



PREVENTING ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF  
CULTURAL HERITAGE:  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

ERASMUS+ 2021-2024

# RECOMMENDATIONS for Policy Makers



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## The Looting of Archaeological Sites and the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Goods: Figures and Stakes

**Archaeological looting has grown over the past thirty years across European territory, reaching in France for example the staggering figure of several million objects each year. The looting and illicit trafficking of cultural property have severe consequences on our understanding of the past, our security, and the development potential of many countries.**

In the latter, new generations are particularly affected by these scourges: the prevalence of looting limits their access to heritage, leading to a weak identification with their history. Conversely, in many Western countries, these new generations have become participants in archaeological looting through the use of metal detectors designed specifically for children, a phenomenon that has been growing significantly since the 1990s.



# The PITCHER project

Funded by the European Erasmus+ program from 2021 to 2024, PITCHER (Preventing Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Heritage: Educational Resources) is based on the final recommendations of the European NETCHER project (H2020 - 2019-2021) coordinated by the CNRS, which established a solid cross-sectoral network and recommendations to strengthen the fight against archaeological looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods. One of these recommendations emphasized the need to educate and guide educational communities on these issues.

The PITCHER project was initiated by the ENSP (Research Centre of the National Police Academy) and the Michael Culture Association (MCA) - both members of the NETCHER consortium - and brought together BIBRACTE, a major actor in archaeology, MUSEOMIX, a reference in museum mediation, as well as educational institutions from France, Greece, Italy, and Spain.

The main objective of PITCHER was to develop Open Educational Resources (OER) to enhance the ability of education professionals to prepare new learning experiences that support the fight against archaeological looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods. These educational resources, along with the “Teacher and cultural mediator’s guide”, provide them with innovative ways to address this topic and effectively share this issue with younger generations, who will soon play a crucial role in heritage preservation.

The project also offers a set of policy recommendations presented in this document for policymakers in the fields of education and culture.

For more information on the project, please visit our website:

[www.pitcher-project.eu](http://www.pitcher-project.eu)





## Foreword

The National Higher Police School (ENSP) drafted these recommendations based on contributions from all project partners, each representing different professional sectors involved (education, culture, archaeology, museums) and having strong expertise in formal or informal education.

These recommendations are addressed to policymakers and public authorities at the European and national levels, as well as more locally to heads of educational and cultural institutions.

This document presents desirable policy decisions and actions to be implemented in order to amplify the results of the project and thus more effectively combat archaeological looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods. These recommendations aimed at:

- **Strengthening the teaching** of heritage preservation and the fight against looting of archaeological site and illicit trafficking of cultural goods.
- **Raising awareness** among all stakeholders on these issues, focusing on the younger generations.
- **Modernizing regulations** to better protect younger generations and heritage.

## Recommendations from NETCHER

Before presenting the recommendations proposed by the PITCHER project, it is important to take a step back and recall the recommendations from the previous NETCHER project. They are fully available on the PITCHER project's website, or by following this link [\*\*NETCHER Final Recommendations\*\*](#), and address several categories of stakeholders. Here, we focus on the section most directly targeting decision-makers, organized according to the different stages typical of the fight against looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods.



# Recommendations

## Strengthening the teaching of heritage preservation, combating the looting of archaeological sites, and the illicit trafficking of cultural property

### Training teachers

#### Expected Outcomes:

A better understanding by teachers of the challenges of heritage preservation, fighting the looting of archaeological sites, and illicit trafficking of cultural property will ensure greater awareness among young people by providing precise and updated knowledge. Equip teachers to answer students' questions about the use of metal detectors and the ownership of archaeological discoveries, and how to respond to students bringing such objects to class.

#### How?

- Incorporate teaching these issues into initial and ongoing teacher training, utilizing the PITCHER project's resources ([“The teachers and cultural mediators’ guide”](#) and [Open Educational Resources](#)).
- Develop interactive and digital training materials on these subjects, for example in the form of MOOCs.
- Adopt best practices identified during training sessions organized as part of the PITCHER project for in-person training:
  - Holding the training in a museum presenting this subject in its permanent collections or a temporary exhibition, allowing participants to approach it concretely and enabling organizers to benefit from the expertise of their partners.
  - Using roundtable formats, which are particularly suitable for addressing the complexity of the topic but require proper structuring to allow time for participant questions.
  - Targeted lectures that are relevant to key topics in the school curriculum.

- Sharing diverse experiences and case studies to inspire participants with educational actions and/or the production of already completed educational tools.
- A lecture on an offbeat topic, such as the role of looting ancient artifacts in video games or the illicit trafficking of endangered species, to provide participants with interesting ways to start discussions with students using examples from their own world.

Encourage academic research on teaching these subjects and exploring the best pedagogical approaches.

## Integrating these subjects into school curricula

### **Expected Outcomes:**

Educating a generation that is informed and engaged in the protection of heritage, the fight against looting of archaeological sites, and the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

#### **How?**

Integrate key topics related to the fight against the looting of archaeological sites and the illicit trafficking of cultural property into educational programs (loss of information when a looted object is separated from its archaeological context, removal of looted and stolen works from the common heritage, financing terrorism, existing national and international laws, and the penalties incurred...).

Integrate the PITCHER Open Educational Resources, or at least some of them, into the official school resources of different European countries.

Integrate illustrated examples of looted objects and stolen artworks into textbooks to present the different aspects of this issue (consequences of archaeological looting and art theft, why these acts and the illicit trafficking of these cultural goods are prohibited, the actors and networks involved in illicit trafficking, the fight against this trafficking, provenance research and traceability, and the possible return of missing objects).

Encourage teachers to approach these topics through interdisciplinary methods due to the diversity of subjects that can address them (history, ancient languages, art history, visual arts, citizenship and media education, geography, literature, modern languages, economics, and political science, life sciences, earth sciences).

Include the theme of cultural goods within the competencies and responsibilities of education inspectors in different European countries.

## Integrating these subjects into professional and university training related to heritage

### **Expected Outcomes:**

Train future professionals in heritage protection and raise their awareness of the damage caused by the looting of archaeological sites and the illicit trafficking of cultural property. Teaching them the best practices they must implement regarding archaeological discoveries, protection of archaeological sites and collections, and the sale or acquisition of cultural goods, to comply with national and international legislation. Additionally, raising awareness among law enforcement beyond specialized offices.



## How?

- Include training on legislation regarding accidental archaeological discoveries and the importance of preserving this heritage in the professional training of public works, construction, and agricultural sectors.
- Systematize the teaching of heritage protection measures at national and international levels, including the issue of looting of archaeological sites and/or illicit trafficking of cultural goods, in Bachelor's and Master's level courses for future professionals in archaeology, museums, and the art market. Where possible, involve representatives of the police forces to support these trainings. In cultural mediation courses, this teaching can be effectively supplemented by interventions from education professionals on how to address these topics with young people, particularly by using the outputs of the PITCHER project.
- Systematically complement this theoretical training with students' participation in study days and/or internships with professionals in these fields.
- Include a module on raising awareness about these issues in the initial or ongoing training of police students, with interventions from offices responsible for these topics.

## Encouraging collaboration at national and European levels between educational institutions and cultural heritage actors

### **Expected Outcomes:**

Enriching educational and training programs through visits, lectures, and practical projects. Collaborating on PITCHER resources and learning from each other's cultural differences.

## How?

- Promote innovative learning approaches by encouraging partnerships between, on the one hand, schools and universities, and on the other hand, heritage protection actors (museums, archaeological sites, police forces, and other organizations). For example, visits to archaeological sites allow participants to see how heritage emerges directly through excavations or indirectly through non-invasive surveys.
- Promote and develop transnational partnerships between schools, universities, and other educational and cultural institutions across Europe to work together on these topics. Call on the partner schools of the PITCHER project to initiate these partnerships (Lycée franco-hellénique Eugène Delacroix in Greece, INS La Bisbal and IES Albalat in Spain, Istituto Comprensivo Ennio Quirino Visconti in Italy).

# Raising awareness among all stakeholders on the issues of archaeological looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods

## Raising Awareness of New Generations Outside the School Framework

### Expected Outcomes:

Addressing the younger generation in their extracurricular activities and particularly reaching those who are no longer in school.

#### How?

- Encourage every museum and archaeological site to present an exhibition panel on the problem of archaeological sites looting or illicit trafficking of cultural goods, with content specifically aimed at young audiences. Include concrete examples related to the archaeological site or the museum's collections.
- Based on the model of the international "MUSEOMIX" event, encourage any event that allows young people to think and act independently to imagine how to represent the shared heritage of a society.
- Encourage cultural institutions to conduct outreach activities on these topics, particularly in social centres, hospitals, and prisons, using the PITCHER Open Educational Resources, which are in the form of a game.
- Develop collaborations between cultural institutions, the socio-educational sector, and youth associations to implement participatory actions for heritage protection and identifying weak signals of archaeological sites looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods.
- Launch large-scale awareness campaigns at national and European levels on these issues, particularly on archaeological sites looting (permanent displays in public places such as airports, train stations, and museums). To reach young people more directly, favour their communication channels such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and influencers.

## Mobilizing the educational community and younger generations to raise awareness among local communities

### Expected Outcomes:

A population informed by its younger generation is more likely to support heritage protection efforts at both national and local levels.

#### How?

- Propose the theme of combating illicit trafficking of cultural goods for a future edition of the "European Heritage Days." Encourage cultural institutions to offer activities on this topic for schools on Fridays and encourage these two actors to implement educational projects beforehand, the results of which could be presented to the general public on the weekend, following the model of the French initiative "La classe, l'œuvre" for the "European Night of Museums" (see the PITCHER OER Vade-mecum Educational Project).

- Do the same with the theme of archaeological sites looting for a future edition of the “European Archaeology Days.”
- Make November 14th, “International Day against Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property” (UNESCO), a European event similar to the “European Heritage Days,” “European Night of Museums,” “European Archaeology Days,” etc., meaning over several consecutive days, with one specific day for school audiences, a program of activities provided by cultural institutions and disseminated at national and European levels, accompanied by a strong communication campaign.

## Modernizing regulations to better protect younger generations and heritage

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### Expected Outcomes:

Protect younger generations from health and pyrotechnic risks associated with the use of metal detectors and prevent them from committing offenses. Encourage them to play an active role in combating archaeological looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods while providing a secure framework and appropriate support.

### How?

- At a minimum and in the short term, ban the sale of metal detectors designed as toys for children, as well as the sale of all metal detectors to minors, recognizing that a complete ban on the free sale of metal detectors would be the only truly effective way to curb the looting of archaeological sites.
- Create a specific whistleblower status for heritage protection for minors aged 14 to 18, which would include:
  - A specific legal framework with legal protection adapted to minors and reduced liability in case of good faith errors in their reporting.
  - A secure and appropriate reporting mechanism.
  - Support from adult mentors to guide them in their efforts.
  - Forms of recognition and valorisation



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BIBRACTE



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