

## European Task Force

The idea of a European task force stems from observing that the fight against looting and trafficking of cultural goods needs more coordination, and more efficiency. Two main fields of action have been identified:

- operation. The task force should be instrumental in triggering repressive actions, led by police forces. Law Enforcement Agencies must be at the centre and the agency should respond to their needs;
- expertise. The task force should identify and interlink the appropriate experts requested to respond to the needs of expertise of LEAs.

The task force should be instrumental in raising alerts, effective in tackling challenges, needs, interoperable and innovative solutions, and in training professionals already active in the field, and also new generations of experts. The European Task Force should be TRACK, i.e.:

- Transversal, addressing many disciplines and professions. The whole process of looting, from identification until repressive action must be addressed;
- Result-oriented, since an increased efficiency is its ultimate goal;
- Agile, thanks to a light organization, leading to prompt interventions;
- Coordinative and collaborative;
- Knowledgeable, with a high role of expertise, as well as instrumental in sharing knowledge, towards professionals and general public.

Governance can be a critical issue, due to the harmonization among national units and this European task force. The situation varies from country to country and many countries do not possess a dedicated unit.

## Global Approach in Using Technology

Looting and trafficking is a global phenomenon, to be tackled with interdisciplinary tools. The use (as well as the development) of technology should be supported by in-depth studies of the actors.

Machine learning, 3D imagery, blockchain, nanotechnologies are very promising tools, however they raise new challenges still to be addressed, such as controlling and managing the data collected, what financial and human resources can be mobilised, with what level of security.

Digitisation helps creating databases, as well as sharing knowledge and raising awareness of the citizens. The lockdown taught that there is a strong demand for culture: during the crisis, culture has remained accessible. Strong efforts must be done towards open access.

Innovation needs time and support, and more data and case studies are needed to complete the current test phase. When technologies are usable, it is then necessary to train people to correctly use them. Cultural heritage professionals, as well as customs and police forces, must be capable of using technologies and controlling the data produced. This can be a major security concern, since the use of technologies could lead to delegate the management of highly sensitive data to private companies.

## “Glocal” Approach in Involving People

Quoting the French poet François Rabelais, “Science sans conscience n’est que ruine de l’âme”. The fight against looting and trafficking relies on a variety of people, professionals, citizens, people who have a local know-how, and also humanities and social science professionals, auction houses, antique dealers, private collectors, as well as judges and magistrates. This is relevant because fight against looting starts at a local level: local professionals must be involved in the preservation of their cultural heritage. In our “glocalized” time, when local has an impact on global and reversely, we have to work on each stage of the looting process, starting from the source countries and remembering that all European countries are source countries as well.

At a time when wild life sanctuaries are multiplying, archaeological sites, historical monuments, museums must be considered as sanctuaries, such as we are doing with wildlife natural parks.

## Connecting Different Professions

Technological and human issues share the common need of creating connections among databases and among people. Databases raise issues of security, and also issues of reliability of the data they are hosting. A common vocabulary is fundamental, able to interlink different databases and also effective in improving communications of people from different professional fields.

Collaboration among research disciplines, hard and social sciences, should be also stressed. Even if dialogue is sometimes difficult, even if methods and timescales are different, the NETCHER Seminars have demonstrated the usefulness of this dialogue.

Together with the in-depth studies of the many actors of the looting problem, a wide reflection on practices of cultural heritage practitioners must be launched. The impact of archaeological work, cultural heritage policies must be analysed and compared at a European scale.

Connecting professions means that archaeologists and police officers can have different approaches, but they pursue the same goal: the fight against looting and trafficking!

Connecting professions means an active involvement of the art market, forgetting the passive attitude common to some of them: "I did not know, I did not know that this object was looted, I complied with due diligence". Actors of the market should adopt a responsible behaviour, as well as good practices. The fear of shaming and punishing is not enough: paths towards sustainable solutions include encouraging them through reputational and financial rewards.

Connections should also target the ordinary citizens. We are currently facing a paradox: people are demanding for more culture, they are interested in cultural heritage protection, however they are still admiring controversial figures of looters, romantic *tombaroli*, as if treasure hunting could create a link with the past.

On the contrary, treasure hunters dig holes in our past: looting is a problem of circulating orphan artefacts, as well as destroying ancient sites.

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This is why archaeologists should be not only trained professionals, following strict protocols of investigation and recording, but also open to the general public, making them responsible of their cultural heritage.

Finally, connections should also include the common understanding of highly diverse national heritage codes. Adoption of a common legal framework should be encouraged, and – even more urgently - a common prosecutorial language should be developed. The final goal could be the creation of an international court, like the La Haye court for crimes against humanity. Here, there is still a long way to go.

## Managing the Future in a Global Way

Looting and trafficking of cultural objects is a crime, and like all other crimes, it needs a holistic approach as it is embedded in political, economic and social issues. It is a global phenomenon that must be addressed through a global approach. There will be no sustainable solution if there are no alternative solutions proposed to people who make their living from looting and trafficking.

This means that it is necessary to work with other bodies working on the field, addressing problems of poverty, of sustainable rural development, of sustainable cultural and touristic development. This is true also at the other end of the process, when looted objects are sold: there will be no sustainable solution without the active involvement of magistrates and art market.

Building bridges is the key mission for being successful!

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