

NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second edition of the RITHMS Project's Newsletter, where we highlight significant events, share valuable updates, and explore important conversations happening in our community.

In this issue, we bring you insights from our recent RITHMS Conference in A Coruña, focusing on "Good Practices of European Police Forces in Combating Cultural Property Trafficking." Additionally, we explore our partner UDC's participation in the Law and Society Conference 2024



in Denver, Colorado, as well as a recap from RITHMS' involvement in ARCA's 13th Annual Interdisciplinary Art Crime Conference and our featured presence at the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) Annual Meeting in Rome.

We are also pleased to introduce our sister project, EMERITUS, and share a feature interview with a member of our LEA team, providing an in-depth look at LEAs use of technology in combating cultural property trafficking.

Sincerely yours,
The RITHMS Dissemination team

INSIGHTS FROM THE RITHMS CONFERENCE IN A CORUÑA

The international conference "**Trafficking in Cultural Property: A Criminological Perspective**" hosted and organized by RITHMS partner the Universidade da Coruña, brought together experts from across Europe to discuss challenges and solutions in fighting the illicit trade of cultural objects.

Among the sessions, one dedicated to identifying best practices offered valuable insights from



keynote speaker John Kerr, from the University of Law, UK, and representatives from the police forces of the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and Romania, all partners or collaborators of the RITHMS Project. (p.2)

ISSUE #2 HIGHLIGHTS



Special Interview with Mr. Tobias Mattes, member of RITHMS Security Advisory Board (p.4)



Sister project in focus EMERITUS (p.6)

INSIGHTS FROM THE RITHMS CONFERENCE IN A CORUÑA



Why do criminals find the art market so appealing?

Criminals exploit the art market as a form of currency for other illicit activities. John Kerr, from the University of Law UK, opened the session by explaining this phenomenon. He highlighted the significant roles played by criminal groups, insiders at museums and cultural sites, and dealers in the art market. Comparing various policing strategies across different countries, Kerr underscored the importance of cooperation and information sharing to effectively address the issue.

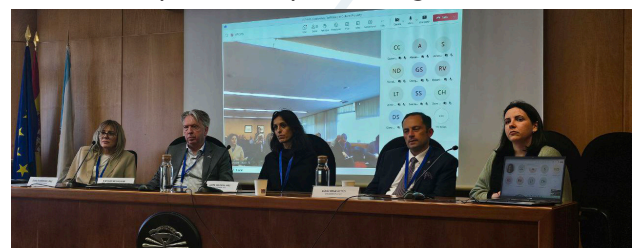
Richard Bronswijk, head of the Art Crime Unit of the Dutch police, focused on significant cases involving cultural property. He expanded, in particular, on the case of the 'Ndrangheta mafia boss Raffaele Imperiali, who tried to use stolen Van Gogh paintings for negotiating reduced sentences. Bronswijk also drew attention to the dis-



parity in resource allocation between drug trafficking and cultural property crimes, advocating for increased investigative capacity and European Union support to strengthen efforts in this field.

Spain's approach involves a combination of specialized databases and regular inspections of art galleries and auction houses. Silvia Valencia, lead of the operational team of the Spanish Brigade for Historical Heritage, emphasized the importance of collaboration between various administrations, police forces, and the art market. She illustrated how Spain uses databases like Dulcinea and INTERPOL PSYCHE to track and recover stolen artworks, showcasing the effectiveness of these tools in preventing crimes against cultural heritage.

The criminal network related to illicit trafficking of cultural property is highly complex. Mar. Luca Migliaccio from the Italian Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage provided a detailed overview of this special corps' structure. He explained how the Carabinieri operate on multiple levels to combat illicit trafficking, working closely with other countries to recover stolen cultural property and bring perpetrators to justice. Migliaccio's insights into the roles of thieves, counterfeiters, and "cleaners" who provide false attributions and provenance certificates were particularly revealing.



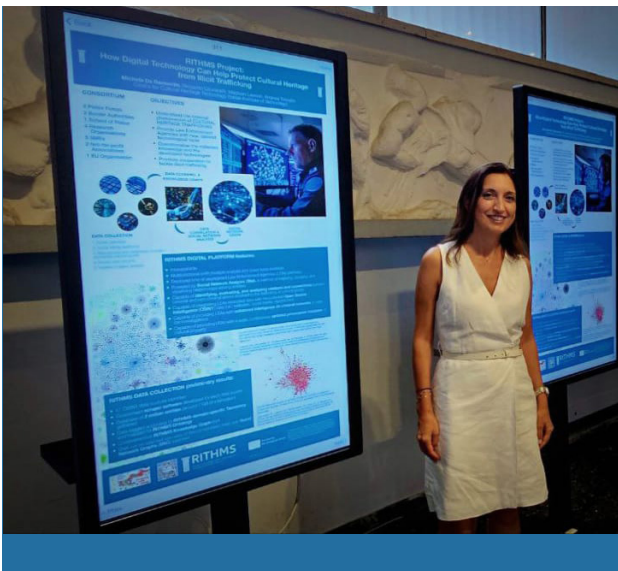
Romania's unique position as both a source and transit country for trafficked cultural property was highlighted by Chief Commissioner Paula Mita of the Romanian police. She described efforts to protect and recover cultural heritage, emphasizing the importance of video surveillance and the accountability of local authorities. Mita stressed once more the crucial role of international and interdisciplinary cooperation in effectively combating cultural property trafficking.

The recently concluded data collection phase represents a significant milestone for RITHMS, consolidating a wealth of information from diverse sources. Preliminary results, currently in publication, underscore the potential of the RITHMS platform to provide detailed and operationally valuable insights into criminal networks.

The conference also featured the participation of three other RITHMS partners, that is, representatives from the Italian Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (TPC), the Spanish Brigade for Historical Heritage and the National Police of the Netherlands.

RITHMS at EAA 2024 in Rome

RITHMS was prominently featured at the [European Association of Archaeologists \(EAA\) Annual Meeting](#), which took place in Rome this past August. During the event, the session titled "Tracing & Protecting: Facing the Shadows of Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Goods" was dedicated to addressing the urgent and complex challenges posed by the illicit trade of cultural heritage.



This session was a collaborative effort of the RITHMS and DECOPE Projects, and the University of Oslo's Museum of Cultural History, focusing on fostering cross-disciplinary alliances to combat cultural heritage crimes. A special high-



light of the session was the presentation by Dr Michela De Bernardin on behalf of RITHMS Coordinator (CCHT-IIT), who showcased the cutting-edge capabilities of the RITHMS platform, focusing on how Social Network Analysis (SNA) is being employed to identify and disrupt criminal networks involved in the trafficking of cultural goods.

RITHMS is building the world's largest knowledge graph to aid Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) in their fight against this global crime. By leveraging open-source data from various digital channels, the platform provides valuable intelligence that enhances the ability of LEAs to trace and protect cultural heritage.

⇒ RITHMS News

⇒ RITHMS Results



SPECIAL INTERVIEW



*In Issue #2, the RITHMS team is pleased to feature a Special Interview with Mr. Tobias Mattes, RITHMS Project Security Officer. Mr. Mattes is also involved in the **PERIVALLON Project**,*

RITHMS' sister project that was introduced in our [First Newsletter](#).

What are your roles and contributions within the RITHMS project?

First, I have to mention, that basically I am a practitioner: my regular duty is Head of the Criminal Police Department in Amberg (Bavarian Police). On the sideline, I participate in different research activities as part of the research unit of our Police University. In RITHMS project, as a scientific researcher, I take part in different work packages. Additionally, I was a member of RITHMS Security Advisory Board (SAB) and now, since July, I am the Project Security Officer (PSO).

During the last years, I participated in several research projects in the field of security research; knowledge from those as well as experience from daily police work in the field of art crime, in the development of IT solutions for Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA) and in police investigation processes (investigation cycle) are the core parts of my contribution to this project, mainly in the testing and validation during the pilot execution phase.

As member of the SAB I was involved in different task relating to security of sensitive information (like propose of information classification, declassification, etc. and other timely measures for preventing the misuse of sensitive information).

The role of the PSO is to guarantee that the rules on the handling of EU classified information and applicable security procedures are respected.

What value does HfoeD gain from participating in the RITHMS Project?

The HfoeD is Bavaria's Police University. On the one hand, it is very beneficial for us to learn more about the phenomenon of art crime, especially as basis for terror financing. Knowledge from the RITHMS Project will directly find the way into the training of our students, the future middle management of the Bavarian Police.

On the other hand, we strive to learn as much as possible about new technologies and approaches, such as using SNA to process big data in criminal investigations, evaluating their suitability for everyday use and potential application to other criminal phenomena. This way, we aim to acquire new knowledge that will make us, as an LEA, more efficient in our daily crime-fighting operations.

What benefits and technical outcomes do you expect for LEA partners as a result of their participation in RITHMS?

Investigations in the area of art crime and dealing with cultural heritage are characterized by the need of dealing with big data. A lot of different data from different data sources must be prepared in an assessable, searchable, and, above all, understandable way for the police in front of the screen. The RITHMS platform will enable exactly that. Due to the usage of SNA techniques new relevant knowledge for investigators will be created.

In addition to technical innovation, detailed knowledge of the criminal phenomenon of art crime and terror financing by dealing with cultural heritage is of essential interest for all LEA.

How RITHMS solutions are expected to improve the work of LEAs in their operations?

First of all, it must be underlined, that during the project lifetime a TRL6 will be developed, this means the RITHMS platform will be a prototype demonstrated in an operational environment. The 'finetuning' of the platform, like customization etc. will be done after the project – the prototype will be able to be used by the consortium partners for their tests with their data sources.

As all LEA Consortium members, I look forward to the RITHMS platform being further developed, after the Project's lifetime, to a powerful tool that enables us to do our job more efficiently and much faster than nowadays.

PERIVALLON project is one of our RITHMS sibling projects. What is your experience with PERIVALLON and how its expected solutions would differ from RITHMS?

Both projects are intended to support LEAs in context-related processing of large amounts of data from various data sources in order to enable investigators to identify suspects as quickly as possible in the respective crime phenomenon and to be able to carry out criminal proceedings quickly and efficiently.

Compared to the RITHMS SNA platform, the PERIVALLON platform offers broader and di-

verse operational scenarios addressing criminal situations online, offline, and – physically – on land and water by using other technologies and approaches such as AI-based geospatial intelligence, remote sensing, and scanning tools: it features an intelligence decision support system including a risk assessment tool and online monitoring and analysis tools.

For you, what is the unique value of these projects?

The development of tools that are contextually oriented towards the real needs of end users from LEA organizations and, on the other hand, the implementation of the latest technologies in the operational environment.

Criminals are often one step ahead when it comes to technical innovations: using solutions like RITHMS and PERIVALLION makes it a battle on equal terms.

SISTER PROJECT IN FOCUS

EMERITUS: ONE OF OUR SISTER PROJECTS

Among its communication and dissemination activities, RITHMS project is also carefully developing a network that integrates various projects with shared objectives, especially supporting Law Enforcement Agencies in combating different types of illicit trafficking. EMERITUS project is one of them.

Environmental crimes such as the discharge of substances into the air, water and soil as well as the shipping and trafficking of waste and hazardous materials have enormous impacts on the climate, human health and the environment. However, these crimes are still considered highly profitable for criminals since most feature relatively low risks of detection and penalties for the perpetrators, given the complexity of preventing criminal wrongdoings and delivering distinct proofs to law courts to punish the authors.



EMERITUS aims to lay the foundations of a new generation of technological tools orchestrated via a single-entry point platform at the service of Law Enforcement Authorities (LEA) and Border Guards (BG) to improve detection and proof collection capabilities against waste-related environmental crimes. To do so, EMERITUS will create and implement a protocol for effective environmental crime investigation, Mainly combining innovative monitoring and analysis technologies with a complementary training programme to foster LEAs and BGs' intelligence and investigation capabilities at both the national level and cross-border levels.

The ambition of **EMERITUS** is to explore and demonstrate how these technologies and specialised training could improve the efficiency of environmental crime detection and intelligent risk profiling to optimise resources, reduce the risk for operators and provide a deterrent for offenders.

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