



## Concept Note of the Conference

Nicosia, Republic of Cyprus  
24-26 October 2019



Promoting the Council of Europe Convention  
on Offences relating to Cultural Property,  
within governments and civil society

SUPPORTERS



## **Overview and objectives**

The Commissioner for Volunteerism and Non-Governmental Organisations of the Republic of Cyprus, in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, the Council of Europe and the European Union is organising a two-day Conference on the Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property (the Nicosia Convention) on 24-26 October 2019.

The Conference will take place to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, with a view to increasing the Organisation's visibility in Cyprus and in the wider geographic region.

The primary aim of the Conference will be the promotion of the Nicosia Convention and its universality, as well as raising awareness on the topical issue of preventing offences relating to cultural property which is of concern to a large number of countries. The event will also feature findings from a new European study on trafficking of cultural property and links to organised crime, new regulation by the European Union on import of cultural goods as well as important on-going European research and action projects. Another focus will be to enhance co-operation and the joining of efforts between governments, civil society and the business sector in protecting cultural heritage.

The participants of the Conference (approximately 150, by invitation only) will include representatives of governments (culture, crime prevention, tourism, education) and civil society/ (I)NGOs from Council of Europe member States and Council of Europe Mediterranean neighbourhood countries, business representatives as well as representatives of the European Union, UNESCO, UNIDROIT, WCO, INGOs and other relevant stakeholders.

The event will be highly interactive and lead to a better understanding of what is at stake when we speak about offences relating to cultural property, and their public perception. It will combine specialists' points of view with those of more generalist heritage actors. Finally, based on in-depth debates in four working groups it will consolidate insights and formulate action proposals for working vigorously towards a culture of awareness and responsible handling of cultural property, empowering citizens and governments alike.

## **Conference questions**

Questions for debate will include<sup>1</sup>:

- What is cultural property according to the Nicosia Convention and what are the main risks it is exposed to?
- Why are we responsible for cultural property in far-away places?
- How does the Nicosia Convention address the challenges at stake, as compared to other legal tools in this area and how does it interact with these?
- What are the elements/provisions required for a functioning regulatory system?
- Why and how can the Nicosia Convention make trans-border co-operation more efficient? How can the Nicosia Convention and other standards challenge the unrestrained and uncontrolled free market ideology, including in cultural matters, in our present-day societies?
- What is the specific role of civil society/ (I)NGOs in addressing the threats to cultural property?
- What should be done by crime prevention/cultural/heritage policy makers, civil society/ (I)NGOs and business -including, inter alia art and antique dealers and representatives of the tourism sector to work towards a culture of awareness and responsible handling of cultural property and what are the priority actions?
- Is there a need for more arts/culture/heritage training and cultural awareness-raising in school curricula and informal education?
- How best can the Nicosia Convention be made known at global level?

<sup>1</sup> Tentative list only

## ***Conference papers***

Three conference input papers will introduce the subject from different perspectives and provide stimuli for debate, drawing insights from the most recent research and practice about the Convention's key topics and their implications for promoting and implementing it widely (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/act-for-heritage>).

## ***Results and follow-up***

The results of the workshops and conference debates will be assembled during the event into a set of proposals for action on how best the Convention, in interaction with other regulation, could be promoted in the short, medium and long term by civil society, government and business actors, and how their collaboration could be shaped to ensure best possible impact. These proposals may be fed into the Council of Europe's work programme in the sectors concerned and also be reflected in the implementation of the EU's Action Plan on Cultural Heritage. A future CoE/EU Joint Project may be derived from the conference conclusions. In addition, these will hopefully inspire the action by civil society partners/(I)NGOs and the business sector, on promoting the Nicosia Convention and preventing offences relating to cultural property. Through specialised intergovernmental bodies such as the Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP), the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) and other Organisations' decision making structures, the proposals for action will find their way into the policy making systems (specialised Ministries) in Council of Europe member States and neighbouring countries. Specific attention will be given to enhancing education to foster cultural awareness in view of the global implications of offences relating to cultural property. A follow-up conference may be organised in 2021 in Cyprus to evaluate progress made and an interim event may take place in 2020, pending interest by a potential host country.