



Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Combating illicit cultural property trafficking

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From 01 Oct 2018 to 05 Oct 2018 more than 50 participants from police, border and customs services, and the Ministries of Justice and Culture from South-east Europe and the Caucasus have taken a five-day workshop in Podgorica on combating illicit cross-border trafficking in cultural property. Actually, diverse cultural property belonging to peoples constitutes a unique and important testimony of the culture

and identity of such peoples, and forms their cultural heritage.

The workshop, the third held as part of an OSCE project on this issue, was prepared by the Italian OSCE Chairmanship in co-ordination with the Border Security and Management Unit of the OSCE Transnational Threats Department, the OSCE Mission to Montenegro and the Ministry of Culture of Montenegro. Similar workshops were held previously in Vicenza, Italy for the Mediterranean region and in Tashkent, Uzbekistan for the Central Asian region. Raising awareness regarding illicit trafficking in cultural property and regarding its impact on security and stability in the South-Eastern Europe region has been the aim of the meeting. The participants debated various methods and best

practices from the OSCE perspective and examined best mechanisms and tools that enable them to counter to this serious transnational threat in a viable manner in co-ordination with relevant national agencies, international organizations, private sector, and educational institutions. Offences related to cultural property are growing and such offences, to an increasing extent, are leading to the destruction of the world's cultural heritage.

“Driven by more and more evidence on the global level that the illegal looting of cultural goods and artefacts, and destruction of common historical heritage are used by criminal groups and terrorist organizations to generate tremendous profits, we have to engage in awareness-raising activities and

assist professionals from different agencies in discussing the available tools and new methods to jointly fight this phenomenon,” declared, Ambassador Maryse Daviet Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro. The OSCE participating States, along with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation, in fact, have come into contact with a dramatic upsurge in the criminal looting of archaeological sites and illicit cross-border smuggling of priceless stolen artwork, archaeological materials and antiquities. Trafficking in cultural property that in most cases is cross-border in its nature, has close connections with transnational organized crime groups, international money laundering, corruption networks, and terrorist organizations.

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Following the recommendations arising from the 2014 Annual Meeting of the OSCE Border Security and Management National Focal Points (NFP) Network, in 2017 the OSCE Border Security and Management Unit (BSMU) developed the project titled “Combating Illicit Cross-border Trafficking in Cultural Property in the OSCE area”. The project envisages a series of regional consciousness raising workshops to be organized for the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, Central Asian, South-Eastern European regions, Caucasus, and Asian Partners for Co-operation. The introduction of practical measures against this emerging transnational threat, and the suggestion of a platform for discussion, exchange of views, and identification of best practices

to counter this complex and multi-faceted phenomenon.

The workshop emphasized the international legal framework and best practices in criminal justice responses to trafficking in cultural property. Experts presented the available IT systems and databases to support the fight against this phenomenon. They stressed the importance of international co-operation and information exchange as well-organized counter-measures, equally important to the monitoring and protection of archaeological sites, as well as controls in museums. Combating the illicit cross-border trafficking in cultural property is one of the priorities of 2018 Italian OSCE Chairmanship. South-East Europe and the South Caucasus are rich in history and increasingly exposed to

devastation and looting. Moreover they lie directly on the route where artefacts from other regions, including crisis and war-affected areas are trafficked. This phenomenon requires a direct and co-ordinated response from different stakeholders across borders. Experts from various agencies and bodies participated in the workshop. They included representatives of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Homeland Security Investigations, Italy’s Carabinieri Command for the protection of cultural Heritage, the International Partnerships, Trade Operations and Law Enforcement Coordination Department of Canada, INTERPOL, EUROPOL, UNESCO, the British Museum.

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