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## **UNESCO participates in panel on the protection of cultural heritage during the European Civil Protection Forum 2018**



**On the 6th March, UNESCO’s Chief of Emergency Preparedness and Response at the Culture Sector, Mr. Giovanni Boccardi, took part in a debate centred on the protection of cultural heritage from the effects of natural and man-made disasters.**

Organised in Brussels during the [European Civil Protection Forum](#), the largest recurring public event on European cooperation in the field of civil protection since 2003, and within the framework of European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, the panel discussion “Scaling Up Prevention: Protecting Cultural Heritage” was moderated by Ms. Erminia Sciacchitano, Policy Officer for Culture, Heritage and Economy of Culture at the DG EAC, European Commission (EC).

The panel brought together the EC, UNESCO, and some of the experts who contributed to the EC study on the panel discussion topic, namely: Ms. Alessandra Bonazza, from the Research Group “Natural, environmental and anthropic hazards of cultural heritage (RICH)” at CNR-ISAC, Italy; Mr. Christian Hanus, from Danube University Krems, Austria; Mr. Ingvall Maxwell, International consultant in Architectural Conservation.

The session represented an occasion to discuss recommendations to integrate cultural heritage into national disaster and risk reduction strategies developed by EU Member States, in line with the UN’s [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#). Particular focus was given to the role of the European Union’s [Civil Protection Mechanism](#) and how this can best address the consequences of disasters on cultural heritage.

Mr. Boccardi opened his intervention by stressing that cultural heritage protection and rehabilitation is critical in emergencies due to the central role that cultural heritage plays in strengthening identity, resilience, and promoting social cohesion. He highlighted that as the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#), 2018 is a pivotal moment for raising awareness on the value of cultural heritage to society and the ongoing need to protect and safeguard this heritage.

The role of heritage is recognised in a number of recent policies such as the [Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO’s Actions for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict \(2015\)](#), the [Addendum to the Strategy concerning emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards \(2017\)](#), the [European Communication Strengthening EU Disaster Management: rescEU. Solidarity with Responsibility \(2017\)](#) and the [EU’s Strategy on International Cultural Relations \(2016\)](#).

During the debate, the panellists reiterated that a gap still needs to be bridged between civil protection mechanisms, policies and the safeguarding of cultural heritage.

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism is about to broaden its scope, particularly with the launch of the [RescEU initiative](#), a recent proposal from the EC to reinforce Europe's ability to deal with natural disasters. Within this context, UNESCO called for a strengthened coordination with cultural heritage organisations, an increased integration of cultural heritage in the mandate and procedures of national civil protection authorities, as well as in the policies and instruments of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/brussels/about-this-office/single-view/news/unesco\\_participates\\_in\\_panel\\_on\\_the\\_protection\\_of\\_cultural\\_h/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/brussels/about-this-office/single-view/news/unesco_participates_in_panel_on_the_protection_of_cultural_h/)