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UNESCO and EEAS join forces to protect cultural heritage at risk in crisis situations.



The European External Action Service (EEAS) and UNESCO recently agreed to cooperate in the field of urgent safeguarding of cultural heritage in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen.

The 18 month agreement, under the [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace \(IcSP\)](#), aims specifically at providing immediate safeguarding measures for cultural assets that have been targeted by conflict or disaster. The project “Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace” is the result of the longstanding experience of UNESCO in the protection of cultural heritage in crisis situations, attested also by the existence of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit within the Culture Sector.

The European Union has increasingly devoted attention to the cultural dimension of its external relations and foreign policy, as enshrined in subsequent resolutions culminating in the European Commission’s Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council “[Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations](#)” of June 2016. In addition, the EU was also a key partner in the UNESCO High-Level event on “[#Unite4Heritage. Cultural Diversity under Attack: Protecting Heritage for Peace](#)”, featuring the intervention of UNESCO Director General and of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini.

In the framework of the [European Year of Cultural Heritage \(EYCH\)](#), the forum ‘[EYCH 2018: International Perspectives](#)’ on the 23rd of April provided an ideal backdrop to present the joint UNESCO-EEAS project to representatives of governments, cultural institutes, and civil society organisations active in European external cultural relations. The forum offered participants the opportunity to exchange expertise, latest cultural heritage strategies and discuss the international dimension of the EYCH 2018.

UNESCO’s Chief of Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit discussed the project during his intervention within the first panel session discussing the reconstruction, recovery and regulation of cultural heritage at risk. Experts from different organisations across the world explored the most recent developments and approaches to the reconstruction of damaged sites and the recovery of effected communities. Numerous factors are threatening the preservation of cultural heritage, from natural disasters to human-induced disasters such as armed conflict, international terrorism and the illicit trafficking of stolen cultural goods. The aim of the panel was to address these issues from a broad and international perspective, reinforcing cooperation on cultural heritage as one of the main pillars of the EU’s external relations.

The UNESCO-EEAS project has the specific objective of developing a global response mechanism by which UNESCO will be able to rapidly deploy missions to Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen in order to identify emergencies, map cultural resources at risk and effectively evacuate and secure collections. These concrete actions will be accompanied by scrupulous damage assessment analyses and the rehabilitation of targeted sites, as well as by intensive engagements in awareness raising campaigns and training for local staff on emergency interventions for cultural heritage.

More information about the project at this [link](#).

http://www.unesco.org/new/en/brussels/about-this-office/single-view/news/unesco_and_eas_join_forces_to_protect_cultural_heritage_at/