face à l'arsenal destructeur d'aujourd'hui.

Dans ce contexte de crise, la DGA a mis en place un plan d'urgence pour le Musée National de Beyrouth. Nos archives photographiques, nos correspondances, nos rapports de fouilles et nos publications, qui datent pour certains d'entre eux de plus d'un siècle, sont essentiels pour préserver notre mémoire patrimoniale. Ces archives doivent être numérisées et placées dans de nouveaux locaux sécurisés. Il est également essentiel de remettre à jour les inventaires des objets archéologiques dans toutes les réserves de la DGA et leur numérisation et une étape essentielle pour préserver les indices du passé pour les générations futures.

Le Liban fait face au défi de la lutte contre le trafic illicite. En tant que pays d'origine et de transit pour les biens culturels, nous devons lutter contre ce fléau. Notre lutte est sur 2 axes : restituer notre propre patrimoine et retourner celui d'autrui. En effet, nous avons déjà restitué des objets précieux à l'Irak et à la Syrie, et espérons renforcer notre collaboration avec l'Union européenne, région de destination et de transit afin d'améliorer les mesures restrictives en obligeant les collectionneurs à obtenir les permis nécessaires auprès des pays d'origine.

Tout comme les guerres et les conflits qui tentent d'effacer la mémoire et la culture des peuples, notre rôle en tant que communauté internationale réside dans notre union pour protéger toutes les cultures, qu'elles soient matérielles ou immatérielles. Malgré les défis économiques, sociaux, naturels et politiques, la détermination de la Direction Générale des Antiquités du Liban, soutenue des partenaires nationaux et internationaux, reste inébranlable : sauvegarder notre héritage culturel, berceau des civilisations anciennes et carrefour historique des échanges entre l'Orient et l'Occident afin de préserver notre identité et notre mémoire collective universelle.

Roundtable discussion with the participation of Stefano Tomat, Managing Director – Civilian Operations Commander, EEAS; **Katariina Leinonen**, Head of Division, EEAS – PCM. 1.; **Efthymios Shaftacolas**, Archaeological Officer of the Department of Antiquities, Deputy Ministry of Culture, Republic of Cyprus; **Lujza Varga**, Head of Department, Hungarian National Museum; **Norbert Richard Ibrahim**, Deputy Secretary General, OACPS; **Céline Gilquin**, Head of Social Link Division, Agence Française De Développement (AFD); **Souha Choueiri**, Director, Zarat El Ihsan’s School in Beirut; **Sarkis Houry**, Director General, Directorate General of the Antiquities of Lebanon; **Johanna Leissner**, Scientific Representative for Fraunhofer; **Edmond Alejji**, Architect and on-site Project Manager of the Crac Project (EPDC – DGAM); **Nicola Orsini**, AVSI Foundation Representative to Jordan. The Discussion was moderated by **Péter Kovács**, Director General of the Hungary Helps Agency.

The discussion had been organised around the following questions:

- *What are the most important challenges facing the Protection of Cultural Heritage?*
- *What can be done by the EU in the short, medium, and long term?*
- *What are the most vulnerable regions?*

Katariina Leinonen, Head of Division of EEAS PCM 1. talked about the EU’s work on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in crises and conflicts and highlighted the need for a joined-up, integrated approach. She mentioned among the main challenges financial constraints, capacity gaps, weak legal frameworks, limited community engagement, and incomplete inventories of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. However, these challenges also lead to new opportunities to protect cultural heritage to the benefit of all.

Stefano Tomat, Managing Director - Civilian Operations Commander of the EEAS, explained the role of civilian CSDP missions in Protection of Cultural Heritage and talked about the cooperation with security forces, peacekeeping missions, and governments in this regard. Mr. Tomat identified Protection of Cultural Heritage as a tool for conflict resolution, building bridges between communities.

Dr. Norbert Richard Ibrahim, Deputy Secretary General of the OACPS, provided an overview of the activity of the Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (OACPS) regarding the Protection of Cultural Heritage. Dr. Ibrahim talked also about the EU’s role in supporting the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the African, Caribbean, and Pacific States in the framework of the implementation of the OACPS-EU Samoa Agreement.

Dr. Lujza Varga, Head of Department of the Hungarian National Museum, talked about museums’ mission to prevent illicit trafficking of cultural goods and other related crimes. Dr. Varga pointed out the importance of creating a cross-border and

cross-sectoral informal network and the need for education that museums could give to law enforcement officers in this regard.

Efthymios Shaftacolas, Department of Antiquities, Deputy Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Cyprus, while talking about the role of institutions in preventing illicit trafficking of cultural goods, mentioned that, besides the OSCE Heritage Crime Task Force, there are other organisations whose cooperation in this regard is essential. Mr. Shaftacolas emphasised the need to effectively train customs officials and law enforcement (police officers), and to bring in more academic and scientific institutions to collaborate.



Edmond Alejji, Architect, on-site Project Manager of the Krak des Chevaliers in Syria, talked about the ongoing work in the Krak des Chevaliers in Syria, which was severely affected by armed conflicts and natural disasters. The Krak des Chevaliers has lost millions of visitors due to the destruction

caused by these negative effects and is now being reconstructed in cooperation with the Hungary Helps Agency.

Johanna Leissner, Scientific Representative for Fraunhofer, shared information about the results of the OMC Expert Group of Member States work, highlighting that not only tangible but intangible cultural heritage is also affected and destroyed by climate change. Ms. Leissner confirmed that preserving traditional knowledge is strongly linked to tangible heritage; therefore, it is important to invest in young people and traditional handcraft jobs.

Sarkis Khoury, Director General, Directorate General of Antiquities of Lebanon, underlined the importance of the Conference and expressed his appreciation to the Hungarian Presidency. The Director-General underlined that Lebanon has a very small area but is very rich in both tangible and intangible cultural heritage from ancient times. He explained how difficult it is to protect this heritage during armed conflicts, not to forget the problem of 2 million refugees due to the war in Syria. The Director-General expressed his gratitude to Valéry Freland and ALIPH for the help from the first day of the 2020 explosion and to other partners, including Hungary Helps. He explained how important it is for all of us, including the European Union, to devote as many resources as possible to prevention. Investing in prevention is often more cost-effective and less expensive than post-conflict reconstruction or rehabilitation. We should put much more emphasis on this, and there is a huge need for international cooperation at all levels. There is a need for long-term projects that can bring reconciliation to the country.

Souha Choueiri, Director of School Zahrat El Ihsan in Beirut, emphasised the



significance of raising awareness and educating students about cultural heritage, emphasizing that a comprehensive understanding of values, traditions, and languages should begin at an early age. By integrating these elements into the curriculum, schools can foster a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity and the legacies that shape our societies. This approach empowers students to become informed and

responsible stewards of their heritage. Additionally, she stressed that the hidden curriculum, along with history and civics, should be prioritised in educational settings. It is essential for these components to be reflected in the mission and vision of schools.

Céline Gilquin, Head of Social Link Division of Agence Française de Développement (AFD), talked about the related projects financed by AFD, pointing out the role of the Protection of Cultural Heritage in promoting social cohesion and strengthening the values that are essential to sustainable development and education. Ms. Gilquin also highlighted the need for close collaboration with local communities and the need for training to increase local capacities and expertise.

Nicola Orsini, country representative of AVSI in Jordan, shared his experience of AVSI's activity on cultural heritage protection in Jordan. Mr. Orsini talked about AVSI's approach to cultural heritage through the involvement of local communities in the restoration of heritage sites. He emphasised that such projects are not only a tool for economic growth for the most vulnerable groups of the population but also a fundamental contribution to human development and personal identity as they help to enhance social cohesion, women's empowerment, and raise historical awareness.





**ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION
FOCUSING ON SYNERGIES
WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR
IN RELATION TO THE
PROTECTION OF CULTURAL
HERITAGE**

Stefano Sannino, Secretary General of the European External Action Service

The third panel started with opening remarks made by the EEAS Secretary General, Ambassador Stefano Sannino, who thanked the Hungarian Presidency for hosting the event on the Protection of Cultural Heritage (PCH), marking a clear commitment from the rotating Presidency of the Council of Europe. He then highlighted two main directions on which efforts should be focused: ensuring coherence in the EU's external action on PCH and equipping the EEAS with PCH-specialized staff. He also emphasised the socio-economic constraints currently affecting public budgets and identified PPPs as the only sustainable alternative for innovation in cultural heritage protection. The panel provides an opportunity to start addressing the reconceptualization of PPPs and to explore and research innovative forms of collaborative partnerships. Sannino stressed the need for a change of mindset, one that requires a toolkit to ensure complementarity between financial and non-financial instruments. The shift aims to innovate public and private partnerships, encouraging private capital to flow into EU PCH and, more broadly, into International Cultural Relations Projects.

Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen, Director General, European Commission DG EAC

This year we have celebrated the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the 'Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict'. It emphasises the responsibility of countries to protect cultural property. Protecting our heritage is not solely a matter of governmental responsibility. It also calls on the active engagement of the private sector. Today's panel represents a unique opportunity to explore ideas on the collaboration between the public and private sectors. Preserving the invaluable cultural heritage assets of our societies from damage and destruction is a shared mission.

When we think of public-private partnerships in culture, the first thing that often comes to mind is the financial aspect. While it is true that private capital helps immensely, alternative sources of funding are also of crucial importance to supplement public budgets, particularly when it comes to providing a fast and adequate response. One of the most important examples was showcased recently by the funds collected after the Notre Dame Cathedral fire in Paris in April 2019. The Commission initiated dialogue with Member States and experts earlier in this mandate on complementary sources of funding for cultural heritage. The aim was to ensure the long-term sustainability of heritage sites and institutions by changing their funding strategies and by re-designing their business models through the exchange of good practice examples (*e.g., considering commercial revenue streams, adaptive reuse projects, volunteering, crowdfunding, micro-donations*).

The economic contribution of philanthropy is indeed significant. There are more than 186,000 philanthropic organisations in Europe, with a total annual contribution of EUR 54.5 billion. The combined assets of European public-benefit foundations are over EUR 647 billion. In this regard, we might need to be more creative in utilising these valuable resources for the protection and preservation of our cultural heritage. However, the role of the private sector is not confined to merely 'bringing in the money'. Private entities bring unique capabilities to the table: technical expertise, innovative solutions, and an agility and flexibility that can complement and amplify public policy approaches.

I would like to briefly recall the Commission's excellent collaboration with the ALIPH Foundation (*International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas*). This underscores the power and potential of public-private partnerships. By supporting ALIPH's efforts in Ukraine, we are contributing to the safeguarding of cultural sites and artifacts in regions where they are most at risk. ALIPH can act very swiftly in times of crisis, in a matter of days, much faster than a public service. Furthermore, we are grateful that ALIPH shares its valuable experiences and insights as a member of the Commission's expert group on safeguarding cultural heritage in Ukraine.



We need the knowledge and commitment of the private sector for the aim of policy design and implementation.

That is exactly what we are trying to gain with our ongoing 'Dialogue with the Art Market', which we have set up in the context of the EU Action Plan on combatting trafficking in cultural goods.

Art dealers, collectors, and auction houses play a critical role in the circulation of cultural artifacts. By engaging with these stakeholders, the Commission has worked to establish and promote best practices to prevent the illicit trade of cultural artifacts. This initiative not only aids in preservation but also fosters a culture of ethical stewardship among those who handle these invaluable items.

Today's panel provides an opportunity to dive deeper into these partnerships, explore new ideas, and strengthen our collective commitment to heritage protection. Today's discussions will be vital in shaping future strategies and initiatives. Together, we can ensure that our cultural heritage survives the trials of conflict and continues to thrive.

Allow me to provide you with a final example, as we also have the EIB with us: Since 2013, the EIB has supported the "7 Most Endangered Heritage Sites" programme, organised by Europa Nostra, the leading cultural heritage network in Europe, which is also a Creative Europe network. This innovative programme combines the vast

cultural expertise and advocacy work of Europa Nostra with the technical appraisal and rescue planning skills of the EIB and its Institute – and it is working. Restoration was successful or is making good progress at most of the 63 sites selected so far. Public-private partnership at its best!

In conclusion, the preservation of cultural heritage is not just an obligation but a profound responsibility. It is a testament to our respect for the past and our commitment to future generations.

President von der Leyen, in the Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024-2029, emphasises the importance of Europe's rich and diverse cultural heritage as an essential part of the European way of life.

By working together and leveraging our collective expertise and resources, we can ensure it lives on for years to come.

Summary of Roundtable Discussion

Roundtable discussion with the participation of **Hugues Moret**, Ambassador; **Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen**, Director General, European Commission DG EAC; **Valéry Freland**, Executive Director of ALIPH Foundation; **Luis Monreal**, General Manager, Aga Khan Trust for Culture; **Silvia Foschi**, Head of Historic and Artistic Heritage and Cultural Activities, Intesa Sanpaolo; **Shiva Dustdar**, Director of EIB Institute; **Evelio Acevedo**, Managing Director, Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum Madrid; **Junior Lodge**, Assistant Secretary-General of the Structural Economic Transformation and Trade, OACPS; **Annica Floren**, Deputy Head of Unit, European Commission, DG INTPA. The Discussion was moderated by **Mario Carlo Ferrario**, founding partner of Schroeder Ventures.

The discussion had been organised around the following questions:

- *The panellists of the roundtable discussion explored the following questions: What are the main challenges in public-private cooperation projects for the Protection of Cultural Heritage?*
- *What are the possible alternative financial instruments, besides donorship and sponsorship, to support such projects?*
- *Can the recent ESG Sustainability EU directives become impactful tools to enhance new forms of public-private partnerships and engage new stakeholders?*

The panel tackled the challenges of the organisation and legal issues related to the launch of public-private partnerships (PPPs). It was underlined that such partnerships should be inspired by public needs and represent a new way of funding

real-life projects, where the primary focus is on meaningful impact rather than solely on profits. The panelists acknowledge the multiple challenges lying ahead of PPPs, like the different legal frameworks applying to each area of activity.

Then, **Valéry Freland, Executive Director of ALIPH** took the floor. The Executive Director explained the important role that ALIPH plays on the global stage. ALIPH is an international alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas, and these days it is the main global fund exclusively dedicated to the protection and rehabilitation of cultural heritage in conflict zones and post-conflict situations. It was created in response to the massive destruction of cultural heritage over the past decade, predominantly as a result of terrorism and war in the Middle East and the Sahel. ALIPH was founded in 2017 as a public-private partnership assembling initially seven countries and three private donors. Based in Geneva, this foundation, under Swiss law, also benefits from the privileges and immunities of an international organisation, thanks to a headquarter agreement signed with the Swiss Confederation. To date, ALIPH has supported nearly 180 projects in 30 countries on four continents. Wherever possible, ALIPH finances initiatives that are carried out on the ground. In all cases, ALIPH's objective is to work hand in hand with local partners, authorities, and communities. Despite its recent establishment, ALIPH has successfully become a point of reference by offering emergency grants that provide quick and flexible support in immediate response to disasters or conflicts, enabling the rescue of cultural heritage. The success of ALIPH also arises from the fact that it is an "alliance" between several states, private partners, and experts, guaranteeing a pluralistic vision. Several states, institutions, and individuals have decided to come together to fund this initiative. France, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Morocco, Luxembourg, China, and Cyprus have provided financial support. ALIPH also benefits from the support of Switzerland and has received contributions from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Getty, and philanthropists.

After this intervention, **Hugues Moret, Ambassador, Special envoy for the European Political Community**, took the floor. He started by saying that Russian aggression in Ukraine also represents also a war against cultural heritage. For this reason, it is crucial to create common policies among the European Member States. He added that the EU budget for culture constitutes a small percentage of the global financial sources, and for this reason, it becomes necessary to reallocate resources and programs with the support of Member States from a common strategy perspective. Within this framework, the ALIPH foundation represents a concrete model that is able to respond quickly and effectively to crises. As a result of the widespread destruction of monuments, museums, and heritage sites in conflict areas, it was crucial to create an international fund to protect heritage in situations of armed conflict and to quickly respond to challenging situations. Driven by the initiative of France and the United Arab Emirates, this idea became a reality with the creation of ALIPH. Since then, the initiative has brought a number of other countries and private partners on board.

Then, **Dr. Junor Lodge, Assistant Secretary General of the Structural Economic Transformation and Trade (OACPS)**, reported on the Samoa Agreement, which binds the EU and the OACPS in the preservation of UNESCO world heritage sites that are rich in mineral resources but currently face challenges in the absence of good governance. In fact, this is the major challenge for fragile states, which cannot provide adequate protection to their own CH sites. Therefore, there is an urgent need to collaborate among states within this sector to ensure better safeguarding of globally valued common heritage sites. States should put in place all the political arrangements needed to boost cooperation to this end. Keeping in mind that cultural heritage is not only a material asset but also a motley set of non-material assets, such as culture and human creativity in arts and entrepreneurship. Lodge highlighted, for example, the great role diaspora groups—generally wealthier, more cosmopolitan, and more business-oriented than their fellow countrymen—could play in boosting PCH in their countries of origin. Finally, he emphasised that in the Samoa Agreement, which tackled the creative sector, the economic empowerment of local actors was a key goal. However, this has not been fully achieved, as better organisation and boosted cooperation between institutional and developmental actors is still needed.

Afterwards, **Dr. Luis Monreal, general manager of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture**, stated that PPPs should be dealt with carefully when cooperating with the so-called “developing” world. In fact, they tend to enjoy a bad reputation, as they are often associated with the privatisation of public assets to the benefit of a few businesspersons. Thus, a rebranding policy of PPPs is needed, validating them as legitimate and useful instruments for the greater public, acting in full respect of national legislation, abiding by national laws and constraints, and resulting from negotiated practices rather than top-down decisions. Monreal focused on the different models of PPPs already active, some of which involve only domestic actors, others with multiple actors, and still others in tripartite configurations, including local governments and foreign public entities. Notwithstanding the different classifications, all PPPs models contribute to providing soft loans to local governments, viewing cultural heritage not as a burden or a liability but rather as a potential economic asset likely to be developed to boost the local or domestic economy and have positive trickle-down effects to the greater public in terms of employability and environmental sustainability. Yet, governments should be further encouraged to trust and rely on the management capabilities of the private sector, viewing PPPs as an opportunity to save local taxes while ensuring PCH at risk is safeguarded.

Then, **Evelio Acevedo, Managing Director of Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza**, commented on the importance of the PPPs highly positive impact on PCH, highlighting that the returns, in terms of fiscal benefits and marketing opportunities, are tangible. However, as much as private companies involved in PPS should be fully credited by public authorities, the latter should also be acting responsibly, ensuring efficiency, transparency, and smooth communication, as private investors

need to be updated regularly on actions and projects undertaken thanks to their funding.

Furthermore, **Silvia Foschi, Head of Historic and Artistic Heritage and Cultural Activities**, provided the example of “Restituzioni”, a private company that carried out quality restoration projects of more than 2000 artists’ works so far. As of today, in its 2022-25 business plan, PCH stands as a priority area. It is already active in Brazil and looking forward to expanding its range of activities and collaborations.

Afterwards, **Annica Floren, Deputy Head of Unit at DG INTPA**, focused instead on public interest in boosting PPPs at times of financial constraints and crisis. She mentioned the pressure on public finances exerted by the COVID-19 pandemic as one of the main causes of decreasing investments in culture and saw in PPPs an opportunity to replace the reduced efforts of public authorities in PCH. As development cooperation shifted from the old model of development aid (donor-recipient relationship) to a system of equal partnerships, private actors’ involvement is more needed than in the past. In fact, this approach lies at the core of the new EU Global Gateway (GG) strategy, aiming at boosting smart, clean, and secure links in digital, energy, transport, health, education, and research systems across the world. However, she underlined that there are still too few private companies interested in PCH, as financial institutions lack experience in investing consistently in creative industries and public and private actors are not used to collaborate on common projects. The GG agenda provides a framework for joint action in PCH thanks to the European Fund for Sustainable Development offering a variety of risk-sharing instruments. Some best practices to look at are already in place, but more public funding is needed to encourage private actors to invest in creative industries. Among them, notable initiatives include the Culture and Creative Industries Financing Initiative (CreatiFI), a 20 million euro project with OACPS aimed at strengthening the capacities of financial intermediaries in Africa, the EU-UNESCO PCH project in Lamu, Kenya, which supports sustainable development, and various museum partnerships between the EU and Africa.

Finally, **Shiva Dustdar from the EIB Institute** introduced the flagship initiative of “Europea Nostra”, an innovative project jointly carried out with an NGO, whereby the EIB acted both as a main gateway to access financing and as a selection committee of projects worth funding by both public and private capitals through bank loans and risk-sharing guarantees. She emphasised that grants are not enough to support PCH improvement and new blended instruments are needed, able to widen the risk-sharing financial facilities already existing under current financial frameworks such as the Juncker plan, InvestEU, etc. However, there is some reluctance to innovate financial instruments and to open up PCH to new funding schemes. The EIB can play its part by using the public budget to boost investments in culture, while also introducing a new business model based on technological innovation that can turn PCH into an economically sustainable and financially rewarding activity. This would enable banks to take on more risks and attract new investors. Public investment should serve as a multiplier, spilling over to the private

sector. While new instruments, such as French lotteries or crowdfunding, could be considered, the main challenge remains for the public sector to buckle down and draw private actors into investing in creative instruments and the Protection of Cultural Heritage.





CLOSING REMARKS AND TAKEAWAYS

Closing remarks by **Stefano Sannino**, Secretary General of the EEAS

Warm thanks to the panelists, to the organisers, the HU Permanent Representation, and Bálint Ódor, whose dedication has been a driving force behind this project in recent years. Allow me also to thank in particular professor Federica Olivares, our special advisor for public diplomacy, especially for her efforts in engaging the private sector in international cultural relations projects, and Gaia Danese, our international cultural relations and public diplomacy coordinator at the EEAS.

I cannot add much to what Mario has already said – we already have a number of instruments at our disposal. However, I still believe that we can push things a little bit further; there is huge potential in this area. This applies not only to cultural heritage but also more broadly to international cultural relations and public diplomacy. We've done quite a lot of work in some areas. Our colleague from DG INTPA was mentioning, for instance, the Team Europe spirit and the Team Europe approach as an asset in this field, but also all the potential of the Global Gateway strategy. I think that we do have problems in terms of channelling sufficient resources to cover the whole range of initiatives and actions that we would like to implement. That's why it is important to engage private sector stakeholders, as their expertise, knowledge, and understanding is extremely helpful. Furthermore, they tend to work much more in the reality they're rooted in, which is particularly true for foundations, as they are deeply focused on their local territory. If we can create an alliance, mechanism, or platform that enables the private sector to bring their knowledge, understanding, and expertise to the table, along with the the power they hold through their human resources and skills, we can make significant progress in the area of international cultural relations, with cultural heritage being a key component.

So, thank you very much. I think that we have a huge agenda in front of us, and we are very committed. Also, thanks to the work of the Hungarian Presidency, we've managed to create a framework in the horizontal Relex subgroup to move this file forward with the Member States. I am confident that during this presidency, and with those to follow, we will achieve highly relevant results. In the near future, I am confident that we will be able to confirm that we have made significant progress in advancing our common agenda from today.

Conclusions and takeaways from the Presidency

We need a more proactive, innovative approach to tackle crisis situations in the EU's immediate neighbourhood. For this purpose, we need to improve the implementation of Council Conclusions on the EU Approach to Cultural Heritage in conflicts and crises. When improving this important achievement, such as the 2021 Council Conclusions, we should put more emphasis on the economic, social, and environmental aspects related to the Protection of Cultural Heritage and, most importantly, ensure the active involvement of local communities and experts in PCH projects. To help these communities and civil societies, we propose the creation of a better coordination mechanism between stakeholders, Member States, and EU institutions, also taking into consideration the necessity to find synergies with the private sector in relation to PCH. In a broader context, we suggest carrying out a full-scale reflection on possible alternative financial instruments besides donorship and sponsorship to support PCH projects. Additionally, we propose considering Team Europe initiatives in the field of Protection of Cultural Heritage to implement more important projects and enhance the visibility of the EU.

I would like to thank my colleagues in the Permanent Representation for their dedication and tireless work. Without them, this conference would not have been possible. In particular, I would like to thank Mr. Lajos Rajczy, Senior Advisor, for his enthusiastic and professional efforts, both in advancing the Protection of Cultural Heritage initiative to this level and in his work on this conference.

Exhibition of ALPIH and Hungary Helps Agency

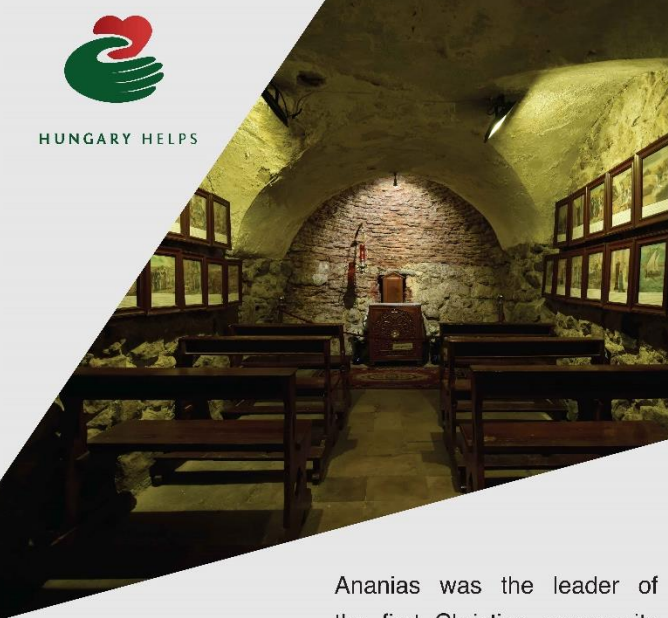
On the margins of the conference, two mobile exhibitions were set up in the patio of the venue to present the different projects of ALPIH and the Hungary Helps Agency. The exhibition was opened by Permanent Representative Bálint Ódor, as well as Péter Kovács, Director General, Hungary Helps Agency and Valéry Freland, Executive Director of ALIPH.

The Hungary Helps Agency exhibition emphasizes the organization's commitment to safeguarding cultural and religious heritage in areas impacted by conflict and crisis. A major focus is the preservation of Christian heritage, exemplified by projects like the rehabilitation of the Saint Ananias chapel in Damascus, a site of profound historical and spiritual significance. The chapel, preserved since the first century and associated with the Apostle Paul, has suffered due to the ongoing war. Hungary Helps supports the Syro-Hungarian Archaeological Mission in documenting and planning the site's restoration to stabilize the area and revitalize the local Christian community. Another prominent project is the reconstruction of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which serves as a symbol of reconciliation among Catholics, Muslims, and Orthodox Christians. Located in a UNESCO-protected area, the restoration includes structural stabilization and fresco preparation, contributing to both heritage preservation and interfaith harmony.

The Agency also prioritizes the restoration of medieval fortifications that hold cultural and historical importance for local communities. The Crac des Chevaliers in Syria, visited and supported by Hungarian King Andrew II in 1218, is a prime example. Severely damaged in the war, the site has been meticulously documented using advanced technologies such as AutoCAD and 3D modeling to support its restoration. Similarly, Margat Castle, another medieval fortress linked to King Andrew II, has undergone extensive research and preservation efforts since 2007. Hungary Helps supports the ongoing efforts to save the castle, which was further damaged by a 2023 earthquake. Additionally, the Mission's work extends to preserving unique medieval murals in these castles, using cutting-edge techniques to study and stabilize endangered wall paintings, thereby protecting these rare artistic treasures for future generations. These projects not only conserve historical landmarks but also foster tourism, education, and community engagement in the affected regions.



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The Ananias Project

in Damascus

Ananias was the leader of the first Christian community of Damascus, and he was the one who gave shelter and baptized Apostle Paul.

The ancient tradition preserved the location of the house which contains elements archaeologically datable to the first century. This early Christian site of utmost importance is a chapel guarded by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.

The recent war has taken a heavy toll on the population of the Christian quarter of Damascus and the saving and rehabilitation of the area around the house of Ananias has started with the support of the Hungary Helps Agency.

Experts of the Syro-Hungarian Archaeological Mission have been helping in the architectural documentation and the planning of the rehabilitation of the site.

The Crac des Chevaliers

The UNESCO World Heritage Crac des Chevaliers (Qal'at al-Husn) is one of the most important medieval fortifications in the world.

It has been visited by the Hungarian king Andrew II. who ordered a generous annuity for the site in 1218. The Crac is the most important monument and touristic attraction of the region that has the largest Christian population in Syria, but it has been badly damaged in the recent war.

The Syro-Hungarian Archaeological Mission of the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums of Syria and the Pázmány Péter Catholic University is conducting a damage assessment, archaeological and architectural documentation, and a rebuilding program of the site with the support of the Hungary Helps Agency.



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Cultural Heritage Protection

A significant part of the world's cultural heritage is religious in nature, or is owned and managed by religious actors (according to UNESCO, 20% of World Heritage sites are religious).

Religious elements are an integral part of each civilisation and national culture. This is even more significant in regions outside the EU and is particularly true in regions affected by conflict and crisis. The protection of cultural heritage aims to ensure the survival and strengthening of the human communities to which they are linked. This has a particular impact on the protection and development of religious cultural heritage.

An outstanding example of the Hungary Helps Programme's projects in the field of cultural heritage protection is the preservation of the Crac des Chevaliers knight's castle in Syria, the conservation and restoration of the centuries-old fortress, which serves to boost Christian culture and tourism.

Equally important is the reconstruction of the earthquake-stricken church of St Nicholas in Izmir and the restoration of the Benedictine monastery of St Benedict in Nurcia and the renovation of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Mostar, and the Saint Ananias quarter rehabilitation in Damascus.



Architectural Documentation

The Mission's architects conducted a detailed survey of the site and made a precise damage assessment. This was complemented with the first concise AutoCAD plan of the whole castle in which the scientific codification system for all the spaces was created.

The Mission undertook a 3D modelling of the castle using drone images too, which was supplemented by the detailed AutoCAD architectural drawing of the sections and plans. The geodetical base for these works was relying on the Syrian system.

Besides being essential for the planning of the reconstruction works and later developments, the state-of-the-art architectural documentation serves as an important base for the study on the construction history of the site too.



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The Castle of Margat

Margat castle (Qal'at al-Marqab) is one of the largest medieval castles of the Near East, which was also visited and sponsored by the Hungarian king Andrew II in 1218.

The Syro-Hungarian Archaeological Mission has been conducting a full-scale research and documentation program since 2007 which comprises the fields of archaeology, architecture, medieval wall paintings, anthropology, archaeozoology and geology amongst others. The Mission has provided opportunity for hundreds of participants from various countries, both as a research or training field for experts and students alike or a working place for the local inhabitants of the region.

The earthquake of 2023 has resulted in serious destruction of several unique buildings which are on the verge of collapse. Its saving is of utmost importance.



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Serbian Orthodox Church

in Mostar

Renovation of the Holy Trinity Cathedral

The renovation of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Mostar contributes to the renewal of the mutual reconciliation between Catholics, Muslims and the Orthodox Churches in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The building has been a national monument since 2004. The monument complex is located in a UNESCO-protected area of the Old Town.

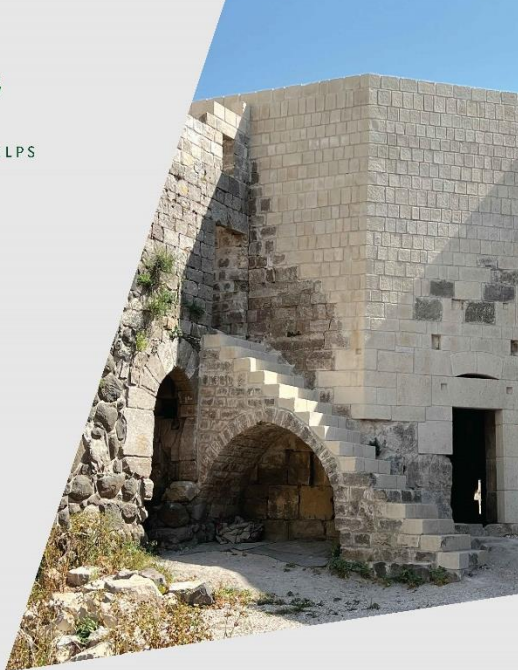
The first renovation work of the building began in 2005. As part of the restoration works of the Hungary Helps Program, the stone plinth, the plaster for the frescoes, the entrance and the retaining wall was built.



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The Reconstruction Works

After a thorough survey and documentation of all the war damages, the most affected and instable buildings have been selected for the first phase of the reconstruction.

Rebuilding the destroyed northern façade of the Baybars tower saved one of the most outstanding examples of medieval Muslim military architecture; reconstructing the northern wall of the main stable stabilized the largest medieval building of its kind; rehabilitation of the church/mosque created a potential space for cultural events..

This together with several lesser repairs provided work for dozens of local colleagues and inhabitants of the region. Christians and Muslims work together in the Crac to save an important heritage of humanity and the base of tourism of the region.

Work of the Students

Syro-Hungarian Archaeological Mission also works as a training school for students interested in research and learning the use of the most up-to-date technologies.

Dozens of Syrian and Hungarian students work with the mission on various subjects including the study of the fine sculpture, ceramic research, medieval wall painting research or the study of lapidary marks.

Many of them are making their MA or PhD theses on the research done in the framework of the Mission.

With the help of the Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship a number of these Syrian students are continuing their higher education in the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University to contribute to the reconstruction of their country.



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Emergency stabilization of monuments and sites in Odessa

Stabilisation d'urgence de monuments et de sites à Odessa



Implementing partner / *Opérateur*: Museum for Change

Deploying heritage ambulances to conduct emergency restoration of artworks

Création des ambulances du patrimoine pour restaurer en urgence des oeuvres d'art



Implementing partner / *Opérateur*: National Research Restoration Center of Ukraine

Protecting Palestinian heritage

Protection du patrimoine palestinien



Implementing partners / *Opérateurs*:
Première Urgence Internationale, Palestinian Museum, and RIVMOQ

The ALIPH roll-up exhibition in Brussels showcases the organization's extensive efforts in safeguarding cultural heritage in conflict and post-crisis zones worldwide. Since its establishment in 2017, ALIPH has supported 450 projects across 35 countries, demonstrating agility in responding to emergencies.

Notable examples include the emergency stabilization of monuments in Odessa, Ukraine, and the deployment of "heritage ambulances" to restore artworks at risk of destruction. In Gaza, the organization collaborates with local partners to protect cultural heritage, and in Lebanon, ALIPH has been instrumental in restoring Beirut's heritage following the 2020 explosion. Each initiative highlights the organization's commitment to working with local communities and leveraging innovative technologies, such as 3D documentation used for cultural preservation in Armenia.



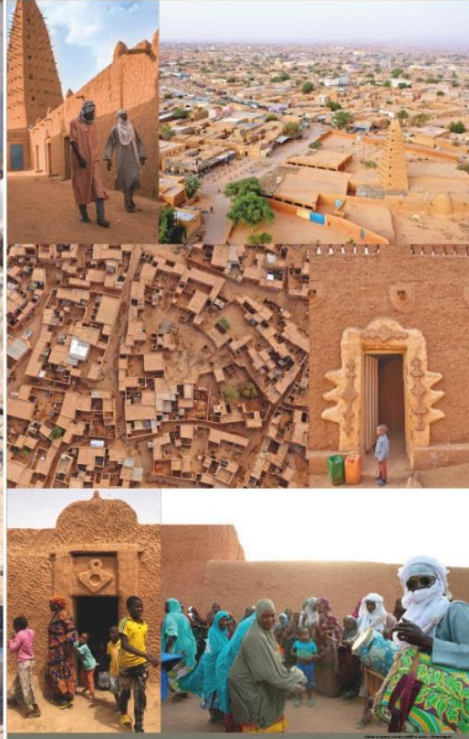
Emergency protection of cultural heritage in Gaza
Protection d'urgence du patrimoine de Gaza



Implementing partners / *Opérateurs*:
 Mayasem Association for Culture and Arts, Al Qarara Museum, and Palestinian Museum



Preserving the earthen architecture of the Old City of Agadez
Préserver l'architecture de terre de la vieille ville d'Agadez



Implementing partners / *Opérateurs*:
 Imhane Atiaouh in cooperation with the Planning Committee of the Old City of Agadez



Restoring Beirut's heritage following the 2020 blast
Restaurer le patrimoine de Beyrouth après l'explosion de 2020



Implementing partners / *Opérateurs*: Directorate General of Antiquities of Lebanon in partnership with local and international NGOs, and cultural, educational and religious institutions

ALIPH's global reach extends to iconic heritage sites in diverse regions. In Niger, the organization is preserving the earthen architecture of Agadez's Old City, a testament to local craftsmanship and culture. Similarly, in Yemen, ALIPH is restoring the Old City of Shibam, ensuring the survival of traditional architecture and crafts. Efforts in Iraq focus on rehabilitating the Al Masfi Mosque in Mosul, combining local expertise with international collaboration. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, the Buddhist-era heritage at Mes Aynak is safeguarded through partnerships with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. These projects not only protect heritage but also foster sustainable development and peace, underscoring ALIPH's role as a vital actor in the field of cultural heritage preservation.

Restoring the heritage in the Old City of Shibam

Restauration du patrimoine de la vieille ville de Shibam

Implementing partners / Opérateurs :
 Arab Regional Center for World Heritage, Petra National Trust, Heritage Management Organization,
 Association for the Study of Man, and Association for Traditional Handicrafts in Shibam,
 in collaboration with the General Organization for Preservation of the Historic Cities of Yemen
 (GOHCCY)

Restoring the Al Masfi Mosque in Mosul

Réhabilitation de la mosquée Al Masfi à Mossoul

Implementing partners / Opérateurs :
 La Grande École Française de Bagdad, in cooperation with the Iraqi State Board of
 Antiquities and Heritage (ISBAH), the Société Vinci, the Institut National du
 Patrimoine (INP-France) and Ecole de Chaillet

Protecting Buddhist-era heritage at Mes Aynak

Protéger le patrimoine bouddhique de Mes Aynak

Implementing partners / Opérateurs : Aga Khan Trust for Culture, in cooperation
 with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Monuments of Afghanistan

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PROTECTION OF **CULTURAL HERITAGE** CONFERENCE 2024

A NEW TOOL IN THE EU EXTERNAL POLICY TOOLBOX

