

PROCULTHER-NET

Protecting Cultural Heritage from the Consequences of Disasters-Network

the newsletter

Union
Civil Protection
Knowledge Network



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PROCULTHER-NET 2
PROTECTING CULTURAL HERITAGE
FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISASTERS - NETWORK



PROCULTHER-NET 2 is co-funded by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - **DG-ECHO** under the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism - **UCPM**, and implemented by a Consortium led by the Italian Civil Protection Department (**Italy**) in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior-Disaster and Emergency Management Authority - **AFAD (Türkiye)**, the German Archaeological Institute - **DAI (Germany)**, the Ministère de l'Intérieur - Direction Générale de la Sécurité Civile et de la Gestion des Crises (**France**), the Fondazione Hallgarten - Franchetti Centro Studi Villa Montesca, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Region Government of Castilla y León (**Spain**), the Federal Agency for Technical Relief - **THW (Germany)**, the University of Porto - **UPORTO (Portugal)** and the Suor Orsola Benincasa University - **UNISOB (Italy)**. Building on the experience and lessons learnt by the previous PROCULTHER EU-funded initiatives implemented under the framework of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network-**UCPKN**, **PROCULTHER-NET 2, running from January 2024 to December 2025 aims** at implementing the pathway mapped out by the PROCULTHER-NET project to consolidate the **inclusion of the protection of cultural heritage at risk in the UCPM processes and structures**, so as to increase disaster preparedness capacities and knowledge at European and national levels.

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BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

Building the PROCULTHER-NET Community: Croatian and Turkish experts in Italy

The Italian National Civil Protection Service hosts delegations from Croatia and Türkiye to reinforce the PROCULTHER-NET community.

As part of the study visits foreseen under PROCULTHER-NET, Italy hosted a delegation of experts in the management and protection of cultural heritage in emergency situations from Croatia, and disaster risk managers from Türkiye, who were eager to learn the Italian inter-institutional coordination practices, as well as the securing and restoration techniques for damaged heritage.

From 19 to 21 March, the Italian Civil Protection Department, leading the [PROCULTHER - NET 2](#) Consortium, welcomed a delegation from the Croatian Ministry of the Interior - Civil Protection Directorate and the Ministry of Culture and Media while on 20 and 21 May, it hosted disaster risk management experts from the Turkish Ministry of Interior-Disaster and Emergency Management Authority - AFAD, for an exchange on how to reinforce the protection of cultural heritage at risk.



An example of material distributed to experts © DPC

The delegations were interested in learning more about the operation and functioning of the Italian National Civil Protection Service, whose effectiveness is based on the interdisciplinary cooperation among the main actors involved in the management of cultural heritage, both in ordinary time and crisis.

The first part of the visits started with an introduction to the key Italian stakeholders involved in preserving cultural heritage at risk: the Civil Protection Department, as the institution having the mandate of coordination of all actors deployed in the field in case of emergency, the Ministry of Culture, the National Fire and Rescue Service, the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, and the Italian Army, who explained their respective roles, the activities carried out, and the procedures applied in emergencies. In addition, the delegations visited the *Sala Situazione Italia* at the Headquarters of the Italian Civil Protection Department, the operational room from where all Ministries, institutions and specialised agencies and organisations work together to monitor the activities on the ground and to coordinate interventions in the field in case the management of a disaster should require a national response.

After this introduction the objectives of the two visits diverged as they were tailored according to the countries' particular needs :while Croatia experienced the support offered by the Italian Ministry of Culture in the aftermath of the earthquake that affected the Balkan country in 2020 and followed proactively [PROCULTHER](#)(2019-2021) and [PROCULTHER - NET](#) (2022-2023) activities, Türkiye has been a long term collaborator in this field since the two countries began the PROCULTHER adventure together and this fruitful partnership is still ongoing with [PROCULTHER - NET 2](#) (2024-2025).



The Croatian delegation at the DPC HQs © DPC

For these reasons, exchanges with Croatian experts also focused on cultural heritage protection training programmes carried out by the National Civil Protection Service, and on the regulatory and organisational framework for the management of civil protection volunteers trained to support intervention on the field during emergencies.

Moreover, the Croatian study visit continued at the Ministry of Culture, where the experts were informed on Italy's guidelines for securing damaged or disaster-prone cultural heritage developed by the Ministry's General Directorate for Cultural Heritage Security, the management of temporary storage facilities, and techniques for the selection and transfer of debris of cultural interest. The exchange reached its conclusion in Umbria where, in collaboration with the Superintendence in charge of archaeology, fine arts, and landscape, the regional Civil Protection and the Archdiocese of Spoleto-Norcia, the delegation visited a few symbolic sites of the emergency management and post-earthquake reconstruction of central Italy in 2016, such as the building sites for the reconstruction of the Basilica of Saint Benedict in Norcia and the Abbey of Sant'Eutizio in Preci (PG) and the Santo Chiodo deposit in Spoleto (PG).

On the other hand, experts from Türkiye were introduced to the management procedures of activities related to the safeguarding and protection of cultural heritage, according to the Directive by the Italian Ministry of Culture of April 2015. At the end of the visit, the delegation travelled to Tuscany with experts from the Italian Civil Protection Department and the Ministry of Culture who accompanied it to the cultural heritage sites severely damaged by the historic flooding of Florence of 1966. They first went to the National Library, where they learnt the most cutting-edge restoration techniques for

books and archives used in Italy, before moving on to the Basilica of Santa Croce, which houses two of the most severely affected art works by the 1966 flood: the Crucifix by Cimabue (c.1263) and Vasari's Last Supper (1546-1547), the latter nowadays protected from flood risk by a complex lifting system that uses ancient methods based on pulley counterweights.



The Turkish delegation at the DPC HQs @ DPC

Knowledge transfer during study visits is never unidirectional, in fact it is through these exchange activities that experts from the hosting country belonging to both sectors can in turn learn about the initiatives implemented by others in the same field and thanks to which it is possible to build synergies between projects having similar objectives or partially addressing the same issues.

This undoubtedly is PROCULTHER-NET's strong point which leverages precisely on bridging civil protection and cultural heritage experts and institutions for the reinforcement of the thematic community dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage at risk within the UCPKN.

PROCULTHER-NET knowledge transfer and exchange: Croatian visit to France

Fruitful exchanges between experts on heritage protection practices in France.

Author: Marie Courselaud, Preventive Collections Care and Conservation Officer at the Center for Research and Restoration for French Museums (C2RMF) and President of French Blue Shield

As part of the international exchanges promoted by PROCULTHER-NET, a Croatian delegation, made up of 2 experts from the Civil Protection Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior and 3 curators from the Ministry of Culture and Media, visited France from 8 to 10 April to meet the French key stakeholders involved in cultural heritage protection and rescue.



Visit of the Croatian delegation to the C2RMF © Isabelle Hilaire/DCIS/Mol

A series of emblematic meetings and visits scheduled by the Ministry of Interior of France, allowed for a fruitful exchange between the French experts involved in cultural heritage protection and the Croatian delegation.

The delegation visited the National Centre for Research and Restoration for French Museums - C2RMF to discover the work carried out at national level concerning the implementation of safeguarding plans, and the activities of the French Blue Shield, particularly focused on the operational side. It was also an opportunity to meet the centre's professionals, namely experts belonging to the restoration sector.

Then, the one-week tour continued to the Oise Departmental Fire and Rescue Service, which presented the activities of its cultural heritage mission and shared its views on the necessary collaboration between emergency services and culture. A number of subjects were tackled, including digital tools to support fire fighters while operating in emergency, and a discussion with the heritage expert provided an opportunity to review the role of these professionals within fire-fighting units, particularly concerning the handling of art works and CH assets during evacuation. The Croatian delegation members were also able to present their project: "Mitigating fire risk in the historic city of Trogir".

The delegation then went to the Yvelines Departmental Fire and Rescue Service to discuss the role of firefighters in the development of a safeguarding plan module in collaboration with curators and C2RMF. This was also an opportunity to discover the equipment specifically dedicated to the safeguarding of assets and their sharing in terms of operational coordination. Finally, the Versailles Palace safeguarding plan was illustrated, providing an opportunity to discuss the operational strategy defined for this prestigious site.

PROCULTHER-NET at the UNIBO for cultural heritage resilience

PROCULTHER-NET met local stakeholders to discuss sustainability and resilience for Cultural Heritage protection organized by the University of Bologna.

Local communities and academia are key actors in building community resilience, particularly in the field of cultural heritage at risk. This event, organised by UNIBO, was a great opportunity for PROCULTHER-NET to get a local perspective on approaches and operational elements and promote the involvement of the community's local actors in the protection of cultural heritage at risk within the UCPKN.

PROCULTHER-NET contributed to the day entitled "Cultural Heritage, sustainability and resilience: from risk management to territorial development"¹ organized in Ravenna on 28 June 2024, by the Department of Cultural Heritage - Alma Mater Studiorum of the University of Bologna - UNIBO.



Event banner © UNIBO

The meeting was designed to share with local actors the preparedness and response capacities that local territories can offer, also on the basis of the lessons learned from the floods that hit the Emilia-Romagna region last year, and the activities carried out by the academic world in the field of cultural heritage protection, in particular [RESTART](#)- "RESilience and Territorial Development - Heritage at Risk and Protection" and [SIRIUS](#)- "Strategies for the management of cultural heritage at risk", two projects carried out by UNIBO.

The event opened with a tripartite welcoming from the UNIBO Directions and Departments contributing to these initiatives, and continued with an introduction by the representatives of the institutions responsible for cultural heritage and emergencies management at a local and regional level and from the peripheral institutions of the Italian Ministry of Culture.

The floor was then passed to other actors involved in cultural heritage protection at a local level and participate in the management of emergencies: the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Bologna Unit) and the Regional Fire Brigade Directorate of Emilia - Romagna. Afterwards, the meeting gave space to the presentation of some of the European projects for CH protection involving Italy. In addition to the PROCULTHER initiatives, represented by Project manager Tiziana Vicario, other initiatives in line with the topic were illustrated: CHANGES-National Recovery and Resilience Plan, [INTERREG INACO -CNR-ISAC](#), [Creative Europe CHARISMA](#) and [SOS HERITAGE](#).

The afternoon session then focused on the two projects carried out by the Cultural Heritage Department of the University of Bologna, promoter of the day and with which PROCULTHER-NET

¹ Original title "Patrimonio culturale, sostenibilità e resilienza: dalla gestione dei rischi allo sviluppo territoriale"

has strong synergies: Sara Fiorentino spoke about SIRIUS - “Strategies for the management of cultural heritage at risk” while Mariangela Vandini shared the objectives and results expected from RESTART – “RESilience and Territorial Development - heritage at risk and protection”.²

SIRIUS aims at creating a direct impact on the territory and for this reason, it has implemented a long-lasting collaboration with local institutions and peripheral institutions of the Italian Ministry of Culture. Since January 2024, project activities have been further strengthened by another initiative: the RESTART project, financed by UNIBO in the framework of [Alma CaReS - Climate change, resilience and sustainability](#) following the severe floods that hit the region in May 2023. Its objective being to encourage the sharing of operational criteria and the dissemination of knowledge on the protection and management of cultural heritage at risk in civil society and among local actors. The project, which involves various departments of the University operates in two specific areas: the consolidation of the structured exchange of competences and operational criteria and awareness raising on the contribution to resilience provided by cultural heritage protection.

During the meeting, Vicario shared the approach and the phases that marked the activities leading from PROCULTHER to PROCULTHER-NET; she introduced the participants to the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and the initiatives it promotes in the field of cultural heritage at risk. She finally invited the experts to become an active part of the thematic community dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage at risk within the UCPKN, for example by proposing contributions for the next issues of the [PROCULTHER-NET technical bulletins](#).³

As recently noted on the occasion of high-level international fora, such as the project’s participation in the [celebrations of the Hague Convention’s 70th Anniversary](#) and the [8th EUCP Forum](#), both academic knowledge in the field of cultural heritage at risk and the research findings covering all phases of disaster management can fuel the debate on the next approaches to adopt to improve the preparedness and response capacities of CH protection and disaster risk management experts. In addition, through structured knowledge transfer processes, it can contribute to provide experts with useful elements for developing common standards of intervention, also in the face of new challenges represented by climate change or complex crises.

The event continued with interventions by academics and local representatives of the Ministry of Culture who took stock of public participation, the competences available for training, and of the activities for the implementation of localised strategies for flood risk mitigation, and concluded with lessons learned on the warning system and provincial plans one year after the flood that hit the Emilia-Romagna Region.

Thanks to the Project this profitable exchange provided the opportunity to expand the interdisciplinary network of local experts so as to enhance its capacity to scale-up valuable elements and further enrich the methodological approach proposed by PROCULTHER-NET.

² For more information: S. Fiorentino, T. Chinni, M. Cornaglia, A. Iannucci, M. Vandini “From data interrelationships to capacity building and public awareness: the instance of Ravenna (Italy) and project SIRIUS - management strategies for cultural heritage at risk”, pp 18-27. [PROCULTHER-NET 2 Project. Technical Bulletin N. 3, July 2024](#).

³ See <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/news/3rd-issue-proculther-net-technical-bulletin-out>

TOOLS AND TRAININGS

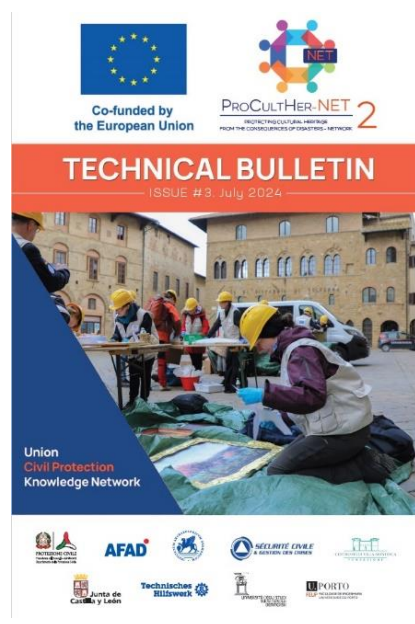
3rd Issue of the PROCULTHER-NET Technical Bulletin is out!

A must-read that pools together interdisciplinary knowledge for the inclusion of cultural heritage protection in all disaster risk management phases.

The third issue of the PROCULTHER-NET Technical Bulletin published in July 2024 shares a selection of articles written by experts belonging to disaster risk management and cultural heritage authorities, Ministries, museums, universities, specialised institutes and research projects.

Following the success of the two PROCULTHER-NET Technical Bulletins - published in [March](#) and [June](#) 2023, in April 2024, the PROCULTHER-NET 2 project launched through the members of the UCPKN Board a call for contributions for the next editions of this publication. The objective of the technical bulletin is to facilitate the collection, sharing and integration of knowledge, and the advancement of preparedness capacities at European and national level, encouraging cooperation both within and among several organisations and sectors of reference.

This [3rd issue of the Technical Bulletin of July 2024](#) is introduced by a Foreword signed by Fabrizio Curcio, Head of the Italian Civil Protection Department,⁴ and coordinator of the PROCULTHER-NET project. The ten contributions featured were written by a variety of experts belonging to disaster risk management and cultural heritage authorities, Ministries, museums, universities, specialised institutes and research projects active in the field, coming from the Partner countries as well as from UCPM states, such as Hungary and Slovakia. The articles cover all phases of disaster risk management: this particular issue opens with two contributions dedicated to **PREVENTION**, providing information on risk assessment tools, while the **PREPAREDNESS** section illustrates several examples of efficient risk management and organizational strategies. The **RESPONSE** section presents two articles on fire and its impact on



Cover of the 3rd issue @LuoghInteriori

movable and immovable heritage while the section on **RECOVERY** concentrates more on the readers' participation by encouraging them to learn more on the recovery of movable assets.

The publication concludes with a special section - **FOCUS ON**- that presents the state-of-the-art and explores the cross-cutting issues regarding cultural heritage protection. In particular, this number includes two contributions: the first one addresses the vast subject of debris management in a cultural heritage setting, and the second one deals with the integration of cultural heritage in virtual reality tools and their application to increase preparedness and emergency capacities based on the findings of the report [Feasibility study for the conception of CH focused virtual reality and learning tools to be integrated into the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network](#) elaborated in 2023 by PROCULTHER-NET.

⁴ As of 25 July 2024, the Head of the Italian Civil Protection Department is Fabio Ciciliano

There is always time to contribute to the growth of the thematic community proposed by PROCULTHER-NET and to intensify the knowledge transfer processes it promotes; experts from UCPM countries wishing to share good practices or approaches relevant to the protection of cultural heritage at risk can contact their National Civil Protection Authority to apply for the next issues.

Click on the titles to access the [call for contributions](#) and the [template](#) to follow to prepare the concept note for the pre-selection of the articles to be published in the 4th issue of December 2024.

Don't miss the next December issue and continue to follow *#ProcultherNet* to find out how to actively participate in the thematic community within the UCPKN!

[Download the PROCULTHER-NET Technical Bulletin N. 3, July 2024](#)

Virtual reality to support the protection of cultural heritage at risk

What is the potential of virtual reality for cultural heritage protection purposes? Findings from the EU-funded PROCULTHER-NET project.



VR for Cultural Heritage

QR code to access the study

An article shared in the third issue of the PROCULTHER-NET Technical Bulletin reports the findings from a study, elaborated within the project in 2023. It aimed to assist the learning process within the UCPKN, by defining technical and conceptual elements needed for adequate integration of cultural heritage scenarios within existing or underway virtual reality tools.

PROCULTHER-NET provided a formidable space for capturing a multi-disciplinary perspective about the possibilities offered by the extended reality technologies to ensure a people-centred design of specific and effective technical systems in support of the shared purpose of disaster and risk management of cultural heritage. The article “Resorting to virtual reality for cultural heritage purposes: findings from the EU-funded PROCULTHER-NET project” recently published in the [3rd PROCULTHER-NET Technical Bulletin](#) addresses the issue of better integration of cultural heritage in virtual reality tools and their application in sectors such as documentation, planning, training and restoration, based from the findings of the report [Feasibility Study for the conception of CH focused virtual reality and learning tools to be integrated into the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network](#) elaborated by PROCULTHER-NET in 2023.

This contribution summarises the elements provided by this study in bridging the gap that currently exists in virtual capacity building processes where cultural heritage protection is not yet completely addressed.

The study derived from the principles and elements gathered to elaborate two other important documents on which the PROCULTHER initiatives are based the PROCULTHER-NET [Ex-Ante Feasibility Study on the Establishment of a Thematic Community](#) (2022) that provided for context, needs and capacities available at the European level in the specific field of cultural heritage protection as well as the [Key Elements of a European Methodology to Address the Protection of Cultural Heritage during Emergencies](#) (2020), the PROCULTHER document sharing a set of elements for the inclusion of the protection of cultural heritage at risk in all disaster risk management processes.

For the elaboration of this feasibility study on virtual reality of 2023, the project carried out an analysis of the existing knowledge and available technological developments in the field, particularly the work done by the Training Centre Network on 3D and the VR-[TRACENET project](#) that clarified the current status of virtual reality tools within the UCPM framework.

Although with its current limitations and challenges for its sustainability, virtual reality can be useful to create immersive simulations of cultural heritage sites, with multiple purposes both for tangible and intangible heritage, in peace time and emergencies: from the documentation in support of disaster planning, restoration, and education, to the elaboration of safeguarding plans for cultural heritage, from the evaluation of the actions to be tested during field exercises with cultural heritage scenarios, to the safety of cultural heritage experts and emergency responders during trainings and real interventions.

Recognising the great potential of new technologies and virtual reality in safeguarding cultural heritage, there is an increasing urgency to strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation and invest resources in this field, which can find in PROCULTHER-NET a space for discussion and in the UCPKN a useful platform for sharing tools and solutions to improve interoperability between the different actors engaged, in peacetime or in emergencies, in the protection of heritage at risk.

To learn more about the results of the study, interested experts can read the article published in the [3rd issue of the PROCULTHER-NET Technical Bulletin](#) or download the [full report](#).

The training activities of the Blue Helmets of Culture in Latin America

The commitment of the Blue Helmets of Culture to support the creation of a task force for the protection of cultural heritage in Latin America.

Experts from the institutions in charge of the disaster risk and cultural heritage management in Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Paraguay involved in a training for the creation of a task force for the protection of cultural heritage, organised by ILLA, the Ministry of Culture and the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Family photo @ Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage

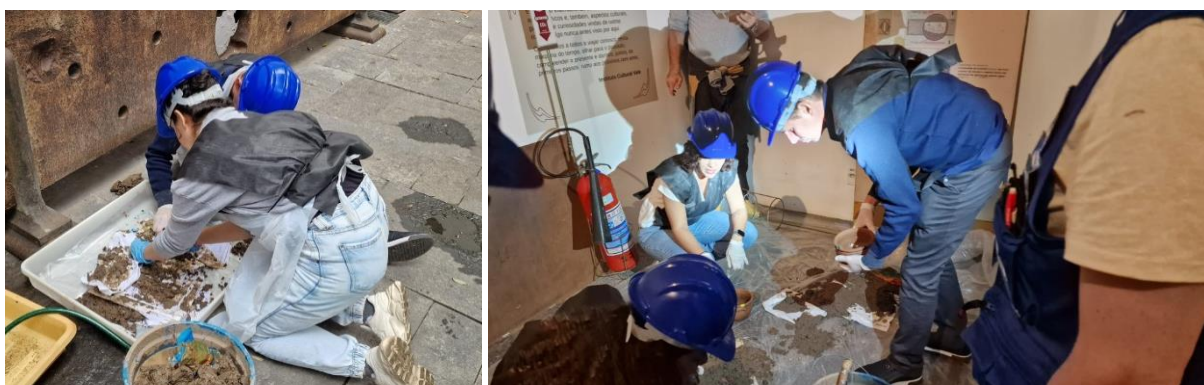
From 24 June to 2 July 2024, the International Italo-Latin American Organisation- ILLA, has organised the Second edition of the course “The Blue Helmets of Culture” in Rio de Janeiro. This training is funded by the General Directorate for Cooperation and Development of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (DGCS-MAECI), and implemented in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Culture (MiC), the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (TPC), together with, on the Brazilian side, the Ministry of External Relations, the Ministry of Culture, the Centre Lucio Costa, the National Institute for Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN), the Sistema Brasileiro de Museus - SBM, the Instituto Brasileiro de Museus (IBRAM), the Instituto Guimarães Rosa, the Federal Police and INTERPOL.

The course was aimed at sharing experiences and best practices for the possible creation of the “Blue Helmets of Culture” with an interdisciplinary audience of professionals representing the different institutions engaged in the management of cultural heritage in Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Paraguay: personnel from the Ministry of Culture - including restorers and architects -, experts from the Army and Police Forces, from the specialised units for the fight against the illicit

traffic of cultural heritage, civil protection operators, firefighters and members from the commission of clerical assets management.

The around 55 trainees were welcomed by a video message by high-level representatives from the main organising institutions: Ms Antonella Cavallari, General Secretary of IILA, Mr Mario Turetta, General Secretary of the MiC and from Gen. D. Francesco Gargaro, from Commander of the Carabinieri-TPC. The opening ceremony concluded with speakers from the main Brazilian co-organizers: Claudia Feierabend Baeta Leal, Director of the Centre Lucio Costa, Daniella Xavier, Itamaraty - Rio de Janeiro, Massimiliano Iacchini, Consul General of Italy in Rio de Janeiro, and Claudia Saldanha, Director of the Centro Cultural do Patrimônio Paço Imperial.

After, course participants were introduced to the theme with theoretical sessions on the tools available for the risk assessment and management, and then focused on the mandate, role and organisational structure of the Italian Blue Helmets of Culture for the possible replication of this model in their Countries. After, the trainees presented their respective national systems for risk and cultural heritage management and shared case studies on real interventions.



Outdoor and indoor practical activities © Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage

Finally, a field exercise enabled participants to move on to practice with the setting up and organisation of temporary storages, the cataloguing, the transport and recovery of cultural assets, their management and securing.

The training course concluded with a proactive exchange between the competent authorities who developed a first draft of shared procedures for the implementation of the Blue Helmets of Culture within the framework of the regulations in force in each country.

Beyond the actual establishment of these specialized teams inspired by the Italian Blue Helmets of Culture which must certainly be adapted to the different organizational structures and national regulatory frameworks, such capacity building activities encourage the dialogue between sectors and facilitate the transfer of knowledge among experts that can have positive effects on the inclusion of cultural heritage in disaster risk management and community resilience.

[IILA Course page](#)

Recruitment and training of volunteers for KulturGutRetter's pilot phase

More than 100 volunteers from across Germany have started training to join the Cultural Heritage Response Unit powered by the KulturGutRetter project.

Authors: Constance Domenech de Cellès, Research Associate and Eva Götting-Martin, Communications Officer, German Archaeological Institute

From May 2024, the German Archaeological Institute, the Federal Agency for Technical Relief and the Leibniz Centre for Archaeology - partners of the KulturGutRetter project - offer an interesting capacity-building proposal combining online training and practical exercises aimed at volunteers willing to join a pool of experts to provide an emergency response to cultural heritage at risk.

In March 2024, the [KulturGutRetter](#) project launched its first call for volunteers, to recruit cultural heritage professionals in Germany who are willing to join a pool of experts to provide emergency response to cultural heritage at risk. Under the direction of the [Federal Agency for Technical Relief](#) (THW), the Cultural Heritage Response Unit (CHRU) will be deployed to disaster sites at the request of an affected country, immediately after the life-saving phase, to protect damaged or threatened tangible cultural heritage from further destruction.



KulturGutRetter Training © Eva Götting-Martin/ DAI

Nearly 200 specialists in cultural heritage assessment, documentation, conservation, salvage and IT attended one of the two online information sessions organized by the three project partners - the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW) and the [Leibniz Centre for Archaeology](#) (LEIZA).

Of the volunteers who applied, more than 100 were selected to take part in the training in 2024, together with civil protection experts from the THW. The online training started in May 2024, using the [iDAI.tutorials](#) learning platform. The e-learning content developed by the DAI enables professionals from the fields of conservation, architecture, building research, crafts, archaeology and IT to familiarize themselves with the equipment, standards and workflows of the CHRU.

During a hands-on training session at the end of June, the cultural heritage and civil protection volunteers will be trained on topics such as the installation and use of the mobile emergency conservation laboratory, the handling of operational hardware and software, as well as standard procedures. The training will be led by professionals from DAI and LEIZA as well as staff from THW and will be hosted in one of THW's logistics centres, where the CHRU-equipment is located, in order to be able to deploy quickly in future.

This training phase will culminate in September 2024 with a national full-scale exercise involving a fictional disaster scenario where volunteers will be prepared for their first deployment. From next year, more cultural heritage volunteers will be able to apply to strengthen the growing pool of volunteers. Application for volunteers from the civil protection sector can be made throughout the year to the local sections (Ortsverbände) of the THW.

The aim of this training phase is to ensure that the CHRU is operational in 2025. In future the module will be embedded in the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), and therefore could contribute to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage worldwide. The project is supported by the Federal Foreign Office and the German Bundestag.

CULTURAL HERITAGE ISSUES AT THE 8th EUCP FORUM

Risk reduction strategies in cultural heritage: what next?

At the 8th EUCP Forum a session on risk reduction in the cultural heritage sector took stock of the results achieved and paved the way for the future.



Snapshot of the session © UCPKN

On 5 June the Forum gave voice to a debate on risk reduction strategies in cultural heritage organized by PROCULTHER-NET and AFAD (Türkiye), to exchange global, national and European perspectives, experiences and research-based approaches. Here below are the main outcomes of a dedicated session attended by some 100 experts invited to explore the multiple facets of this critical issue.

In the wake of the slogan “*Shaping a disaster-resilient Union: charting a path for the future of European civil protection- Charting a path for the future of European civil protection*”, the 8th European Civil Protection Forum has dedicated a panel discussion on “Risk reduction strategies in cultural heritage”.

On 5 June 2024, around 100 experts attended this event organised by the PROCULTHER-NET 2 project and AFAD (Türkiye) to provide the Union Civil Protection Mechanism’s participating states and the stakeholders in this field with a space for discussion, and find elements to face the challenges posed by emerging risks so as to further boost the development of this sector both at global and European levels.

Giovanni De Siervo, Project Director of PROCULTHER-NET, from the Italian Civil Protection Department, opened the meeting as session moderator. Prominent speakers coming from UNESCO Europe, the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture - DG EAC, AFAD (Türkiye) and the University College London ensured a multidisciplinary perspective while stressing the importance of strengthening the protection of cultural heritage at risk.

During the discussion the importance of fostering dialogue among various organizations and institutions involved in cultural heritage protection emerged as a crucial element to increase technical and operational capacities in this field. The PROCULTHER document “[Key Elements of a European Methodology to Address the Protection of Cultural Heritage during Emergencies](#)” was quoted by the speakers as a first knowledge base for UCPM participating states on which to continue building a common European approach.

The first panellist, Louise Haxthausen, UNESCO Representative to the European Union, stressed the importance of the interdisciplinary and interagency collaboration among the various

organisations and institutions involved, to support the paradigm shift initiated within the UCPM for a better protection of cultural heritage in all disaster risk management phases. The strategic actions promoted by both European and global actors could facilitate the establishment of a sustainable governance for the protection of cultural heritage at risk.

“Cultural heritage and disaster risk management experts -these two worlds- must work together in preparedness not only during emergencies.”

Louise Haxthausen, UNESCO Representative to the EU

The next speaker, Stefan Zotti, Team leader for cultural heritage at the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture - DG EAC, introduced the work carried out by the European Commission to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration among the different agencies involved in cultural heritage protection during emergencies. He added that by working together, it is possible to define standard procedures allowing to optimize resources and efforts to achieve the common objective of improving technical and operational capacities to better protect cultural heritage and the communities that cherish it.

Furthermore, Zotti presented the training courses foreseen by DG-EAC on the topic of disaster risk management and cultural heritage that will add further capacity building opportunities for experts from both sides in addition to the training programme currently planned by PROCULTHER-NET for the year 2025.

“Volunteers must be trained and their role in emergency clearly defined”

Burcu Deniz, Geological Engineer - AFAD

The third panellist, Burcu Ertaş Deniz, Geological Engineer from the Turkish Ministry of Interior - AFAD, shared the perspective from a DG-ECHO funded project implemented in Türkiye to define risk reduction

procedures for cultural heritage at local and national level. The audience was very interested in the lessons learnt from the earthquake that struck Kahramanmaraş province in February 2023. The response to this great emergency represents a turning point in the country’s approach to risk management and preparedness because it confirmed that, to better protect cultural heritage, it is essential to strengthen intersectoral collaboration between agencies and institutions, which also involves the coordination of the various actors engaged, including volunteers that must be trained before their deployment in the field.

With a view to a renewed collaboration with the academic world, the last panellist, Dr Yasemin D. Aktas, Deputy Director at the UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings, University College London-UCL, completed the picture by providing the session with the technical approach of research, clarifying the potential contribution that knowledge holders can make to the elaboration of risk reduction strategies for cultural heritage. Resilience is a system issue that requires the understanding of multiple factors, therefore Dr Aktas outlined how a research-based approach can be effectively taken into account in the further development of the shared standards and common language proposed by PROCULTHER. In particular, she explained how research findings

can impact the disaster risk management community so as to ensure their value also from an academic point of view.

Learning from the successes achieved in the past years, the main challenge is promoting cross-sectoral cooperation and dialogue among disaster risk managers, cultural heritage professionals, and knowledge holders, such as those from academia, to develop a common language and methodology. This methodology should be simple, replicable, and applicable when disasters impact cultural heritage and the related community.

“Any protocol should be flexible enough to be representative in many situations or contexts”

Yasemin Aktas, Deputy Director at the UCL

In an attempt to draw some conclusions from the key points that emerged from the debate, Mr De Siervo added that recognizing the protection of cultural heritage at risk as a civil protection sector is a significant milestone.

Now that a strong and effective bridge between the cultural heritage and the disaster risk management fields has been established, it's time to apply and test this common methodology during emergencies, while also focusing on preparedness. New and stronger threats to cultural heritage and communities, such as climate change-induced disasters, require stronger dialogue and cooperation between experts from both sectors. Academia can also make a significant contribution to the implementation of mitigation procedures and standards, thanks to in-depth analysis of risk scenarios, for example. Universities and research centres also play an important role in raising awareness among new generations.

“If we want to contrast the increasing risks that we are experiencing and effectively reinforce the protection of cultural heritage at risk, we need to fill gaps without creating overlaps. We need to build a community.”

Giovanni De Siervo, PROCULTHER-NET Director

Finally, Mr De Siervo added that to facilitate the implementation of these capacity building actions and knowledge transfer processes, it is crucial to sustain a thematic community of practice dedicated to cultural heritage. This confirms that the approach and the activities planned within [PROCULTHER-NET 2](#), the ongoing project (2024-2025) co-funded by DG ECHO, are moving in the right direction.

This exchange indeed provided a new impulse to consolidate and further expand the thematic community dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage at risk established by the project within the UCPKN.

Still within the scope of the advocacy actions promoted by the project, the representatives of PROCULTHER-NET 2 were at the Civil Protection Village, the exhibition area organized in parallel with the Forum; they exchanged with experts already aware of the thematic community and met new stakeholders eager to learn more and become an active part of it.

70 years after the Hague Convention

Seventy Years later: The Pathway set by the Hague Convention - A New Perspective from PROCULTHER-NET.

In July, a symposium held in Brussels gathered together experts in the cultural heritage and humanitarian fields with civil-protection and armed forces staff to explore interdisciplinary strategies for the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts and catastrophes. PROCULTHER-NET was there to propose the pathway for the inclusion of cultural heritage protection in Union policies



A moment of De Siervo's speech

On 2 July 2024, in the framework of the Hague Convention celebrations, Giovanni De Siervo, PROCULTHER-NET Director, attended the network meeting entitled “Milestones & ways to go for cultural heritage protection 70 years since the Hague Convention”. The symposium was held at the Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU in Brussels and was jointly organized by the [German Society for Cultural Property Protection e.V.](#), the [Swiss Society for Cultural Property Protection](#), [Blue Shield Austria](#), [Blue Shield](#)

[Germany](#) & the [Fraunhofer Society](#), under the patronage of the Austrian Embassy to Belgium and supported by the Austrian Cultural Forum.

Looking back at the Convention’s success and new challenges for the future, this event was divided in two parts: the first was a network meeting and symposium with a panel discussion that gathered experts from the European cultural heritage sector, multilateral and humanitarian policies, civil-protection, disaster risk reduction and the armed forces, to explore the interdisciplinary strategies and initiatives for further enhancing the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts and catastrophes and seek for new approaches to foster cultural resilience. After the welcoming words by Waltraud Strommer, Director of the Austrian Cultural Forum Brussels, the audience was introduced to the meeting by representatives from the Organising Committee: Nelly Cauliez, for the Swiss Society for Cultural Property Protection, Anna Puhr, from Blue Shield Austria, and Constanze Fuhrmann from Blue Shield Germany. The event then delved into the core of the matter, with an intervention by the International alliance for the protection of cultural heritage in conflict areas (ALIPH) that triggered the discussion on the importance of resilience and its inclusion in the operational and strategic activities at institutional level. Afterwards, Hans-Ulrich Goessl, Head of Unit Civil Protection Policy at the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations DG ECHO and Giovanni De Siervo, PROCULTHER-NET Project Director provided inputs for exchanging ideas on the effective strategy needed to strengthen long-term resilience of cultural heritage. Finally, Karl Habsburg-Lothringen, President of Blue Shield Austria, offered the last impulse for discussion with the ratio behind the establishment of Blue Shield in Europe and the possible way forward.

The last part of the symposium focused on the next steps for a stronger legal integration and operational implementation of the Hague Convention into EU policies.

The second part of the event saw the participation of high-level representatives to the European Union from Austria, UNESCO, from the two EU Member States that have the current and next semester of Presidency of the Council of UE (Belgium and Hungary) and from the academic sector that will set the scene for a round-table discussion involving experts from universities, non-governmental organisations, and from European bodies contributing to the cultural heritage safeguard, such as the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The outcomes of these exchanges will provide recommendations to the newly elected EU Parliament for enhancing resilience as a key aspect of cultural heritage.

PROCULTHER-NET joined the [celebrations for the 70th anniversary of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict since May 2024](#). Indeed, PROCULTHER tools have been shared in the Networking Agora organised in parallel to the International Conference “Cultural Heritage and Peace: Building on the 70 years since UNESCO’s Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict”. In The Hague, PROCULTHER-NET met experts from national and international institutions, agencies, ministries and non-governmental organisations. This space hosted a booth in the Good Practice zone where project representatives shared the knowledge and tools developed within [PROCULTHER](#) (2019-2021) and [PROCULTHER-NET](#) (2022-2023) and explained the expected results from the actions foreseen within the current initiative [PROCULTHER-NET 2](#) (2024-2025). In addition to the experts, already familiar with the thematic community dedicated to cultural heritage at risk promoted by the project, new stakeholders approached the stand and received a copy of the main technical documents produced by PROCULTHER and PROCULTHER-NET: e.g., the “[Key Elements of a European Methodology to Address the Protection of Cultural Heritage during Emergencies](#)” and the Technical Bulletins issued in [March 2023](#) and in [June 2023](#).

Cultural Heritage Protection Workshops in The Hague

The German Archaeological Institute participated in expert workshops in The Hague to strengthen the network of PROCULTHER-NET and KulturGutRetter.

Author: Constance Domenech de Cellès, Research Associate, German Archaeological Institute - DAI

The German Archaeological Institute and the project KulturGutRetter participated and represented the PROCULTHER-NET2 Consortium in two events organized by the Dutch organization Cultural Emergency Response in the aftermath of the celebrations for the 70 years of The Hague Convention to extend the discussion and foster exchanges and networking on cultural heritage at risk.

Mid-May 2024, 70 years after the signature of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the city of The Hague was once again the meeting point for dozens of international experts in cultural heritage protection.



Snapshot of the workshop © CER

Following the closing ceremony of the [UNESCO International Conference “Cultural Heritage and Peace: Building on 70 years of The Hague Convention”](#), on the evening of May 15th, the [Dutch organization Cultural Emergency Response \(CER\)](#), [Blue Shield International \(BSI\)](#), and the [Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative \(SCRI\)](#) co-hosted the workshop “**Documenting the Destruction of Heritage & Seeking Solutions**”. Moderated by Bijan Rouhani, [EAMENA](#) Researcher at the University of Oxford, the three panelists addressed

complementary approaches: from the use and interpretations of legal texts – by Marina Lostal, Senior Lecturer at the Essex Law School; to concrete actions on the ground in Ukraine through the experience of Vasyl Rozhko and the [Heritage Monitoring Lab](#). Emma Cunliffe, Senior Research Associate at Newcastle University and BSI, highlighted the importance of preparedness and cooperation.

On May 16th, CER organized a meeting in a speed-dating format to facilitate networking between actors working for the protection of cultural heritage from around the world. For [DAI](#) it was an opportunity to present the achievements of PROCULTHER-NET and the planned activities for PROCULTHER-NET2 to actors coming from the Balkans, the Mediterranean area, Eastern Europe and beyond. Equipment and workflows developed by the project [KulturGutRetter](#) – such as the mobile emergency conservation laboratory⁵ – received a positive welcome.

These two events led to constructive discussions for future cooperation in areas such as training and sharing best practices for better interoperability on the ground.

⁵ See article “Providing first-aid to movable cultural heritage: a modular table system” in [Technical Bulletin#1](#), March 2023

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Follow our webpage in the UCPKN to be updated
on upcoming events involving the PROCULTHER-NET community!

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