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## **UNESCO participated in the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 International Perspectives Forum in Brussels**



**At the EYCH 2018 International Perspectives Forum on the 23rd of April, UNESCO's Chief of Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit in the Culture Sector, Mr. Giovanni Boccardi, participated in a panel discussion on the reconstruction, recovery and regulations surrounding cultural heritage at risk.**

The Forum took place within the framework of the [European Year of Cultural Heritage \(EYCH\) 2018](#), which aims to celebrate the role of cultural heritage at EU, national, regional and local levels and organised around four main initiatives - to increase cultural heritage engagement, sustainability, innovation and protection. With this in mind, and following on from the EU's strategy to place culture at the centre of its international diplomatic relations, the EU-funded [Cultural Diplomacy Platform](#) organised the forum to explore several themes related to the EYCH 2018 from an international dimension.

Held at the Palais des Académies in Brussels, the event gathered high-level speakers from the European Commission, as well as a wide range of experts in the field of culture from organisations across the world. The event was divided into three panel discussions: 'Cultural Heritage at Risk. Reconstruction, Recovery and Regulations. Next Steps?', 'Engagement and Participatory Governance of Cultural Heritage in a Globalised World' and 'Innovation in Cultural Heritage - Diverse Outlooks'. The sessions provided an opportunity to exchange international expertise and perspectives on the central topics of EYCH 2018 and allowed for rich debate and discussion with audience members on the strengthened role of culture in the EU's external relations.

UNESCO's Chief of [Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit in the Culture Sector](#), Giovanni Boccardi, participated in the first panel session discussing the reconstruction, recovery and regulation of cultural heritage at risk. The session focussed on recent strategies and approaches to cultural heritage protection and the reconstruction of sites damaged in crisis situations across the world. The panel drew special attention to the numerous issues currently threatening the protection of cultural diversity and cultural heritage, such as armed conflict, terrorism, rapid development and population growth, and the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

Mr Boccardi spoke of a recently [agreed cooperation between UNESCO and the European External Action Service \(EEAS\) related to the urgent safeguarding of cultural heritage](#),

[particularly in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen](#). The EU and UNESCO will collaborate to provide immediate safeguarding measures for cultural heritage threatened by conflict or disaster and will build on UNESCO expertise in the field of the protection of cultural heritage in emergency situations. During his intervention, Mr Boccardi underlined the incredible relevance of culture in situations of trauma and disaster and its critical role in the recovery process to strengthen peace and stability in transitional contexts and to promote resilient and culturally diverse societies.

Closing the event, Mr Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, spoke about the numerous initiatives planned within the framework of EYCH 2018, many of which place culture at the heart of EU external relations. The Commissioner went on to highlight the EU's collaboration with UNESCO to safeguard cultural heritage targeted by conflict or disaster, stressing that "protecting heritage, whether in conflict zones or much closer to home, is particularly important because our cultural heritage is not only a central part of who we are, it is also vital because cultural heritage has such a big role in building the future".

The forum comes at a time when the European Union is increasingly including culture as one of the main pillars of its external relations and foreign policy. Recent policy developments include the European Commission's Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council "[Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations](#)" of June 2016 and the new rules proposed by the European Commission in July 2017 to tackle [imports into the EU of cultural goods](#) illicitly trafficked from their source country.

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