

Group 3: Culture (including cultural heritage) in conflict prevention and resolution

1. What is the potential role of culture and cultural heritage in conflict prevention and conflict resolution, and how is it possible to maximise its impact in these areas?

- A holistic approach towards conflict prevention and peacebuilding should always take into account cultural aspects.
- The Joint Communication '[Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations](#)' on culture in external relations can be seen as a guiding document on this issue.
- It is important to reconcile the long-term perspective for culture with the need to act quickly for conflict prevention measures.
- Cultural heritage provides a space for unity and culture is a point where people can come together. It is important to take into consideration both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
- Actions need to be organised by the people themselves in order to maintain a bottom-up approach.
- At the same time, there is a need to keep in mind the political risk of division and manipulation around culture. Therefore, the support of local and national governments is needed in order to avoid situations in which they are able to manipulate actions through counter-narratives.
- Culture can be used as a force for tolerance and understanding in emergency situations. For example, social tensions can be eased and the re-escalation of violent conflicts can be prevented through the participation of communities in cultural activities.
- A problem faced by many organisations working on cultural events is that donors often want to politicise them. However, cultural events are means in themselves and have the potential to increase people's political engagement without any overt political agenda.

2. What kind of actions should the EU support in this field, in particular to reduce the risk of cultural heritage destruction in conflict and pre-conflict contexts?

- Cultural heritage exchange is a way of fostering understanding between different conflict parties:
 - In the case of religious conflicts, religious sites can be used for confidence-building measures (e.g. by establishing community measures for protecting and restoring destroyed sites).
 - Universities' avoidance of overt political agendas can enable them to provide common cultural heritage for different conflict parties in their curricula or in specific programmes. They are also well-placed to work with young people.
 - Art and poetry can serve as important tools for cultural heritage exchange if they focus on the common history between the different conflict parties.
- Supporting the production of local crafts as part of the common cultural heritage of a divided community can contribute to conflict prevention and resolution through the creation of a common history as well as through the creation of economic opportunities.
- Local tourism around cultural heritage sites can function as a conflict prevention measure and reduce the risk of cultural heritage destruction.