

Strasbourg, 1 October 2024

Int-Seminar (2024) 02

**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE FIGHT AGAINST  
OFFENCES RELATING TO CULTURAL PROPERTY:  
EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES AND SHARED PRIORITIES**

**NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS' MEETING**

**21 June 2024  
Pignatelli Building  
Zaragoza (Spain)**

With the co-operation of:

## 1. Introduction

On 21 June 2024, a meeting with the national contact points of countries dealing with the offences relating to cultural property was organised within the framework of the “*International Seminar on the fight against offences relating to cultural property: exchange of good practices and shared priorities*”, held in Zaragoza, Spain, on 20-21 June 2024. This meeting, of restricted nature, was organized to mark the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on offences relating to cultural property (hereinafter, the Convention)<sup>1</sup>.

This meeting gathered state Parties to the Convention and other Council of Europe (hereinafter, the CoE) member states not Parties to the Convention<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, representatives from the European Association of Archeologist (hereinafter, EAA), in particular the Community on the illicit trade in cultural material -with observer status at the Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (hereinafter, CDCPP)- also attended this meeting.

In view of the preparation of this meeting, an online preparatory meeting took place on 6 May 2024<sup>3</sup> to help all delegations to get acquainted with the goal of the international seminar and this meeting. Moreover, delegations were provided with some questions outlining the necessary information that each delegation will be requested to delivered in June.

## 2. Meeting of Contact Points

The meeting was divided in two different sessions: a) a round table devoted to the implementation of the Convention by countries and b) a session devoted to the coordination among interested countries in the fight against offenses regarding cultural goods.

To facilitate these sessions, every contact point was invited to fulfil two documents previously distributed by the secretariat. One document requested information depending on whether the country had ratified, signed or neither signed nor ratified the Convention. The other document asked about the information exchange systems in countries about cultural property crimes. All participants were requested to submit both documents to the Secretariat before the meeting in Zaragoza.

### a) Session I: Round table on the implementation of the Convention

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<sup>1</sup> *Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property* (CETS No. 221), Nicosia, Cyprus, 19 May 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Countries attending this meeting which have ratified the above Convention: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Latvia and Mexico. Countries attending this meeting having signed the Convention: Portugal. Other countries attending this meeting which have neither signed nor ratified the Convention: Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, United Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> Agenda of the preparatory meeting enclosed.

Within this session, a round table was organised where all countries were requested to provide information in a *tour de table* about some key elements:

- their national legislation aimed at protecting cultural property from a criminal perspective (if any);
- the changes within their legislation following the ratification of the Convention (if applicable);
- the degree of implementation of the Convention in their territory (for those countries having ratified the Convention);
- their priorities and challenges to properly implement the Convention.

### **b) Session II: Coordination meeting among interested countries in the fight against offenses relating cultural property**

This session was devoted to co-operation at both international and national level.

As far as cooperation at national level was concerned, and given the transversal nature of these crimes, the secretariat stressed the importance of establishing inter-ministerial committees / interinstitutional committees or national coordination platforms at national level aimed at exchanging information about these cultural property crimes for the purpose of investigation or proceedings concerning the criminal offences referred to in the Convention. These committees or platforms should be composed by representatives from all sectors, namely culture, justice, law-enforcement and customs. Delegates considered that other national actors may also be invited and considered.

As far as the co-operation at international level was concerned, countries welcomed the idea of setting-up an informal Network of Contact Points composed by all national actors dealing with the fight against cultural property crimes. During the discussions, the representative from Bosnia and Herzegovina proposed to name this group of contact points as the “**Aragon Group**”, given the region hosting this meeting. The proposal was welcomed and agreed by all participants.

## **3. Conclusion**

The secretariat explained that, in accordance with Article 22 of the Convention, the Committee of the Parties (hereinafter, the CoP) to the Convention shall be held within a period of one year after the entry into force of the Convention for the tenth signatory having ratified the Convention.

Participants to the meeting considered that, pending the setting-up of the CoP, the Aragon Group could work as an informal consultation or advisory group of the Convention. They agreed that within its framework any country willing to fight against cultural property crimes could both take part at its work and provide information exchange on the issues covered by the Convention.

Against this background, participants agreed that this group should provide a practical approach and understanding of both the implementation of the Convention and the challenges that cultural property is currently facing to.

Operating under the authority of the future Committee of the Parties to the Convention and in close cooperation with the Council of Europe Secretariat, the Aragon Group main tasks are strengthen cooperation, promote the exchange of good practices and support national efforts.