



Applying New Solutions for Cultural Heritage protection by
Innovative, Scientific, social and economic Engagement

Training Programme models

Museums and other cultural institutions

*Illicit Trafficking Prevention and
Response in Museums*



Funded by
the European Union

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1 Module identification and context

- **Module name:** Illicit Trafficking Prevention and Response in Museums
- **Target community:** Museum professionals (managers, curators, conservators, registrars, administrators) and students in related fields (museology, heritage studies etc.)
- **Responsible partner:** ICOM

1.1 Specific justification

Particular challenges

- Museums face risks related to the illicit movement of objects, especially related to thefts, losses, and acquisitions.
- Fragmented cooperation between museums, customs, police, and the art market.

Current training gaps

- The issue of combating illicit trafficking in cultural property is rarely addressed comprehensively in museum studies programmes.
- Absence of structured, operational training on preventive measures against trafficking of cultural property within museums
- Heterogeneous knowledge of existing tools and mechanisms that can be used to counter illicit trafficking (INTERPOL, Object ID, ICOM tools, digital tools etc.)
- Limited preparedness for response procedures (identification, reporting, and coordination).

Professional needs

- Practical skills in documentation, data sharing, and use of international databases
- Clear procedures for prevention, identification, and response to suspected illicit activities
- Strengthened understanding of legal and ethical responsibilities (notably through the ICOM Code of Ethics)
- Knowledge of intersectoral collaboration mechanisms.

Added value

- Provide a comprehensive operational framework for museum professionals (both students and professionals in activity) to prevent and respond to illicit trafficking
- Complement existing trainings by addressing broader institutional and cooperative dimensions
- Integrate European and international best practices legal framework
- Be adaptable to both academic and professional contexts.

1.2 Target audience definition

Student prerequisites

- Bachelor's or Master's level in Museum Studies, Heritage Management/Protection, or related fields (could also be international policies, international cooperation, as identified in the ANCHISE mapping - Part2).

Professional requisites

- No specific professional requisites.

Recommended group size:

- 30-40 for lectures and ideally 20 for professional workshops.

2 Format and audience breakdown

- **Students/Academics**
- **Professionals**

2.1 One-day format (6 hours)

Students/Academics:

General introduction on this format:

- This is an introductory module on the subject, designed for students in their bachelor's or master's degree, as well as professionals seeking introductory training. Please note that each session can also be offered as a separate module for further exploration of the topics covered. The course can be developed by a professor, trainer or professional using the available online information on the various topics, specialists may intervene or lead in one or more sessions.

Learning Objectives:

- Introductory module
- Theoretical training
- Overview of the topic.

Content structure:

- Session 1: Understanding illicit trafficking – definitions, risks, and impacts
- Session 2: Legal and ethical frameworks at national and international levels (Conventions, regulations and Codes of ethics)
- Session 3: Operational tools, technological solutions and databases
- Session 4: Inter-agency cooperation.

Teaching methods:

- Interactive lecture, group discussions, practical exercises.

Required materials:

- Computers, projector, internet connection.

Assessment method:

- Test, based on the content of the different sessions.

Expected outcomes:

- Students can identify trafficking risks, relevant tools, and key stakeholders.

Professionals:

Learning objectives:

- Implement institutional prevention protocols
- Apply documentation standards and use digital tools
- Identify and report suspicious activities or objects
- Coordinate response actions with relevant authorities.

Content structure:

- Session 1: Trafficking typologies and museum vulnerabilities
- Session 2: Documentation as key for prevention
- Session 3: Crisis management and inter-agency coordination
- Session 4: Tools and technologies in practice (hands-on session with databases)

Teaching methods:

- Workshop, simulations, peer exchange, case study analysis

Required materials:

- Computers, templates for incident reporting.

Assessment method:

- Test, based on the content of the different sessions..

Certification/recognition:

- Participation certificate.

2.2 One-week format (30 hours)

Students/Academics:

Learning objectives:

- Understand the full trafficking chain and its implications for museums.
- Apply preventive documentation and legal principles in practice.
- Conduct basic risk assessments and use relevant tools.
- Analyse case studies and propose institutional responses.
- Develop teamwork and problem-solving skills in crisis situations.

Daily programme structure:

- **Day 1: Understanding illicit trafficking – definitions, risks, and impacts**

Focus on definitions, risks and impacts (more general)

Focus on typologies and actors – introduction to the trafficking chain (possible link with an “art market” module)

- **Day 2: Legal and ethical frameworks at national and international levels (Conventions, regulations and Codes of ethics)**

Focus on international standards and conventions

Focus on national regulations (import/export rules, police competences, museum standards).

- **Day 3: Preventive measures**

Focus on documentation systems and provenance research (possible link with the module on provenance research)

Focus on tools (ICOM Red Lists, available databases and technological opportunities)

- **Day 4: Response mechanisms**

Focus on internal procedures

Focus on cooperation with law enforcement agencies (possible link with a LEA module) and judiciary services.

- **Day 5: Case study – developing an institutional prevention plan**

Focus on risk assessment methodology

Focus on the development of the prevention plan

→ How to build a realistic plan for an institution.

Assessment components:

- Group project (institutional risk assessment + presentation)

Required deliverables:

- A short museum action plan or “Illicit Trafficking Response Checklist.”

Follow-up mechanisms:

- Post-training online group for sharing resources and updates.

2.3 Semester format (60 hours distributed)

Students and professionals

Integration objectives:

- This module is designed for integration into master's programmes in Museum Studies, Cultural Heritage Protection, or related fields. It can also be adapted for professional continuous learning for professionals seeking advanced knowledge and operational guidance.
- The module aims to provide an in-depth and operational understanding of illicit trafficking, connecting legal, ethical, practical professional activities, and cooperative dimensions.
- For working professionals, the module can be restructured as a hybrid or modular format to accommodate limited availability.

Weekly structure:

- 12 weeks, 5 hours per week

Learning objectives:

- Understand and contextualize the phenomenon of illicit trafficking
- Interpret and apply legal and ethical frameworks
- Develop preventive institutional practices
- Use operational tools and cooperation mechanisms
- Respond to incidents and communicate effectively
- Integrate and apply knowledge in professional contexts

Session breakdown:

- **Block 1: Understanding the illicit trafficking phenomenon and its implications**

Introduction to illicit trafficking in museums

- Introduction to illicit trafficking in museums
- Definitions and terminology (UNESCO, ICOM, INTERPOL, EU).
- Historical development and global patterns.
- Typologies and actors (looters, intermediaries, collectors, online platforms).
- Mapping of trafficking routes and circuits.
- Impacts on museums, communities, and cultural identity.

Professionals:

Learning objectives:

- Understand vulnerabilities within their own institutions.
- Implement and test protocols to prevent and combat illicit trafficking (related to inventories, due diligence, cooperation with other services etc.)
- Strengthen cooperation with law enforcement and heritage authorities.
- Integrate use of digital tools and reporting procedures.
- Become familiar with institutional guidelines for prevention and crisis response.

Modular programme structure:

- **Module 1: Trafficking typologies and museum vulnerabilities**

Focus on trafficking threat mapping (internal theft, loans, online sales, displaced heritage, conflict zones, etc.)

Focus on museum vulnerabilities (governance gaps, weak documentation, , inadequate security)

- **Module 2: National and international legal and ethical frameworks (Conventions, regulations and Codes of ethics)**

Focus on national and local standards applicable to museums

Focus on international legislation and ethical standards, special focus on the ICOM Code of Ethics

- **Module 3: Documentation as key for prevention**

Focus on the documentation system

Focus on due diligence for acquisition and loans (possible link with the module on provenance research)

- **Module 4: Tools and technologies in practice**

Focus on the presentation of existing tools and databases

Focus on hands on training (with a database/or a tool)

- **Module 5: Security in museums**

Focus on internal security policies

Focus on operational response and coordination with other services (possible link with a LEA module)

→ Simulation of a case (cfr. below).

Professional case studies:

- E.g. stolen object recovery, misattributed loan, customs seizure..

Peer learning components:

- Institutional exchange and joint scenario simulation.

Assessment for professionals:

- Practical evaluation:

Practical evaluation (mock response exercise).

- Professional portfolio:

Participation certificate

- **Block 2: Legal and ethical frameworks**

Legal and ethical frameworks

- International framework: UNESCO 1970 Convention, UNIDROIT 1995 Convention, other resolutions.
- EU and regional instruments: EU Regulation 2019/880, Council of Europe Conventions.
- National legislation: import/export rules, police competences, restitution mechanisms.
- Ethical principles: Codes of Ethics (e.g. ICOM Code of Ethics) due diligence obligations.

- **Block 3: Building institutional prevention**

Documentation as a foundation for prevention

- Documentation systems
- Inventory standards (ex CIDOC CRM, Re-Org)
- Linking documentation, provenance research, and due diligence.

Risk management in loans and acquisitions

- Risks associated with the movement of collections.
- Legal obligations and best practices for loans and acquisitions.
- Due diligence procedures and provenance verification.

- **Block 4: Leveraging tools and cooperation**

Tools and databases

- Overview of major digital resources (e.g. INTERPOL database)
- Technological opportunities (image recognition, blockchain provenance, AI monitoring)
- Ethical and legal aspects of digital data use
- Interoperability and integration into museum systems (including with non-digital tools)

Risk management in loans and acquisitions

- Institutional partnerships between museums, customs, police, ministries, NGOs
- Mechanisms for reporting and information-sharing (national focal points, international task forces)
- Collaboration with the art market, auction houses, and online platforms
- Developing intersectoral prevention strategies

Crisis communication

- Internal communication
- External communication
- Media and public disclosure management.
- Coordination with law enforcement and authorities.

- **Block 5: Integration and application**

Case study analysis

- Note: possible intervention of a museum professional.
- Analysis of real or fictional case studies (museum theft, customs seizure, Fakes/forgeries/counterfeit cultural objects and fake documentation and fake provenance).
- Step-by-step examination: identification, documentation, cooperation, resolution.

Group work - prevention plan

- Group development of an institutional prevention and response plan (PSBC model)

Presentation and Final Review

- Group presentations of institutional plans (10-15 min each).
- Expert panel feedback and discussion.
- Collective synthesis: lessons learned and key takeaways.
- Reflection on professional applications and future training needs.

University-level assessment:

Project evaluation:

- Exam (50%) - knowledge test
- Coursework (30%) - essay
- Collective project (20%) - prevention and response plan

ECTS/credit allocation:

- 5 credits.

3 Practical implementation

3.1 Instructor requirements

Required expertise:

- Experts in museum documentation, legal frameworks, and law enforcement cooperation.

Guest speakers:

- Museum professional – ICOM representatives, LEA representatives (local police, customs, INTERPOL), Tech specialist

3.2 Logistical requirements:

Technical requirements:

- Computers, database access, projector, internet, printed materials.

Budget considerations:

- Speaker honorarium, travel, materials, software licenses

3.3 Quality assurance:

Module evaluation by participants:

- Post-course evaluation survey (could be an online questionnaire)

Learning outcome measurement:

- Learning outcome verification through assessment review

Continuous improvement process:

- Continuous improvement process (annual feedback review)

4 Contextual adaptations

4.1 Local / national variations

Legislative differences:

- Adapt legal sections to national legislation
- Integrate local case studies and museum examples

4.2 International standardization

Core universal elements:

- Prevention, cooperation, documentation, ethics.

European best practices:

- Promote interoperability with European tools and databases/or other existing databases at the international level

International cooperation aspects:

- Align with UNESCO, ICOM, UNIDROIT (and EU standards)

Transferability guidelines:

- Adapt legal sections to national legislation
- Integrate local case studies and museum examples

4.3 Cross-disciplinary adaptation and transferability

Target disciplines for adaptation:

- Archaeology, art market, law, international cooperation.

Key modifications required:

- Focus on legal aspects, trade monitoring, geopolitical implications.

Universal transferable elements

- Ethical standards, legislation, response procedures, tool use

Interdisciplinary collaboration opportunities:

- Modules in archaeology (on illicit trafficking + legislative aspects), law enforcement formations (cooperation aspects), international cooperation (cooperation aspects + geopolitical implications, trafficking routes etc.), engineering or tech development (opportunities to create tools to protect heritage)

Customization guidelines:

- Adaptation to local contexts (specific challenges, institutional and legislative frameworks)

Resource sharing potential:

- International resources/legislation, ICOM resources and tools (ICOM Code of Ethics, ICOM Red Lists, Object ID), international databases examples, general presentation on illicit trafficking threats and consequences.

4.4 Hybrid adaptations

Online / hybrid format feasibility

- Modules can be transferred in video/hybrid format, but not the workshop sessions.

Technology and platform requirements:

- Videoconferencing set-up



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