



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Fight against  
illicit trafficking  
of cultural property

Venice  
Office



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## Strengthening Albania's capacity to combat and prevent the illicit traffic of cultural property



**From 23 to 27 November 2015, a group of officials from the ministries of Culture, Interior and Justice, as well as the Customs authorities of Albania will meet in Rome to benefit from a training organized by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Venice (Italy), in cooperation with the Comando Carabinieri per la Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale (Carabinieri, Cultural Heritage Protection Department, Italy).**

Although the illicit traffic of cultural goods cannot be scaled through exact figures, it is a major crime intertwined with other serious transnational criminal networks and activities, such as weapons' and drugs' trade. Besides being a crime against the history and identity of the concerned communities, as well as of the entire humanity, the illicit trafficking of cultural property is also increasingly linked to the financing of terrorism.

Today, the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property is becoming a priority on the international political agenda about culture, including for the countries of South-East Europe. A first South-East European expert meeting was organized by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe in Ohrid, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in 2006, to discuss regional cooperation. It was followed by a regional capacity-building workshop that took place in Gaziantep, Turkey, in 2012. The outcomes and recommendations of these two meetings called for the enhancement of capacity-building actions at national level, with special focus on the coordination among relevant institutional stakeholders including police forces, ministries of culture, customs agencies and the judiciary. The development of human and institutional capacities is also a

priority for the action of UNESCO in this field, on issues including national inventories, improvement of legal frameworks, information and communication, and awareness-raising.

Last year, in October, UNESCO and Italy joined hands and trained in Rome officials from the national authorities for culture, police and customs of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This year, the workshop will benefit Albania and take place thanks to the generous contribution of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to the UNESCO Venice Office. The objective of this new training workshop is to develop institutional and professional capacities of the concerned services of the Government of Albania for the implementation of the relevant international standards, tools, and best practices. Special focus will be set on the [UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property](#) (1970), ratified by Albania in 2002, and on the [UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects](#) (1995), not yet ratified by Albania.

Thanks to the precious cooperation of the Italian Carabinieri, Comando per la Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale (Cultural Heritage Protection Department) and the contribution of distinguished international resource persons, participants in the workshop will receive information and training on a variety of topics related to the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural properties, as well as on issues such as the restitution or return of cultural objects, preventive measures and risk mitigation, awareness-raising, etc. The workshop's resource persons will include senior representatives from international organizations - UNESCO, UNIDROIT, UNODC, the World Customs Organization - as well as from Italian ministries and specialized services.

To date, the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property has been ratified by 129 Member States of UNESCO. The 1970 Convention requires its States Parties to take action in these main fields: preventive measures; restitution provision; international cooperation.

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Photo credit: © Fighting illicit traffic of cultural property in South-East Europe video - Head of Asklepios stolen from Butrint Archaeological Museum returned to Albania